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ANNE ORDE

THE QUESTION OF SECURITY IN BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

1920-1926

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Abstract

The subject is the formation of official British policy on international security between the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles and Germany's entry into the League of Nations, and defence policy in relation to foreign policy. The problem of security in these years, for Britain, falls into three parts: international security in the broadest sense; the security of areas of the world of importance to Britain and the Empire; and the security of Britain and the Empire itself.

International security in the broadest sense was largely a matter of the development of the League of Nations. The attitude of British Governments to the obligations of the Covenant and the rejection of the attempts of 1922-24 to give them greater precision, are shown to have been much influenced by the abstention of the United States from membership of the League and by the position of the Dominions. In terms of foreign policy the areas of greatest importance for regional security were western Europe and the Far East. The problem of western European security is traced from the unsuccessful negotiations of 1921-22 for an Anglo-French pact to the apparent solution at Locarno; that of the Far East from the early discussion of the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance through the Washington Conference to the problems of developing the Singapore base. Defence policy was, it is shown, more closely related to foreign policy in the Far East than in Europe. The security of France and Belgium was generally regarded as a British interest; but danger was nowhere imminent and economy was a paramount consideration. The solutions sought were political rather than military: no commitment was undertaken in the Far East; and when Britain finally accepted one in western Europe no provision for its fulfilment was considered.

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A.A.E. = France, Archives des Affaires Étrangères

A.D.A.P. = Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik 1918-1945

B.F.S.P. = British and Foreign State Papers

D.B.F.P. = Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939

D.D.B. = Documents diplomatiques belges 1920-1940. La Politique de sécurité extérieure

D.D.I. = I Documenti diplomatici italiani

Documents relatifs aux garanties = France, Documents relatifs aux négotiations concernant les garanties de sécurité contre une agression de l'Allemagne, 10 janvier 1919-7 décembre 1923

F.R.U.S. = Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States

H.C. Deb. = The Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons

H.L. Deb. = The Parliamentary Debates. House of Lords

Petrie, Life and Letters = Sir Charles Petrie, The Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain

Roskill, Naval Policy = Stephen Roskill, Naval Policy between the Wars, Vol. I

Introduction

On 17 April 1869 Gladstone, in a letter to the Queen's private secretary, summarised what he believed to be his colleague Lord Clarendon's ideas on the principles of British foreign policy:

> "that England should keep entire in her own hands the means of estimating her own obligations upon the various states of fact as they arise; that she should not foreclose and narrow her liberty of choice by declarations made to other Powers, in their real or supposed interests, of which they would claim to be at least joint interpreters; that it is dangerous for her to assume an advanced and therefore an isolated position in regard to European controversies; that, come what may, it is better to promise too little than too much; that she should not encourage the weak by giving expectations of aid to resist the strong, but should rather seek to deter the strong by firm but moderate language from aggression on the weak; that she should seek to develop and mature the action of a common, or public, or European opinion as the best standing bulwark against wrong, but should beware of seeming to lay down the law of that opinion by her own authority, and thus running the risk of setting against her and against right and justice, that general sentiment which ought to be, and generally would be arrayed in their favour." (1)

1. J.M. Morley, Life of William Ewart Gladstone, London 1903, Vol. II, pp.316-18.

In a sentence, the purpose of this work may be said to be an examination of the way in which, half a century later and in very different circumstances, a series of British Governments of different political complexions applied these same principles. More specifically, it is to examine British policy on the question of international security and to consider British defence policy in relation to foreign policy, between the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles and Germany's entry into the League of Nations. The subject matter is the decisions taken by successive Governments, the advice given to them by their official advisers, and the considerations upon which the advice and the decisions were based. The formulation of official policy is a coherent subject which can reasonably be examined on its own. Parliamentary and public opinion - or, to be more precise, what ministers and officials thought public opinion was - were of course factors in this process and are treated as such. But no attempt has been made to evaluate public opinion separately; and unofficial policy and the influence of pressure groups has been largely excluded.

The problem of security in the years after the First World War, so far as Great Britain was concerned, can be divided into three separate but overlapping parts: international peace and security in the broadest sense; the security of those areas of the world of greatest importance to Britain and the Empire and Commonwealth, and the security of the Empire itself.

International peace and security in the broadest sense were, during the 1920's, largely a matter of the development of the League of Nations. During the war the creation of a new international order and some organisation to secure peace had become to a greater or lesser extent one of the aims of many of the belligerents, especially on the Allied side. The Covenant of the League of Nations, drawn up at the Peace Conference, reflected mainly British and American conceptions of the possibilities and functions of an organisation of this kind. The elements of guarantee and conciliation, of coercion and tribunal of opinion, of obligation and free decision, were delicately and not altogether harmoniously balanced. The abstention of the United States from membership of the League greatly enhanced the instinctive doubts of British Governments about the coercive and automatic obligations of the Covenant: their attitude to the attempts of 1922-24 to give greater precision to these obligations in connexion with the pursuit of disarmament is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Throughout the period covered by this study the two areas of the world the security of which most significantly involved Great Britain and the Dominions in relation to other powers were Europe and the Far East. Once peace had been concluded with Turkey, the Middle East and India were primarily matters of imperial concern alone; but internal disorder or subversion from outside might (and in subsequent years did) require the use of substantial British forces. Of the two the problem of European security was the more

immediate, the more intractable and the closer at hand. It was one aspect of, and at times seemed to be the key to the whole question of the economic as well as the political recovery of Europe, and of Britain, from the war. As their attitude to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and the Geneva Protocol shows, British Governments of the period still refused to undertake commitments for circumstances which could not be precisely foreseen: their traditional reluctance to undertake continental commitments of any kind was slightly weakened by the advent of air power, but only to the extent that the limit was pushed eastwards from the Channel coast to the Rhine. The search for a solution is discussed in Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6. The treaty concluded at Locarno was a partial solution to one part of the problem of European security. The expectations founded upon this settlement reflect a conviction that France held the key to European pacification, and also perhaps a desire to make the greatest possible political capital out of the limited extent to which Britain was prepared to undertake European obligations even in her own interests.

The problem of the Far East, discussed in Chapters 2 and 7, also arose to a large extent from the war but in a different way. Fundamentally it was a matter of changes in the relative strengths of the powers concerned with the area. The problem was less immediate than that of Europe, less ponderable, rather a question of possible future difficulties than actual ones. In 1920 and 1921 the issue was one of triangular relations between Britain (with three of the

Dominions deeply concerned), the United States, and Japan. The Washington treaties of 1921-22 secured a naval balance between the three which reflected the new situation. The political undertakings too in a sense reflected existing relationships: they neither promised nor produced active co-operation between all or any of the signatories.

The security of Great Britain, the Dominions, India, and the colonies was the object of defence policy, also discussed in Chapters 2 and 7. A connexion can be shown between defence policy and foreign policy in the Far East, but despite the magnitude of the security problem there, in Europe hardly at all. The reasons for this paradoxical difference appear to be several. In the first place imperial defence was still conceived mainly in naval terms; it was on naval policy that the earliest postwar decisions were required; and the nature of these decisions clearly depended on relations with the United States and Japan. Even after the naval balance had been struck the development of a base at Singapore, whether for the sake of imperial communications or to meet a remote threat, still involved relations with Japan.

In the second place, in Europe, the protection of Great Britain itself against air attack began to be provided for in this period; but the peculiar circumstance that the greatest existing air force belonged to a recent and possible future ally robbed the preparations of urgency. However uneasy were relations with France between 1920 and 1924, and whatever the alarms created by the Air Staff, war with France

was not seriously considered to be probable and was officially stated by Austen Chamberlain in 1925 to be inconceivable. On the whole in Europe, despite its troubled state, there was no threat to Britain, Germany having been defeated and, it was held, effectively disarmed. However the doctrines of deterrence by bomber or of limited liability had not yet taken root: it was assumed that in the case of a war in Europe in which Britain felt it necessary to intervene, she would do so with military as well as with naval and air forces. It was also assumed that in the case of a major war conscription and industrial mobilisation would be required. Meanwhile it was regarded as impossible to provide in peacetime more than a token expeditionary force made up from that portion of the regular army which was not currently required for imperial duties. A further paradox of defence policy is the fact that whereas immediately after the war informal contacts between the British and French General Staffs seem to have remained fairly close, once Britain did undertake a European obligation at Locarno the impossibility of holding staff talks with both France and Germany about the defence of each against the other meant that no plans were made for the implementation of the British guarantee. As the Chiefs of Staff pointed out in 1930, Britain was in a less favourable position to fulfil the Locarno guarantees than she had been, without any written undertaking, to go to the assistance of France in 1914. (2) The lack of a sense of

2. C.O.S. Paper 247, CAB 53/21, cited by Michael Howard, The Continental Commitment, London 1972, p.160, n.180.

urgency was most powerfully reinforced by financial stringency. The net result of all these considerations was that, as the Chiefs of Staffs stated in the summer of 1925 without drawing any comment from ministers: "The size of the forces of the Crown maintained by Great Britain is governed by various considerations peculiar to each service, and is not arrived at by any calculation of foreign policy, nor is it possible that they ever should be so calculated." (3)

In some senses the position of Great Britain in the years immediately after the war was very strong. All her enemies had been defeated, and she had suffered little material damage in the process. But on the other hand the war had imposed costs and burdens which would weigh heavily for two generations or more; her trade had been disrupted and her financial predominance lost; economic reorganisation and social improvement were imperative. To outside eyes Britain might appear powerful, but successive postwar Governments were conscious rather of the severe limitations on her resources. The desire for European pacification fitted the temper of a public determined never to see another such war. It also seemed essential to British recovery.

The Dominions also, during this period, acted as a brake upon Great Britain. Their position of greater visible independence was sealed by their separate membership of the League of Nations. Although the constitutional expression

3. See p. 545.

was not laid down until 1931, the implications of their independence were being worked out in practice throughout the 1920's. In retrospect the idea, held mainly in Britain, that it might be possible to construct and conduct an "imperial" foreign policy in which the Dominions would have a voice and responsibility, seems to have been unrealistic from the moment of its conception. It was defeated successively by Canadian, South African and Irish insistence on independent decision and refusal of responsibility; but since no one was yet prepared to face the consequences of complete separation the Dominions had something very near to a veto on British commitments: only in western Europe did they acquiesce. A practical sharing of the costs of imperial naval defence also proved impossible although Australia and New Zealand, aware unlike Canada of dependence on maritime communications, made some contribution.

During this period the Cabinet ~~was~~ were, as always, responsible for deciding British foreign and defence policy; and the advice and information upon which their decisions were based were provided by the Foreign Office and the Service departments, with the Treasury looming in the background. Within this constant framework practice and actual authority varied from one Government to another. Until the end of the Coalition Lloyd George took a more active part in the formation and conduct of foreign policy than many other Prime Ministers; frequent inter-Allied conferences gave scope for his particular talents, and his personal secretariat remained powerful. Curzon's lack of

authority during Lloyd George's premiership has often been described: a noteworthy feature of the Anglo-French negotiations discussed in Chapter 1 is the minor part played by Foreign Office advice. Circumstances were then against the taking of new initiatives after Lloyd George's fall even had Curzon wished for them.

In the first Labour Government MacDonald combined the offices of Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. Before entering office the Labour Party had had ideas of introducing new blood and tapping fresh sources of advice to counteract the influence of the permanent officials. But although there is a different flavour about foreign policy in 1924 the officials were in practice neither cold-shouldered nor constantly overruled. With the return to power of the Conservatives at the end of 1924 the picture changed again to one that was to last until 1929, with Baldwin as a generally non-interventionist Prime Minister and Austen Chamberlain as a Foreign Secretary more powerful than Curzon but yet not always able to get his way in the Cabinet.

In defence policy too the framework remained much the same throughout the period, with the individual Services, under more or less forceful political heads, contending more or less unsuccessfully for their individual needs. Proposals for the creation of a Ministry of Defence were defeated: the Committee of Imperial Defence remained the combined political and professional source of advice to the Cabinet. The only innovation was the formation of the Chiefs of Staff committee under the Committee of Imperial Defence, and they

were not as yet supported by joint planning. Even if such provision had been made, however, it is reasonable to assume that the decisions of the Cabinet, governed as they largely were by other considerations, would have been much the same.

The Foreign Office conducted the day-to-day business of foreign affairs, even under Lloyd George's premiership. It had grown during the war and retained some of its wartime recruits; its internal procedures were modified to deal with the increased volume of work; and the Diplomatic Service was merged with the Foreign Office staff. Since reparations were dealt with by the Treasury an important area of postwar policy was almost wholly outside the Foreign Office's influence, and overseas trade matters were shared with the Board of Trade. Reading the Foreign Office files, and comparing them with those of the German Foreign Ministry and an as yet limited number of those of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, one cannot but be struck by the generally high level of ability and professional competence of the permanent officials at home and abroad: the two ambassadorial exceptions - D'Abernon and Geddes - were both non-professionals. But during these years, unlike those immediately before the war, the senior officials, even Crowe, did not exert great influence on the formation of policy. They were essentially executants; and even if they had the inclination, they had little leisure to reflect or advise on the long-term implications of the problems with which they had to deal piecemeal. Despite all the upheavals let loose by the war and the new uncertainty introduced by the existence of a

fundamentally alien regime in Russia, they still assumed that the state system would function in a generally rational matter: adjustments through the League or by exercise of direct influence might be required, but it was not an international anarchy. At the very worst they and their Service counterparts assumed, or were compelled to assume, that Britain would be given time, and the will and means to use it.

Chapter 1

The Anglo-French Pact Proposals 1921-22

The Background

For the first two years after the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles on 10 January 1920 the most important question of security so far as British policy in Europe was concerned, was whether to renew the guarantee to France, which had been offered in April 1919 as part of the bargain over the peace terms regarding the left bank of the Rhine and embodied in the treaty signed, with the peace treaty and a parallel Franco-American agreement, on 28 June of that year. (1) The question was closely bound up with the search for a solution to all the problems arising out of the war and the peace settlement, particularly those concerning Germany but also those concerning eastern Europe and the Near East. The position of Belgium was a subsidiary question closely connected with that of France.

The terms of both the British and the American guarantee provided that neither should come into force without the other. Ratifications of the Anglo-French treaty were exchanged in November 1919. After the long internal struggle over reservations to the Covenant of the League of Nations the United States Senate rejected the

1. British and Foreign State Papers, hereafter cited as B.F.S.P., Vol. CXII, pp.213-18.

Treaty of Versailles on 19 March 1920: the Franco-American agreement was never brought before the Senate. But so long as there seemed to be a chance of a Democratic victory in the elections of 1920, or a possibility that the new United States administration, whatever its complexion, might reconsider the Treaty of Versailles, there was reason for the Government in London to do nothing more about the British treaty with France.

Their reluctance, however, was more fundamental than merely a desire to wait upon the United States. As Harold Nicolson pointed out in his study of Curzon, (2) two alternative policies were theoretically open to Britain at the beginning of 1920. One would have been to side with Germany and work for the revision of the Treaty of Versailles; the other would have been to reconstitute the wartime alliance and co-operate with France in resolving the problems arising from the peace settlements. Either policy would have been difficult. The first was probably impossible because it would have represented much too rapid a break with the recent past and British opinion was still on the whole anti-German although no longer so rabid as in 1918: the second would have been unpopular because there was a widespread desire to draw a line under the war and avoid further responsibility. The guarantee treaty had been accepted by Parliament with little debate, (3)

2. Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925, London 1934, pp.197-8.

3. On 21 and 24 July 1919: Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, hereafter cited as H.C.Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 118, cols. 1115-18; House of Lords, hereafter cited as H.L.Deb., 5th ser., Vol.35, cols.1036-7.

amid general agreement that in case of need Britain would in any case go to the help of France; but at the same time anxieties were expressed lest Britain be drawn by it into more distant involvements or be required to maintain substantial military forces. Moreover a reconstitution of the alliance seemed unnecessary: there was no prospect of early German revenge; Britain was secured by the disappearance of the German navy; French fears seemed either irrational or at best remote, and for many who could appreciate them French policy seemed designed to ensure their realisation. The British Government therefore pursued neither policy. They assumed the continuance of the Entente and attempted on this basis to solve each problem piecemeal as it arose; but at the same time they attempted to moderate, for the sake of British interests, the harshest effects of the Treaty of Versailles. The resulting strains on Anglo-French relations were often severe, and each occasion made the conclusion of a pact more difficult.

As far as the United States was concerned, the Foreign Office were more anxious about the Covenant than about the Franco-American agreement. On 19 November 1919 Viscount Grey, who had been sent on a special mission to the United States rendered abortive by President Wilson's illness, expressed the view that even if the Treaty of Versailles failed to pass the Senate, ratification of the Franco-American agreement in some form was still most desirable and its failure a disaster. Four days later Grey

reported general opinion in Washington that the agreement was dead, but he still hoped that if a compromise could be reached on the Treaty and the Covenant some form of agreement with France might be possible. However in reply to his first suggestion the Foreign Office remarked that although ratification of the agreement was desirable in the long run, temporary suspension might have advantages if it forced France into a more moderate policy towards Germany. (4)

The suspension of the guarantee was first used to suggest a more moderate French policy towards Britain. In the middle of December Clemenceau came to London for an inter-Allied conference. A week earlier Lloyd George had told the French Minister of Reconstruction, Loucheur, that since France could not count on support from the United States she must continue in close relations with Britain; and therefore press attacks must cease and bitterness must not be allowed to grow out of matters which were not of vital importance to either country. (5) On the eve of Clemenceau's arrival a meeting of Ministers disussed what should be said to him. Curzon and Churchill agreed that

4. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, hereafter cited as D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. V, Nos.413, 253, 423.

5. S.2, Public Record Office, London, CAB 23/35. Documents in the Public Record Office are cited by their individual number and by the class and volume number - CAB, CO, DO, FO, for Cabinet Office, Colonial Office, Dominions Office, and Foreign Office respectively.

the guarantee was a very powerful weapon to use with France. (6) In a private conversation before the inter-Allied meetings Lloyd George warned Clemenceau that there would be opposition in Parliament if the Government proposed a guarantee without the United States, and impressed upon him that everything depended on the atmosphere in which the two Governments faced their problems. (7)

It is a matter for speculation whether keeping the guarantee in reserve would have served to improve Anglo-French understanding had the French elections of November 1919 not given a large majority to the Bloc National or had Clemenceau been elected President in January 1920. It seems unlikely. As it was the French attitude stiffened, and all mention of the guarantee seems to have been dropped for over a year. In August 1920 the British General Staff, who throughout the year were anxious about the prospects of a right-wing régime in Germany and even more about the prospects of Bolshevism, and therefore advocated Allied concessions to maintain the parliamentary Government, suggested an alliance with France and Belgium in order that those countries might feel sufficiently

6. S.4, loc. cit.
7. S.5, loc. cit.

secure to allow German recovery. (8) The suggestion was not discussed by the Cabinet. The question had in effect been settled already by their decision not to send an officer to take part in Franco-Belgian staff talks.

The possibility of joint military plans was first discussed between the French and Belgian Governments in the summer of 1919, and the Belgians enquired whether the British would take part. (9) The matter hung fire, partly owing to Franco-Belgian disagreement over Luxembourg and partly because discussion in Paris of the revision of the treaties of 1839 raised the question of an interim guarantee to Belgium. Since some lawyers held that the guarantee of 1839 remained in force if the new treaty were not signed, and since they did not wish to make Britain appear the cause of breakdown, the Cabinet agreed on 2 December 1919 to give a guarantee for not more than five years provided that the Belgian Government would undertake to maintain neutrality. (10)

8. C.P. 1782, CAB 24/110. The term "Bolshevism" was frequently used at this time in the sense of radical social upheaval rather than specifically of a Russian connexion; but in this paper, written just after the Spa conference had insisted on the reduction of the German army to the treaty figure and while the Russians were advancing in Poland, the General Staff envisaged an alliance with Russia, whether Bolshevik or nationalist, as the only alternative for Germany to continuance in subjection to the Entente. Such an alliance would be disastrous for the West; the only way to prevent it was to give Germany more hope; to induce France and Belgium to allow this they should be offered an alliance.

9. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. V, Nos.108,211.

10. C.P. 117, CAB 24/93; C.P. 228, CAB 24/94; C.9(19), Appendix, CAB 23/18; C.12(19), Appendix IV, CAB 23/18; Conference of Ministers, No.13, CAB 23/37; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. V, Nos.228, 246, 248, 249, 254, 259, 260, 274, 281, 282, 308.

It is not at all clear what this stipulation meant, for as Sir Eyre Crowe (who was at the time in charge of the British delegation in Paris) pointed out, Belgium, as a party to the military occupation of Germany, could not be completely neutral and in any case the Belgian Government were determined that their country should not return to a position of "servitude". (11) Attempts to find a formula that did not include the word "neutrality" were, however, rejected by the Foreign Office, and on 8 January 1920 the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs told the British Ambassador in Brussels that his Government had decided to abandon the request for an interim guarantee. (12) Owing to continued Belgian-Dutch disagreement over the navigation of the Scheldt the revisionary treaty was not signed, and the question of the continuing validity of the 1839 guarantee seems to have been quietly dropped. The subject of Belgian neutrality came up again, as will be seen, in January 1922; but on 12 April of that year it was stated in the House of Commons that the British, French and Belgian Governments were agreed that the treaty establishing the guarantee was not regarded as being still in force. (13)

Although an invitation to take part was delivered by

11. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. V, Nos. 286, 302.
12. Op. cit., Nos.287, 289, 312, 319, 323, 324, 330, 331, 343.
13. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 153, cols. 32-3.

the French Ambassador in London on 2 February, the Franco-Belgian staff talks were still delayed. (14) At the inter-Allied conference at San Remo, on 20 April, Hymans asked Curzon for British participation but Curzon, annoyed by the Belgian attitude over the recent French occupation of Frankfurt and Darmstadt, replied that the moment was not opportune to ask Britain to enter into new obligations towards an ally who had treated her badly. (15) On 2 June, the French and Belgian Governments having reached agreement on the Luxembourg railways, the invitation to military talks was renewed by the Belgian Ambassador in London. He said that a treaty of alliance was not contemplated; the talks were to be about plans in case of German aggression; and the British authorities would be told of the results even if they did not take part. (16) At Boulogne later in the month Hymans asked Crowe to impress on Curzon the importance of an Anglo-Belgian understanding. He expressly disclaimed any intention of asking for a British commitment. (17)

Although the correspondence was sent to the Committee

14. Curzon Papers, Kedleston, Box 22, Anglo-Belgian Pact; C.I.D. Paper 240-B, CAB 4/7; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XII, Nos. 6, 7, 9, 11; Documents diplomatiques belges 1920-1940. La Politique de sécurité extérieure, hereafter cited as D.D.B., Vol. I, Brussels 1964, No.141.

15. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. IX, No.416; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.113, 146.

16. D.B.F.P., Ser.I, Vol. IX, No.501; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.153, 157, 158, 159. The Director of Military Operations in the War Office was informed of the sense of the negotiations in Paris in June: General Maurice Weygand, Mémoires, Vol. II, Paris 1957, pp.75-6.

17. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XII, No.23, D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.161, 163, 164, 165.

of Imperial Defence, who also received a paper from Austen Chamberlain advocating a treaty undertaking to Belgium, the Committee did not discuss the question. The War Office were in favour of taking part in the staff talks; but on 30 June the Cabinet agreed that they were not prepared to contemplate a treaty with Belgium and that military talks should not precede discussions between governments: they had an unfortunate way of becoming binding. (18) No formal reply was sent to the Belgian invitation, but at Spa in July Lloyd George told the Belgian Prime Minister of the decision. (19) The Franco-Belgian staff talks then proceeded without British participation and an agreement was signed on 7 September. (20)

Shortly before the inter-Allied conference in London of February-April 1921 Crowe, now the Permanent Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, suggested to Curzon that he should ask the Cabinet to consider a comprehensive policy of reconstituting the Entente and giving France a guarantee. Crowe feared that unless a general settlement that would satisfy French opinion were reached at the conference, there was every prospect of a serious quarrel. This could not be in Britain's interest, since she had failed to gain or keep the good will of any

18. C.I.D. Papers 240-B, 244-B, 246-B, CAB 4/7; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XII, No.11, n.2; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos. 164, 165; C.38(20), CAB 23/21; Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, ed. Keith Middlemas, Vol. I, London 1968, pp.115-17.

19. D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos. 169, 172, 173.

20. Op. cit., No.175; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XII, No.38.

European power, relations with the United States were far from satisfactory, and Russian hostility was active in the Near and Middle East. Reconstituting and if possible strengthening the Entente would have a stabilising effect in Europe and would help towards a settlement in the Near East.

Since fears of German revival lay behind French policy on reparations and the disarmament of Germany, Crowe suggested that the key to the situation might lie in reviving the guarantee of 1919. He believed that an offer of definite security in the same terms as the 1919 treaty might well make the French Government more conciliatory, both in areas such as the Near East and in their attitude to Germany. Crowe also thought thatmany sections of British public opinion would support an understanding with France - some as the fulfilment of an obligation acknowledged two years earlier, some for the prospect of a more reasonable reparation policy, some for the prospect of French concessions in the Near East. (21)

Much of the work of the London conference was concerned with the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres, upon which French policy was diverging from the British. On Germany, Crowe appears to have underestimated the urgent

21. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, No.38. In a Cabinet discussion of German disarmament on 30 December 1920 Churchill and Chamberlain advocated a defensive alliance with France and Belgium in order to induce France to adopt a more reasonable attitude towards Germany: C.80(20), CAB 23/23; Stephen Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, Vol. II, London 1972, pp.209-10.

need for money for the reconstruction of the devastated areas as a factor in French reparation policy, although he was right about the underlying fear of German revival. In eastern Europe France was about to sign an alliance with Poland, (22) which might lessen her anxiety for the British guarantee; but the future of Upper Silesia was to be a cause of serious Anglo-French difference in the summer of 1921. In the Danubian area French policy at this time was still uncertain, favouring a grouping based on Hungary rather than the Little Entente. (23) In general, French policy in Europe at the end of 1920 and the beginning of 1921 lacked direction, and there might have been an opportunity for a new British initiative. Curzon did not raise the matter with the Cabinet. It did come up there, however, once or twice in the next three months, in connexion with French policy towards Germany. On 21 May there was a general discussion of Anglo-French relations. Ministers were prepared to consider a guarantee if it would bring about a steadier French policy, but there was a good deal of doubt whether it would do so, whether an offer would be welcome in France, or whether British and Dominion opinion would support one. It was suggested instead that France should be made to realise

22. B.F.S.P., Vol. CXVIII, pp.342-3: a text of the attendant military convention is printed in Piotr S. Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies 1919-25, Minneapolis 1962, Appendix III.

23. Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, Vol. VII, Les Crises du XXe siècle, Pt I, Paris 1957, pp.281-3.

that an aggressive policy would lead to the end of the Entente. The Cabinet agreed that the time was not ripe for anything more than tentative soundings as to the French Government's attitude to a mutual guarantee of assistance.(24)

The indications at first appeared to be that the French Government would welcome an alliance. Early in June Barthou, at that time Minister for War, told the British Deputy High Commissioner in the Rhineland that an alliance would give France the sense of security which would enable her to return to normal.(25) At the same time the press on both sides of the Channel took up discussion of an alliance or a guarantee - the two were not clearly differentiated.(26) Crowe commented that he believed that the French did want an alliance but would not modify their anti-British policy in the rest of the world without additional British concessions.(27) After a few days the French press was less favourable, perhaps as a result of a hint from the Quai d'Orsay.(28)

24. C.24(21); C.40(21), CAB 23/25.

25. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVI, No.634.

26. The Times, 3 Jun. 1921; Le Temps, 6 Jun. Lord Derby, from 1918 to 1920 Ambassador in Paris, was also urging Lloyd George to take an initiative: Lloyd George Papers, Beaverbrook Library, F/14/5/27, F/13/2/31, F/14/5/29; Randolph S. Churchill, Lord Derby, 'King of Lancashire', London 1959, pp.396-8.

27. Minute, 14 Jun. 1921, W 6298/6298/17, FO 371/6995.

28. Hardinge to Curzon, 13 Jun. 1921, Curzon Papers, Box 22, Hardinge letters; Comte de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate, Paris 1953, pp.566-9.

The argument whether a guarantee or alliance would make France more co-operative was repeated in the Imperial Conference which opened on 20 June. The Dominion Prime Ministers were divided on lines that were to remain the same throughout the period covered by this work: Smuts was anxious for Britain to stand outside Europe as a mediator: Meighen of Canada was opposed to all alliances; Hughes of Australia and Massey of New Zealand were generally in favour of a guarantee. The British Ministers present were also divided. Curzon thought that a guarantee might make France more rather than less intransigent, and was unwilling to risk a rebuff; Lloyd George said that if a guarantee would help France to settle down he would think it wise to give one, but he did not believe that it would be welcomed now; Churchill hoped that something might be done in a year or so, since if Britain were able to reduce French fears she would be in a position to moderate French policy and to rebuild relations with Germany without incurring French suspicions. (29) No decision was recorded, but it appears to have been tacitly agreed that in suitable circumstances Britain might renew the offer of a guarantee to France.

29. E. 2nd, 4th, 6th, 18th meetings, CAB 32/2.

The Genesis of the Cannes Negotiations

As recounted in Chapter 2 the Washington Conference of November 1921 to February 1922 both revealed once more the French anxiety about security and exacerbated Anglo-French differences. Before the conference met the Cabinet agreed that if the question of the guarantee to France came up, the British delegation would be bound to support American ratification of their 1919 agreement, which would bring the British treaty into force. (30) But although Briand is said to have hoped to renew discussions on the guarantee, he was given no opportunity to do so. (31) Instead the French delegation found itself isolated, and participation in the Four-Power pact on the Pacific was minor consolation. Lloyd George's contemptuous dismissal of Briand's statements about German potential hardly augured well for serious British consideration of a pact with France. But at least no one could now doubt that security was a most sensitive point for France. Some sort of guarantee therefore came to be regarded as necessary if the French Government were to be induced to co-operate in the grand plan of economic reconstruction and pacification in Europe which Lloyd George was developing at the end of 1921. At the same time the position of Briand's ministry was weakened, as a result both of the Washington Conference and of domestic difficulties. There was therefore more readiness

30. C.83(21), CAB 23/27.

31. Georges Suarez, Briand. Sa vie, son oeuvre, Vol. V, Paris 1952, p.252.

on both sides to try to improve Anglo-French relations than there had been for some months.

When at the beginning of December Curzon suggested a new meeting of Foreign Ministers in Paris on the Turkish question, Briand replied that he would also be glad of a more general conversation on questions affecting Britain and France. (32) It appears, however, that the Comte de St-Aulaire, the French Ambassador, was acting on his own initiative in proposing an alliance to Curzon. He had previously mentioned the subject to Austen Chamberlain, who warned him not to ask too much. (33) This warning the Ambassador can hardly be said to have heeded, for he told Curzon that France neither wanted nor needed the 1919 guarantee: the alliance that he proposed should cover eastern Europe as well.

Curzon asked whether he was speaking on instructions. St-Aulaire said no, but he thought that Briand would share his views. Curzon asked him to find out, and pointed out that whenever the idea of an alliance had been

32. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, No.465; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Europe 1918-29, Briand to St-Aulaire, 4 Dec. 1921, Grande Bretagne, Vol.69 (Documents in the French archives are hereafter identified as A.A.E., with country and volume number); France, Documents relatifs aux négotiations concernant les garanties de sécurité contre une agression de l'Allemagne, 10 janvier 1919-7 décembre 1923, Paris 1924, hereafter cited as Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.17; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, p.365.

33. A. Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain, 1 Jan. 1922, Chamberlain Papers, Birmingham University Library, AC/5/1/222.

discussed in speeches or in the press the reaction in France had been unenthusiastic. St -Aulaire replied that that had been the guarantee: an alliance would be different. Curzon then mentioned the difficulty with public opinion and the Dominions and asked whether the French would at the same time favour clearing up all the problems on which the two Governments disagreed. The Ambassador said that he thought this would be indispensable. (34)

At the same time Lloyd George invited Loucheur to England to discuss reparations, and on 8 December at Chequers apparently expressed to him a desire to discuss with Briand all the problems which fell outside the scope of these particular talks. The question of reparations was reaching one of its critical stages, and the German Government were about to ask for a moratorium. It was hoped at this point that American representatives would join in discussing outstanding economic problems, including war debts; and in conversation with Loucheur Lloyd George

34. Desp. 3223 to Paris, 5 Dec. 1921, W 12716/17, FO 371/7000, printed in Cmd 2169 of 1924, Papers respecting Negotiations for an Anglo-French Pact, No.32. Briand told Lord Hardinge that he had not authorised St-Aulaire's approach. St-Aulaire did not report his conversation with Curzon until 14 Dec. and was apparently annoyed when Hardinge took the matter up. He says in his memoirs that he continued to advise his Government not to take the initiative: Paris tel. 936, 7 Dec., W 12728/12716/17, FO 371/7000; memorandum by Crowe, 30 Dec., W 50/50/17, FO 371/8249; St-Aulaire to Briand, 14 Dec., A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69; St-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate, pp. 584, 749.

showed some readiness to accept the French proposal of April 1921, which he had previously rejected, to use the C Reparation bonds to extinguish inter-Allied debts. (35) This would have been tantamount to cancellation, since no British expert expected that these bonds would ever be marketed. But unofficial enquiries in Washington showed that the United States Government were not ready to take part in any general discussions, and on 11 December they announced that there was no intention of cancelling Allied debts. When on 16 December the Cabinet discussed Briand's forthcoming visit the prospects for agreement on reparations were therefore poor. It was still thought that the French Government were opposed to an alliance. It was recognised that Briand's position was weak, and that his Government might fall if he returned from London empty-handed; but it was felt that Poincaré might be better to deal with. (36)

The greater part of Briand's talks in London from

35. Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp.346-7; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVI, No.752; Paris tel. unnum., 6 Dec. 1921, FO 800/153; Louis Loucheur, Carnets secrets 1908-1932, ed. Jacques de Launay, Brussels and Paris 1962, pp.185-8; Jones, Whitehall Diary, pp.183, 185. Lloyd George was apparently thinking of a visit to Washington by himself and Briand and Loucheur.

36. C.93(21), CAB 23/27. Poincaré had been advocating for some months, in articles in the Revue des deux mondes, a "general liquidation" of all questions disturbing Anglo-French relations: see his Histoire politique, Paris 1920-21, Vol. II, pp.245-6; Vol. III, pp.142-4.

19 to 21 December was taken up with reparations and with Lloyd George's plan for an international economic conference and a consortium, including Germany, for the reconstruction of Russia. (37) Neither Curzon nor any Foreign Office official was present. On 20 or 21 December Briand called on Curzon and spoke of the alliance idea, although not going beyond St-Aulaire's outline. (38) On 21 December Briand spoke of the alliance in greater detail to Lloyd George and Chamberlain, saying that his idea was that Britain and France should guarantee each other's interests in all parts of the world and act closely together on all questions.

Lloyd George said that British public opinion would not be ready for anything so wide. It would be possible to give France a guarantee against direct German invasion,

37. This idea, which was current in Germany at the same time, was also being discussed with Rathenau, the German Minister of Reconstruction, who paid two visits to London, from 28 Nov. to 10 Dec. and again about 20 Dec. On the first visit his main concern was the German financial situation, but he probably met Lloyd George privately (Lloyd George Papers, F/53/3/12) and it is likely that the outlines of the consortium were discussed then (cf. C.93(21), CAB 23/27) although in his biography (Walther Rathenau, Berlin 1928, pp.308, 311-12) Count Kessler suggested that it was on the second occasion that the plan emerged for Russian reconstruction, cancellation of European war debts, and a peace pact. On the second visit Rathenau discussed the Russian project with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (Sir Robert Horne) and Loucheur: see D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XV, Nos.108, 109.

38. Curzon to Hardinge, 24 Dec. 1921, Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1919-23. Curzon wrote that Briand called on Wednesday, which was 21 December, and opened the subject in more detail to Lloyd George next day: but the latter conversation was on 21 December (see below) and Briand said at midday that he had seen Curzon. It therefore seems more probable that he saw Curzon on 20 December.

but the public would not be prepared to be involved in possible quarrels on Germany's eastern frontier. Briand replied that he thought there was much to be said for a consultative pact like the Four-Power treaty on the Pacific. A European pact of this kind might include three or four countries: others, including Germany, might join later, but its nucleus should be a complete alliance between France and Britain. Lloyd George repeated that public opinion was not ready for anything so large, but that a simple guarantee could be given. He said that he would consult his colleagues; Briand said that he would put his ideas on paper; and they agreed to resume the discussions at the conference to be held at Cannes in January. (39)

When he got back to Paris Briand repeated to Hardinge much of what he had said, and added the further idea that Britain and France should form the "secular arm" of the League of Nations, to enforce its decisions and maintain peace in Europe. (40) Hardinge himself was strongly opposed to an alliance which, he feared, would

39. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XV, No.110. A meeting of Ministers on the afternoon of 21 December had a short discussion of Briand's suggestion, of which no details were recorded: C.93(21), Appendix III, CAB 23/27. There does not seem to have been any other Cabinet discussion before Lloyd George left for Cannes.

40. Hardinge to Curzon, 26 Dec. 1921, Curzon Papers, Box 22, Hardinge letters.

involve Britain in dangers greater than any that it might remove. He was therefore relieved to hear Lloyd George, on his was through Paris to Cannes, tell Briand that the British public would not accept an alliance since they did not like binding themselves to fight when they did not know what the casus foederis would be. Lloyd George said that he was, however, confident that Parliament and the country would agree to a guarantee. (41)

Curzon too advised against an alliance, and even against a guarantee unaccompanied by a settlement of the main questions on which the two countries were divided and an attempt to reach an understanding on future policy. A memorandum which he sent out to Lloyd George was partly based on a paper by Crowe. The latter, on the whole, favoured an alliance confined to the case of an unprovoked German attack on France but providing also for consultation if the vital interests of either country were threatened from any quarter. Other countries, including Germany, could be invited to adhere to the latter agreement, which could follow the general lines of the Covenant with regard to methods of dealing with disputes likely to lead to war. Germany would also join the League and undertake the general obligations of the Covenant. All this would offer substantial guarantees of peace. "The alliance alone would keep any German aggressive designs on France in check; any danger from

41. Hardinge to Curzon, 27 Dec. 1921, loc. cit.

the Russian quarter, more particularly Russian or Russo-German movements against Poland, would be, if not absolutely prevented, at least rendered infinitely less probable, without at the same time finding England committed to go to war for Poland's sake in circumstances when Poland herself might be to blame." The League machinery for dealing with possible causes of disturbance would be strengthened. France would be able to go some way in disarming, and to join in encouraging German economic revival or at least to cease her opposition to Britain doing so. Crowe concluded that the objects which might be attained by Briand's proposal were important and desirable. It should not be summarily rejected; rather Briand should be allowed to develop it and if possible guided in the direction Crowe had outlined. Curzon, although preferring a guarantee to an alliance, also recommended an Anglo-French agreement to consult in case of a threat to either country's vital interests, an agreement to which Germany and other countries could be invited to adhere and which could be placed under the auspices of the League of Nations. (42)

42. Memorandum by Crowe, 26 Dec. 1921; memorandum by Curzon, 28 Dec., W 13420, 13355/12716/17, FO 371/7000; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVI, No.768; Curzon to Lloyd George, 28 and 30 Dec., Lloyd George Papers, F/13/2/63-4.

Cannes

Curzon told Hardinge that if the Foreign Office advised in favour of Briand's proposal he would go out to Cannes to discuss it. (43) He did go to Cannes but took no part in the discussions on the proposed Anglo-French pact. At their first meeting, on 4th January, each Prime Minister began by restating his earlier position, Briand the idea of a grouping of all the signatories of the Treaty of Versailles round Britain and France, Lloyd George his refusal to join an alliance involving the security of Poland and Czechoslovakia. Briand said that he was not thinking of military obligations on their account but of an alliance which might keep the peace by non-military means, for example by conferences in which Britain and France would act together. He admitted that a British undertaking limited to the protection of France might possibly serve the same purpose. Lloyd George said that he thought the essential thing for France was a guarantee against German invasion: on this a stable peace in Europe might be built. Briand asked what conditions were proposed, and Lloyd George replied that certain questions must be cleared up, like Turkey and Tangier; he mentioned the British anxiety about the French submarine programme as a warning, not as a condition: and he stressed the need

43. Curzon to Hardinge, 24 Dec. 1921, Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1919-23.

for joint action in the financial and economic reconstruction of Europe. He hoped that Briand would agree to all the countries of Europe being invited to the economic conference. (44)

After this conversation Lloyd George sent Briand a memorandum of his views.(45) He described a close understanding between Britain and France as indispensable to European welfare and world peace. The problems facing the Cannes conference must be met as a whole, and the French anxiety about reparations and security, the British anxiety about unemployment and European economic recovery, should be dealt with together. With regard to reparations, Britain would have been ready, in consultation with the United States, to cancel the war debts owed to her and to give up almost all her share of German reparations. But since consultation with the Americans had proved impossible she was ready to recommend the

44. I.C.P. 220A, CAB 29/94. The point about Tangier was that the Foreign Office wanted the French to put into effect an undertaking, given before the war, to place it under international control. The mention of Czechoslovakia is rather surprising: France did not have a treaty with that country until 1924.

44. There were four successive versions of this memorandum, A.J. 311 (4 Jan.), A.J. 321 (8 Jan.), A.J. 323 (9 Jan.), and A.J. 332 (probably 12 Jan. but printed in Cmd 2169 of 1924 with the date 4 Jan.), CAB 29/35. Many of the differences between the versions are matters of wording, largely attributable to the fact that the third and fourth were written with a view to publication. The major differences of substance are described below.

arrangement recently reached in Londin, (46) which represented a considerable sacrifice but which she thought would meet French needs until a wider financial settlement could be reached. With regard to security, Britain was prepared to give France a "guarantee that in the event of unprovoked German aggression the British Empire will put its forces at her side." Such a guarantee would both safeguard France in the event of German attack and make it unlikely. The undertaking could be given in the form of an alliance, but this would be against British tradition and would not be generally supported. The British people "would not willingly be committed to military liabilities for breaches of the peace in Eastern Europe, and they would not undertake responsibilities of any kind for the defence of countries in Eastern and Central Europe, in which their interest is necessarily small." The alternative was a "definite guarantee" that the British Empire would stand by France "in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany," and it was probable that the Dominions would join in giving it. This would have far greater weight than an alliance and was the alternative which the British Government were ready to propose.

The treaty must, however, be accompanied by a complete understanding between the two countries and to this end four problems must be cleared out of the way.

46. See D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XV, No.111.

The questions of Turkey and Tangier must be settled, France must co-operate in the reconstruction of Europe and must agree to the summoning of an economic conference at which all the countries of Europe would be represented, including Russia. The conditions and assurances necessary for trading with Russia were set out. Submarines were mentioned, not as a condition but with a warning that if the French programme were carried out British public opinion would insist on a programme of anti-submarine craft, and the resulting competitive building would "react very seriously on British sentiment towards France." (47)

On 5 January Briand asked Lloyd George to elucidate certain points of the memorandum, notably Turkey and Tangier. Lloyd George said that these should be taken up with Curzon, and asked what Briand thought about the guarantee. Briand, who had already suggested that the conditions which Russia was to be asked to accept should include an undertaking not to attack her neighbours, said that this undertaking and one by Germany might be included in a general European understanding based upon

47. A.J. 311, CAB 29/35. The British Government had signed a trade agreement with Soviet Russia in March 1921: see D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XII, Ch. V; M.V. Glenny, "The Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement, March 1921," in Journal of Contemporary History, V(1970), No.2, pp.63-82. Lloyd George's hope now was for a general regularisation of trade relations, leading to recognition.

the Anglo-French entente. It would entail no military obligations but would give sufficient guarantee of peace for several years to allow France to reduce her military expenditure. Lloyd George asked how the non-aggression undertaking would differ from the Covenant of the League of Nations: as soon as Germany and Russia joined the League they would be bound to respect the frontiers laid down in the peace treaties. Briand said that he thought the Covenant was not sufficiently binding in form. Lloyd George then suggested that armaments might be put on the agenda of the economic conference. Briand demurred, although he said that French opinion was very much in favour of reducing expenditure. He undertook to let Lloyd George have his views on the Anglo-French understanding in writing. (48)

The next two days were taken up with the Supreme Council meeting and discussion of the economic conference, reparations, and conditions for the resumption of trade with Russia. (49) The French views on an understanding with Britain were communicated to Lloyd George on 8 January. The main points of the memorandum were, first, that the agreement must express the will of the two

48. I.C.P. 220D, CAB 29/94; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp.359-61.

49. For the latter see Cmd 1621 of 1922, Resolutions adopted by the Supreme Council at Cannes, January 1922, as the Basis of the Genoa Conference. The resolution stated, inter alia, that all countries should join in an undertaking not to attack their neighbours.

countries to act together for the maintenance of peace. A unilateral British guarantee of France would not be enough to deter Germany from trying to provoke Anglo-French disagreement; moreover Britain was no longer immune from attack. The guarantee must therefore be reciprocal. Secondly, violation of Articles 42-44 of the Treaty of Versailles regarding the demilitarisation of the Rhineland should be regarded as an attack on France no less than an attack on her own territory; Britain should also undertake to regard any violation of the military, naval, or air clauses of the Treaty as a ground for concerted action by the two countries. In order to give full effect to these provisions the two Governments should undertake to regulate the strength of their armed forces by agreement. Thirdly, the two Governments should agree to act together on any question of a kind likely to endanger the general peace. While the British reluctance to assume military obligations in respect of countries in which Britain was not directly interested was recognised, it was pointed out that Britain had acknowledged the desirability of a new element in the arrangements for maintaining peace. This could grow out of the Cannes resolution, on the lines of the Pacific settlement reached at Washington, and be based on a close union of France and Britain. (50)

50. A.J. 318, CAB 29/35; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.35; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.21; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp.373-6.

The same evening, after the famous game of golf, Lloyd George and Briand had a further conversation. Lloyd George suggested that the French memorandum tended towards a military alliance which he could not recommend to public opinion. Britain was quite ready to do again what she had done in 1914, and he was ready to sign a declaration to that effect there at Cannes; but he would not go any further. He would give Briand a draft. Briand replied that his proposal was for a purely defensive alliance, limited to the case of attack by Germany. Lloyd George went on to repeat that Britain would not guarantee the general peace of Europe since to do so might involve her in enterprises which public opinion would not contemplate. Briand replied that his general understanding would not entail any military obligations: he thought that the Cannes resolution might be expanded on the lines of the Pacific pact into a general undertaking by the nations to refrain from aggression. Lloyd George said that Britain intended to work for such an undertaking, but it must include all the countries which were capable of disturbing the peace, particularly the dangerous ones like Russia, Germany, Poland, and Hungary. Briand agreed. He said that he wanted in the first place an "entente entre deux", and following on that an "accord générale". In this way, he thought, they might build up a powerful system to stop war. They wanted something more practical than the League. Lloyd George said that it would at any rate be

a powerful system to reduce armaments and the financial burden which they represented. (51)

The second version of the British memorandum was also dated 8 January, but there is nothing to show whether it was ever communicated to the French. The main points of difference between it and the first version were: (a) the forecast of Dominion participation in a guarantee to France was altered to a forecast that Dominion opinion "would support that of Great Britain in giving such a guarantee" (this wording was retained in the subsequent versions); (b) French co-operation in the reconstruction of Europe was dropped from the list of conditions for an understanding; (c) this version alone included an offer to co-operate in negotiating an agreement between the powers on the lines analogous to those of the Pacific treaty. (52)

Next day Lloyd George telegraphed to London a draft treaty for consideration by the Cabinet - a proceeding which caused Briand to think that he was taking a wider view than he had done in London, and that the negotiations might be entering a decisive stage. (53) The draft consisted of six articles. In the first, Britain

51. I.C.P. 225C, CAB 29/94; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp. 380-2.

52. A.J. 321, CAB 29/35.

53. Briand to Peretti, 9 Jan. 1922, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, p.384.

undertook, in the event of direct and unprovoked German aggression against the soil of France, to come to France's assistance with all her forces. In the second the two countries undertook, in the event of German aggression against Belgium, to concert together measures to protect Belgian neutrality. Article 3 asserted the interest of both countries in the provisions of Articles 42-44 of the Treaty of Versailles and provided for consultation in case any breach of them were threatened or any doubt arose about their interpretation. Article 4 likewise provided for consultation in case Germany took any military measures inconsistent with the Treaty of Versailles. Article 5 excluded the Dominions unless they themselves approved the agreement. The last article limited the duration of the treaty to ten years. (54)

The draft was accompanied by the third version of the British memorandum. The principal differences between it and the two earlier versions were: (a) the guarantee was more precisely limited, as in the draft treaty, to "unprovoked aggression against French soil"; (b) the discussion of the economic conference and the conditions for trade with Russia were restored, but agreement on submarines was said not to be a condition; (c) in accordance with the final version of the Cannes resolution, abstention from propaganda and a non-aggression undertaking were included among the

54. Cannes tel. 13, 9 Jan. 1922, W 251/50/17, FO 371/8249.

conditions for trading with Russia, and it was suggested that the latter undertaking could form the basis of a wider system of European accord. (55)

With Chamberlain in the chair the Cabinet discussed the draft treaty and the British and French memoranda on the morning of 10 January. The draft articles were generally accepted. It was pointed out that a bilateral guarantee would leave Britain no longer free to decide the size of her land forces; on the other hand a simple guarantee would involve no special military preparations although if France were attacked all the resources of the Empire would be available to support her. A guarantee would give confidence to France and enable thoughtful Frenchmen to oppose chauvinist policies. It would also enable Britain to help German recovery without incurring the charge of deserting France. A telegram was sent to the Prime Minister saying that the Cabinet were opposed to the French proposal for extending the agreement but concurred in his proposals subject to the conditions for an understanding being realised: they attached great importance to the submarine question and the avoidance of naval competition. (56)

Before this telegram arrived at Cannes the third

55. A.J. 323, CAB 29/35.

56. C.1(22), CAB 23/29; tel. 4 to Cannes, 10 Jan. 1922, W 251/50/17, FO 371/8249.

version of the British memorandum was handed to the French. They had learned that Lloyd George was contemplating publishing something, and Briand asked for time to consider the text first. (57) When he met Lloyd George later in the afternoon Briand said that he feared that a detailed enumeration of conditions would make a bad impression in France, and asked whether they could not be expressed more generally. Lloyd George said that he was willing to drop Tangier if Curzon agreed, but British opinion would be most sensitive about submarines. He read out the Cabinet's telegram and suggested adding to the memorandum a sentence recommending joint discussion of naval programmes. He agreed to a suggestion of Briand's that more should be made of Britain's interest in the safety of France. (58)

At the time of this meeting Briand had not yet received an answer from Paris about the reparation discussions. That morning the French Cabinet had expressed doubts about Russia being invited to the economic conference, had decided not to agree to a moratorium for Germany unless adequate guarantees were given, and had agreed that the Anglo-French pact could not be accepted if it were to lead to other pacts in which Germany might be able to discuss the Treaty of Versailles - in other words Briand's inclusion of Germany in a wider European grouping. Telegraphing an account of

57. Minute by Grigg, 10 Jan. 1922, A.J. 328, CAB 29/35; Grigg to Marsigli, 10 Jan., A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69.

58. I.C.P. 229A, CAB 29/94.

the meeting to Briand in the afternoon the President, Millerand, added that the Government realised that these decisions would not make conclusion of the negotiations with Lloyd George easier, but that in any case the question would have to be discussed in Paris and the two memoranda revealed differences which made a rapid solution unlikely. Briand replied that there had never been any question of his signing a pact without discussion and approval. (59)

On 11 January further communications from Paris made Briand decide that he must go back and confront Millerand and his colleagues. He did so with success as far as the Cabinet were concerned, but rather than face a crisis with the President with doubtful support, and possible defeat in the Chamber, he resigned on 12 January. It is not clear whether he saw the revised draft of the Anglo-French pact and the final version of

59. Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp.388-90, 393-5. The exchanges between Millerand and Briand from 6 to 11 January, printed by Suarez, show that the differences between them were over the invitation of Russia to Genoa and the moratorium for Germany. Millerand seems to have ignored the Anglo-French pact proposal until 10 January, and Briand did not make much of it. He was not at this time laying stress on the pact in order to justify concessions on Russia and reparations.

the British memorandum before he left Cannes. (60) The preamble to the treaty now stated that French security was a British interest. The articles were identical with those of 9 January except that the one about Belgium was omitted and the final clause now provided for renewal at the end of ten years. (61) In the final version of the memorandum only the submarine question was now treated as a condition for an understanding, and the proposal for consultation on naval programmes appeared. French agreement to the summoning of the economic conference was stated as a desideratum, and the British Government were said to wish "to clear away all questions on which controversy between the two countries is possible." Restoration of peace in the Near East was said to be essential, but Tangier was no longer mentioned. (62)

60. In Cmd 2169 the draft treaty (No.38) is said to have been handed to Briand on 12 January; but as he had by then left Cannes either the date is wrong or the treaty and the memorandum were given to the French delegation. A copy of the draft in the French archives (Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69) is dated 11 January.

61. C.P. 3623, CAB 24/132; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.38.

62. C.P. 3622, CAB 24/132; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.38, misdated 4 January. A warning against concluding an agreement with France about submarines while naval questions were still being discussed at Washington came from Balfour on 11 January: Washington del. tel. 249, W 388/50/17, FO 371/8249.

The reason why Belgium was not mentioned in the revised draft of the Anglo-French treaty was that it was now proposed to conclude a treaty with Belgium herself. On 10 January M. Jaspar, the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, asked Curzon for news of the Anglo-French discussions and was shown the first draft. He immediately asked why no guarantee for Belgium was envisaged. Curzon replied that this was an Anglo-French pact, that Belgium had her military agreement with France, and that Britain had not joined in it because the Belgian Government would not give an undertaking to maintain neutrality. He asked whether Jaspar would prefer the article on Belgium to be left out.

Curzon commented on this conversation that if it were desired to extend a guarantee to Belgium a hint would certainly elicit a formal request from the Belgian Ministers. (63) The request must have been made, for on 13 January Curzon, with Lloyd George's approval, agreed on a text with Jaspar and Colonel Theunis, the Belgian Prime Minister. The Belgians first proposed a draft treaty directed solely against Germany. The text agreed contained a preamble recalling Belgium's exposed position and the experience of 1914, and two articles. The first pledged Britain to come to Belgium's assistance with all her forces in the event of direct and unprovoked attack on Belgian territory. The second read: "Belgium will

63. Memorandum by Curzon, 10 Jan. 1922, Curzon Papers, Box 22, Anglo-Belgian Pact.

employ all her military and air forces to defend her frontiers in the event of any attack upon or violation of her territory. She will refrain from concluding agreements or arrangements incompatible with the present engagement."

In sending the draft to London for Cabinet consideration Curzon commented that a decision whether to conclude the agreement separately from the Anglo-French treaty depended partly on the arrangements to be made with the new French Government, and partly on policy considerations which needed to be thought out. (64) The Cabinet approved the agreement subject to amendments designed to make it clear that the guarantee applied only to aggression by Germany, and the addition of articles excluding the Dominions and limiting the duration of the treaty to ten years. The Belgian Government had by this time approved the agreement in its earlier form. (65)

There was no question of a guarantee for Italy, but the Italian representatives at Cannes were nervous, as always, of any Anglo-French understanding in which their country was not included. On arriving at Cannes Lloyd George told the Italian Prime Minister, Bonomi,

64. Cannes tel. 26, 14 Jan. 1922; tel. 7 to Brussels, 20 Jan., W. 468, 613/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, No.204.

65. C. 2(22), CAB 23/29; Brussels tel. 11, 17 Jan. 1922; tel. 5 to Brussels, 19 Jan., W 543/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.208-10.

about the idea of the economic conference and said that he thought France's attitude to it would be influenced by what Britain was prepared to do for her security. If Britain gave France a guarantee it would be on condition that she would work with Britain and Italy for the reconstruction of central Europe and Russia; and Britain would not enter into an exclusive alliance with France. (66)

On 9 January Bonomi called on Lloyd George and Curzon to ask about the Anglo-French negotiations. Lloyd George showed him the first draft of the treaty and explained that it was only a guarantee, not an alliance, and was still under discussion. He said that he hoped that Italy would enter any scheme of international co-operation that grew out of the Cannes resolution, and promised to send Bonomi a copy of the memorandum that he was to give Briand. (67) Next day Lloyd George returned Bonomi's call and asked what he thought of the British memorandum. Bonomi and his Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Marchese della Torretta, expressed anxiety about France and Britain undertaking to keep Germany in check by themselves. Lloyd George said that this was not the

66. I.C.P. 220B, CAB 29/94; A.J. 312, CAB 29/35.

67. I.C.P. 225A, CAB 29/94. It appears that the Italian delegation were given copies of the third and fourth versions of the British memorandum.

object of the treaty: it was simply intended to repeat the 1919 guarantee and give Britain a restraining influence on French policy. He would have been ready to include Italy, but she would take part in the general pact which he hoped would be concluded at Genoa. He invited Bonomi to send him any Italian comments in writing. (68)

The Italians sent in a memorandum on the same day, saying that if the proposed pact discouraged German aggression it was to be welcomed. But they again deprecated separate agreements about only one frontier as opposed to strengthening the Entente as a whole. Lloyd George replied in another memorandum assuring the Italians that there was no intention of excluding Italy from the counsels of the great Allies or of weakening the close understanding between them. Britain had a particular interest in and obligation on France's eastern frontier, but the guarantee was only a stepping-stone to the wider pact, in which Italy had as much chance as France of co-operating. (69) Three years later, in the early stages of the negotiations which eventually led to Locarno, Briand suggested that the French Government had wished to see Italy included in the proposed pact in 1922. He presumably did expect

68. I.C.P. 229B, CAB 29/94.

69. A.J. 337, 338, CAB 29/35.

Italy to join the wider grouping, but not the Anglo-French nucleus. From London, where he had become ambassador, Torretta pointed out that Lloyd George's objection to including Italy had not been the only factor; but Lloyd George had indicated that the general non-aggression undertaking would reduce Britain's responsibility for French security and that the guarantee proposal only had value as a means of getting France to Genoa. (70)

Poincaré and Lloyd George

Briand's fall, and in particular its circumstances, was a bad omen for the Genoa Conference. On the Anglo-French negotiations, however, making all allowance for a difference in tone, Poincaré's position was not far removed from that of the French memorandum of 8 January. Lloyd George stopped in Paris on 14 January on his way home from Cannes and had a long conversation with Poincaré, although the latter had not completed his ministry and could therefore only speak personally. Poincaré agreed that there should be a general liquidation of problems outstanding between the two Governments, but said that he feared that publication

70. Italy, Ministero degli affari esteri, I Documenti diplomatici italiani, hereafter cited as D.D.I., 7th series, Vol. III, No.707; all references in this study are to the 7th series.

of the draft treaty would make it more difficult. He would need time to go into the questions of Tangier and Turkey and would not commit himself to a visit by Curzon and Torretta in the following week. He would prefer to put off discussion of the Anglo-French treaty until the other questions had been settled, but he was ready to give Lloyd George an indication of his preoccupations about it.

In the first place, Poincaré said, French opinion disliked the idea of a unilateral guarantee. It was a question of dignity and also might compromise France's position. A French guarantee of Britain might seem superfluous, but it might be wiser for Britain to accept it. Poincaré then came to the crux of the problem by saying that it seemed to him most important that there should be a military convention between the two countries.

There ensued a lengthy and at times evidently rather heated argument. Poincaré said that the treaty would not have much effective value without a military convention: if he could only have one or the other he would prefer the convention. Lloyd George replied that a convention could only relate to such forces as Britain had actually in being, and would therefore be misleading. He was sure that Poincaré would realise that Britain's peacetime strength - three or four divisions - was not her real strength. This consisted of millions of trained men, who were readily available and would retain their value for as long a time as Germany's reserve of

trained men could be considered dangerous. A guarantee to come to the aid of France with all Britain's forces was much more valuable than a convention. Poincaré said that he was not giving the definite French answer now, but he must point out that a treaty unaccompanied by a military agreement would not appeal very much to French opinion. There was no need for publication: all that was necessary was joint plans made and kept under review by the General Staffs. Lloyd George said that publication would be necessary in Britain. In any case the most important thing was that Germany should be deterred from thoughts of revenge, and the guarantee would do this. Furthermore, although the Dominions might adhere to a guarantee they would certainly not sign a military agreement or undertake in advance to supply any forces.

Poincaré objected that Parliament would surely not want to know the details of the plans every year: all that he wanted was some reference in the treaty to staff talks and a military agreement. Where, he asked, would France stand if Britain disarmed altogether? Lloyd George did not answer this question. He merely asked in reply what difference a reference in the treaty would make. The reserves, their equipment, the pledge would be there. He would not bind the Government to maintain any particular strength in peacetime. "If the word of the British people was not sufficient for France, he feared that the draft treaty must be withdrawn. The

British people would honour their pledge, if France were attacked, with the whole of their strength, but they would never bind themselves by military conventions as to the forces which they would maintain in present conditions during a time of peace."

Poincaré said that it was really a question of knowing whether the guarantee would be effective. If France had no idea of the strength Britain would maintain, how could she calculate what she would have to maintain herself? The lack of a military agreement would make the guarantee illusory. If these were Poincaré's views, said Lloyd George, he had only to communicate them officially and there would be no treaty. The French people must judge their own interests, but if they were not satisfied with Britain's pledge to put all her forces at France's side there was no possible basis of understanding.

At this Poincaré retreated slightly, saying that France did not doubt Britain's word: she knew that even without a treaty Britain would do all that she could. But, he repeated, how could France measure the forces she would have to maintain if she had no idea what the situation would be if war broke out? Lloyd George replied that the strength of the British Empire had been demonstrated, and it could be deployed much more quickly than that of Germany, for the Empire had the equipment and Germany had not. It seemed preposterous to be discussing military conventions now when Germany was

disarmed. If a German revival made a military agreement necessary, Britain would not hesitate to conclude one; but he could not understand difficulties being made about one now. Poincaré again referred to the difficulty of regulating French effectives, and said that he would like to discuss the matter again through diplomatic channels.

Lloyd George then said that he was particularly anxious to know whether the change of government in France betokened a change in policy. No, said Poincaré, the aims would be the same although some nuances might be different. In reply to a further question about other points over the treaty, Poincaré said that the duration of ten years seemed badly chosen. Lloyd George said that this could be discussed, and that staff contacts would of course continue. The conversation ended with a brief discussion of the prospects for Genoa, and an expression of Poincaré's dislike of conferences. He hoped that preliminary discussion of all questions could take place through normal channels, and that conferences would only take place when strictly necessary. (71)

After this meeting Poincaré would appear to have accepted the idea of a settlement of other questions

71. I.C.P. 235A, CAB 29/95; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.23.

before the pact was concluded. He told Curzon, who went to Paris on 16 January to talk about Turkey and Tangier, that the pact could follow and set the seal on the elimination of all the questions dividing Britain and France, which he was determined to see. But he certainly hoped that all the problems could be dealt with quickly. (72)

Reporting this conversation to the Cabinet, Curzon said that the proposal at Cannes had been that he and the French and Italian Ministers for Foreign Affairs should meet to agree on a revision of the Treaty of Sèvres which would then be put to the Greeks and the Turks. When Poincaré spoke of discussions through diplomatic channels Curzon had reminded him that only the Supreme Council could revise the treaty. He feared (mistakenly, as the French archives show) that Poincaré wanted to spin negotiations out until the spring in the expectation of a Turkish victory over the Greeks. The Cabinet discussion then turned to Lloyd George's meeting with Poincaré and the question of what to do next. It was suggested that it would be best to leave the French to make the next move: they might be in a more reasonable frame of mind after some weeks had passed and they began to realise that the pact was not regarded as particularly important to Britain. Other

72. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVIII, No.508; Poincaré to St-Aulaire, 23 and 30 Jan. 1922, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 70.

Ministers asked whether, if negotiations were suspended, the French would occupy the Ruhr. The answer was that the Ruhr could only be occupied if Germany were in default on reparations, and this could not happen before the end of March. The Cabinet agreed to take no action about the pact for the time being.(73)

However the next French step was not long delayed. On 20 January Poincaré told Hardinge that the French observations were to be sent off very shortly. Hardinge asked whether press reports that they referred to Poland were correct, as he thought that he should warn Poincaré that the British Government were unlikely to take any responsibility in the event of an attack on Poland by Germany or Russia. Poincaré said that French opinion was anxious about Poland and he hoped that some formula could be found which, without direct mention, could cover the case of a German attempt to recover Upper Silesia by force. He thought that there must be some Anglo-French agreement about preserving portions of the Treaty of Versailles such as this. (74)

A French revised draft of the treaty was handed to Curzon by the French Ambassador on 26 January. It

73. C. 2(22), CAB 23/29.

74. Hardinge to Curzon, 21 Jan. 1922, Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1922. The German Government had refused to accept the decision of the Council of the League of Nations dividing Upper Silesia and had declared that they did not give up German rights over the whole territory.

corresponded to the views expressed in the memorandum of 8 January. The obligation to assistance was made reciprocal, and the casus foederis unproved aggression against France or against Great Britain. Article 2 laid down, first, that any violation of Articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles should be considered as constituting an act of aggression against both, and secondly that the two countries would concert together in case of any threat of violation, any doubt as to the interpretation of the articles, or any breach by Germany of the naval, military, or air clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Article 3 stated that the General Staffs of the two countries would maintain a constant entente to ensure the efficacy of the two previous articles. By Article 4 the two Governments were to consult together on all questions of a nature to endanger peace or jeopardise the order of things established by the peace treaties, and to examine together measures necessary to ensure a quick, peaceful, and equitable solution. The treaty was to last for thirty years and to be renewable. The Dominions were excluded as in the British draft. (75)

Giving the draft to Curzon, St-Aulaire made some comments on it. He said that the French desire for a reciprocal agreement was a matter of self-respect, and Curzon replied that he thought that the Cabinet would be

75. W 963/50/17, FO 371/8250; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.39; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.23.

willing to consider it from this point of view. St-Aulaire then said that something much more specific was needed on violations of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles than the British suggestion of consultation. He was aware of press criticism on the lines that Britain might find herself involved in war over some petty incident for which the Germans might not be wholly to blame, but his Government were thinking of serious and unprovoked acts of aggression. Curzon said that there was bound to be serious objection to this article. Britain was ready to regard the French eastern frontier as in a sense her own outer frontier, but this proposal meant Britain and France taking on themselves the enforcement of provisions of the Treaty of Versailles which were the concern of all the signatories. Moreover it smacked of a return to the old rival groupings of powers which everyone thought were to disappear and to be replaced by a concert of nations. St-Aulaire replied that he thought on the contrary that the alliance would tend to consolidate international relations, with the other powers grouping themselves round France and Britain. Curzon said that Briand had talked in this vein, but he had not been able to understand how this grouping was to come about.

On the third article St-Aulaire said that in view of Lloyd George's objection to a military convetion, all that was now proposed was regular staff conversations similar to those held before the war. He admitted that

the mention of such talks in the treaty was mainly intended to impress the Germans. Article 4, the Ambassador said, had been framed to meet the British objection to the possibility of being involved in war by German aggression in eastern Europe. The intention was that in such a case the two countries would consult and, if they agreed, would act in concert with the League in finding a peaceful solution. Curzon said that he thought there might be objections to putting anything so ambiguous in the treaty. He then said that he thought that the Cabinet might be willing to consider something like fifteen years for the duration of the treaty, but that agreement to thirty was not likely.

Finally Curzon asked how Poincaré proposed that the general discussions, which the British believed that he favoured as they did, should be carried on. St-Aulaire said that he thought that Poincaré hoped that the pact would be concluded before the Genoa Conference, and his decision whether to go to Genoa would no doubt be influenced by the extent to which his hopes were fulfilled. Curzon, surprised by this change from what Poincaré had said to him ten days earlier, replied that he thought it would be out of the question to settle the pact in five weeks (at this stage the Genoa Conference was expected to open about 8 March), and he preferred the method, which he had thought Poincaré favoured, of settling the

other questions first. (76)

In his despatch to Hardinge recording this conversation Curzon commented that Poincaré's new hurry over the pact showed his anxiety to get it, and that this could be used to get a favourable settlement on the other questions. It might be supposed that on a similar calculation Poincaré was hoping to use Lloyd George's anxiety for the success of the Genoa Conference to secure British concessions on the pact. But according to St-Aulaire Poincaré did not fully accept that this was the right line to take, and he told the Belgian Ambassador in Paris that he wanted the pact and would conclude it even if he had to abandon many of his demands. (77)

St-Aulaire followed up these verbal explanations with three written memoranda. In the first, on 28 January, he developed the argument for consultation in case of a threat to peace. It was true, he wrote, that Germany was unlikely for many years to be able to attack Britain or France directly; but there was little doubt that she would invade Poland or Czechoslovakia, or incorporate Austria, if she thought that she could do

76. Desp. 289 to Paris, 28 Jan. 1922, W 937/50/17, FO 371/8250; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.40; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 70; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.24.

77. St-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate, pp.609, 616-17; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.216-17.

with impunity. Success here would give Germany new strength and would lead to an attack in the west. Peace would remain precarious unless Britain and France undertook to facilitate collective action. (78) The connexion between the west and the east was also pointed out by Max Muller, the British Minister in Warsaw, in reporting Polish anxiety about an Anglo-French pact. At present, he wrote, the pact left a loophole: if Germany were to attack Poland and France went to the help of her ally, a German counter-attack on France would not count as unprovoked aggression and therefore Britain could say that her guarantee to France did not arise. Foreign Office officials were not impressed by this first mention of the problem that was to become familiar later, noting merely that Parliament and public opinion would not contemplate an Anglo-Polish pact and that Max Muller was ignoring the existence of the League of Nations. (79)

St-Aulaire's second memorandum was a brief explanation of Articles 2 and 4 of the French draft treaty. The third went into some detail on violations of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. If, for instance, he wrote, Germany asked permission to send police into the demilitarised zone to deal with disorder,

78. Note from French Ambassador, 28 Jan.1922, W 963/50/17, FO 371/8250.

79. Warsaw desp. 54, 26 Jan. 1922, W 1128/50/17, FO 371/8250.

there would be no violation or threat of one. If permission were refused and Germany showed signs of sending in forces nonetheless, there would be a threat of violation and the two Governments would have to consult. If forces actually went in, either after permission had been refused or without it having been asked, this would be a violation and the casus foederis would arise. Such a provision, the memorandum argued, was essential if the protection afforded by the demilitarisation of the Rhineland were to be real. (80)

This problem too was to become familiar in 1925. But this time there was no serious attempt to tackle it, and the example of Germany sending police forces into the demilitarised zone to quell disorder was not happily chosen if the object of the explanation was to reassure the British. The three stages were almost exactly what had happened in April 1920 and had then give rise to sharp disagreement between the British and French Governments. (81) But in two respects the memorandum

80. Notes from French Ambassador, 1 Feb. 1922, W 1162, 1695/50/17, FO 371/8250; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 70; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.25; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.41.

81. Lord Kilmarnock pointed out this in a despatch of 10 February: Coblenz desp. 30, W 1508/50/17, FO 371/8250, extract in Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.43. But Kilmarnock recognised the validity of the French desire to ensure as far as possible that another war was not fought on French territory, and suggested a way of meeting it.

took account of Curzon's comments to St-Aulaire. The French Government, it stated, preferred thirty years for the duration of the treaty but would accept twenty, provided it were made renewable. And the French Government attached the utmost importance to the general understanding (Article 4) but were prepared to transfer it to notes to be exchanged and published at the same time as the treaty.

On 1 February Hardinge assured Poincaré that Lloyd George and Curzon were friendly to France, but said that there was some resentment in London about the French attitude to the pact. It was Briand who had asked for it, and the Government had thought they were making a handsome gesture in offering to assume an obligation which they had not asked should be reciprocated. But now conditions were being imposed as though it were for France to lay down the terms of the pact and for Britain to accept. Poincaré denied that his proposals were conditions; they were subjects for discussion. The greater part of the conversation had been about Turkey, and Hardinge concluded that if it were possible for the two Governments to agree about this, there would be no difficulty in settling all the other questions. (82)

In the meantime two of the Dominion Governments had expressed their views on the proposed pacts with France and Belgium, of which they were only informed after

82. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XVII, No.516.

Lloyd George's return from Cannes. (83) As might have been expected the New Zealand Government were in favour of the pacts, the South African Government against. Smuts telegraphed on 28 January that he approved the British efforts for European reconstruction but thought that a military alliance was too high a price to pay for French support in them. The South African Parliament would certainly not ratify such treaties, and then the problem would arise of some parts of the British Empire being bound while others were not. Smuts feared that the existence of an Anglo-French alliance might mean the end of the Empire if war broke out in the next ten years, and he did not believe that France needed a guarantee against Germany. Still worse, the efforts at economic reconstruction might fail and then Britain would be left with an alliance with "the state whose present reactionary policy fills with alarm both Europe and America and creates special danger for the British Empire." (84)

Lloyd George's initial rash expression of confidence that the Dominions would join in the guarantee had been replaced as early as the second version of his memorandum to Briand by an expression of confidence that they would

83. C.O. 2511, CO 532/244; CO. 3077, CO 532/215.

84. C.O. 2298, 2299, 3568, 4701, CO 532/207. I have not traced any expression of views by the Canadian or Australian Governments.

approve a British guarantee. Even this was now shown to be somewhat doubtful. In Parliament too debates in the first week of February not only revealed a good deal of objection to anything going beyond the obligations of the 1919 guarantee; there were sections of opinion, including the main supporters of the League like Lord Robert Cecil, who were opposed to any guarantee at all. (85) After these debates Curzon warned St-Aulaire that the Cabinet were very unlikely to wish to go beyond the scope of the 1919 treaty, and that in particular the French must expect refusal of their case on Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. (86)

On 17 February Curzon circulated to the Cabinet a long memorandum on the French draft treaty. Decisions were required on seven points. First, Curzon recommended that the proposal for reciprocal obligations should be accepted, since it would do no harm and might be of advantage. On the second point, the deletion of "direct" from before "attack" and "the soil of" from before "France" in Article 1, Curzon was disposed to refuse, for three reasons. In the first place British opinion would only endorse the treaty if it became

85. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 150, cols. 8-266; H.L. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 49, cols. 4-122.

86. Desp. 405 to Paris, 9 Feb. 1922, C 2000/458/62, FO 371/7418; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.42; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.26.

operative only when the German army crossed the frontier. In the second place, the possibility of earlier action could give rise to serious arguments about what constituted an act of aggression and, for example, at what point German mobilisation developed into an attack. Thirdly, the deletion of "soil" would make the treaty apply to an attack on a French colony, which need not involve Britain.

The third question for decision was the treatment of a German violation of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. Here again Curzon recommended rejection of the French proposal. He did not think that British opinion would be willing to treat the Rhineland as though it were French territory or to be bound to go to war if it were violated, even though in some circumstances it might be willing to do so. As he had said to St-Aulaire, Curzon also disliked the idea of a special obligation overriding the common obligation of all the signatories of the Treaty, feared that it might give rise to other alliances, and regarded it as inconsistent with the principles on which the postwar organisation of Europe was supposed to be based.

On staff conversations, Curzon supposed that there would be no objection to confidential contacts provided that it were understood that any agreements produced were not binding upon the Governments. But he was opposed to mentioning such contacts either in the treaty or in an exchange of notes, on the ground that

this would imply the existence of military obligations defined not by Governments or Parliaments but by General Staffs.

The fifth point was the French article about consultation. In some ways, Curzon wrote, this was highly desirable since the Government had more than once complained of French failure to consult them on matters of common interest. But looked at more closely the article seemed to be an attempt to involve Britain all over Europe and indeed to set up a kind of Anglo-French hegemony which Britain did not want and which other countries, notably Italy, would resent.

On the duration of the treaty, Curzon admitted that from the French point of view ten years was too short. Britain could no more afford to see France overrun in 1932 than she could do in 1914. While thirty years would almost certainly be too long for public opinion, he recommended fifteen to twenty years.

The final question was whether the pact should be concluded on its own or held over until other questions were settled. Curzon regarded delay as a powerful means of pressure on the French Government whose survival, he thought, depended on some form of pact. He therefore recommended waiting until they were nearer a solution of the many other problems. (87)

Thus Curzon recommended rejecting all but two of the

87. C.P. 3760, CAB 24/133. Part in Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.44.

French proposals, that on making the guarantee reciprocal and that on lengthening the duration of the treaty. The Cabinet, however, never discussed his memorandum. Lloyd George took it with him when, a week later, he went to meet Poincaré at Boulogne. The main topic of a not very harmonious conversation was the Genoa Conference. Lloyd George accused Poincaré of trying to wreck the conference in advance by asking for postponement and making conditions. He said that Britain would not wait: if France would not come in Britain could make her own agreements with Italy, Germany, and Russia; but she could not afford delay. After this onslaught Poincaré, who had suggested at the beginning that they should discuss "closing up" the Entente and clearing up political questions, did not mention the pact until the very end. He then said that he had already put off his departure and now had no time to discuss it. Lloyd George said that he was willing to talk about the pact whenever Poincaré wished, but it would be easier for him to get it through Parliament when other outstanding questions had been settled. (88)

Meanwhile the Anglo-Belgian negotiations had gone as far as was possible without a final decision on the French treaty. Some difficulty was caused at first by the British amendments to the text agreed at Cannes.

88. I.C.P. 236, CAB 29/95. See also desp. 799 to Paris, 19 Mar. 1922, W 2448/50/17, FO 371/8251.

The omission of a mention of Germany from this text was, as the Foreign Office said, certainly an oversight - a piece of carelessness which may be attributed to the fact that Curzon had no official with him at Cannes. The Belgian Government accepted the amendment making it clear that the treaty was concerned only with aggression by Germany; but they did not like the provision binding Belgium not to make agreements with the possible enemy which might be inconsistent with the treaty. This provision was intended to secure something like a position of neutrality on Belgium's part; but the kinds of agreement that might be objectionable were not clearly thought out and proved difficult to explain. (89) At the same time the Belgian press showed an indifference, not to say coldness, about the pact which caused surprise and annoyance in London. (90)

Early in February the Ambassador in Brussels, Sir George Grahame, thought that the Belgian Government were deliberately delaying discussions, probably in order

89. The case mentioned as an example was that of a left-wing government in Belgium making an agreement with a like-minded German government, and a later right-wing Belgian government breaking it and thus provoking a German attack. Tel. 7 to Brussels, 20 Jan. 1922; Brussels tel. 16, 21 Jan.; Brussels tel. 18, 24 Jan.; tel. 8 to Brussels, 27 Jan.; Brussels tel. 20, 30 Jan.; tel. 9 to Brussels, 4 Feb.; W 613, 710, 806, 964/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos. 211, 212, 218, 220.

90. Grahame to Curzon, 17 Jan. 1922, Curzon Papers, Box 22, Anglo-Belgian Pact; Brussels tel. 8, 15 Jan.; Brussels tel. 12, 17 Jan., W 496, 545/432/4, FO 371/8239.

to see what happened over the Anglo-French treaty and to gain as good terms as the French. (91) However on 9 February Jaspar said that he was ready to proceed independently, and produced a draft in which the provision about conflicting agreements was transferred to the preamble, the relevant part of which now read: "Considering that Belgium is determined, as in 1914, to to resist a German aggression with all the means in her power and not to conclude any agreement or arrangement conflicting with this determination to defend her territory...." (92) By 20 February the pact had been agreed, subject to Cabinet approval and one or two matters of wording which depended on the final form of the French treaty. (93) Subsequently the Belgians made attempts to have the agreement signed without waiting for the Anglo-French negotiations to be concluded; but on 14 June Crowe told the Belgian Ambassador, Baron Moncheur, that it could not be done. (94)

For its part the French pact seems not to have been

91. Brussels tel. 24, 6 Feb. 1922, W 1245/432/4, FO 371/8239.

92. Brussels tels. 25, 26, 9 Feb. 1922, W 1325, 1356/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, No.223.

93. Desp. 107 to Brussels, 13 Feb. 1922; note from Belgian Ambassador, 20 Feb., W 1436, 1670/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.225-6.

94. Brussels tel. 35, 7 Mar. 1922; Brussels desp. 223, 28 Mar.; desp. 639 to Brussels, 15 Jun., W 2263, 2795, 4959/432/4, FO 371/8239; D.D.B., Vol. I, Nos.228-9.

mentioned for some three weeks after Lloyd George's meeting with Poincaré at Boulogne. On 19 March, at the end of a conversation about the Genoa Conference, St-Aulaire asked Curzon whether the Cabinet had reached a decision on the French draft. Curzon said no; but he believed that his colleagues agreed with the views which he had already expressed to the Ambassador. No doubt a decision would be taken at the right time, but he indicated that clearing up the other questions would last well into the summer. (95) At the end of March Ministers were still thinking of the treaty as a means of putting pressure on Poincaré, although the objects to be achieved were becoming less definite. At a Cabinet discussion on 20 March of the prospects of a meeting to be held in Paris on Turkey, all the Ministers present (Lloyd George was not among them) recognised that the Government's Turkish policy had failed. (96) On 28 March the possibility of using the treaty as a means of inducing the French to follow the British line on recognising the Soviety Government was mentioned.

95. Desp. 799 to Paris, 19 Mar. 1922, W 2448/50/17, FO 371/8251, extract in Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.45; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 70; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.31. St-Aulaire considered that Lloyd George was now satisfied about Genoa and that Curzon, who was primarily interested in Turkey, was the main obstacle to progress.

96. C. 19(22), CAB 23/29.

Churchill, who was strongly opposed to recognition, said that he thought such pressure would be unfair. Lloyd George replied that he had not intended to threaten Poincaré that the treaty would not be pursued unless he fell in with British wishes over Russia; but he thought that it might be used in connexion with reparations and the treatment of Germany. (97)

The General Pact of Non-Aggression

The idea of a general non-aggression undertaking, which formed part of the Cannes resolution, grew out of Briand's suggestions that such an undertaking by Russia should be one of the conditions for resuming trade and that Germany too should give such a pledge. The proposal came to play a significant part in Lloyd George's hopes for the Genoa Conference. Nothing was done about it for some weeks after Cannes, but in the middle of March Hankey, the Secretary to the Cabinet, asked the Foreign Office Legal Adviser to prepare a draft. Sir Cecil Hurst, with some difficulty, produced two short articles, the first pledging the parties to refrain from any act of aggression against the territorial integrity of any other parties, the second pledging them, in the event of any act of aggression taking place, to use all the means at their disposal and to resort to any organisation that

97. C. 21(22), CAB 23/29.

might be available to adjust by peaceful means the dispute out of which the aggression arose. Crowe, although conscious of the difficulty of criticising something that the Prime Minister was assumed to want, wrote that he regarded this proposal as "mere verbiage", weaker even than Article 10 of the Covenant, which the lawyers now admitted imposed no material obligations. Crowe found it impossible to conceive that a country which felt itself threatened by an unscrupulous neighbour would disarm on the strength of that neighbour's signature at the bottom of a treaty such as this. He agreed with the suggestion of a more junior official that the aim could best be attained by getting Germany and Russia to join the League. (98) However Hankey, to whom Crowe put the last point, replied that even if the French dropped their objections to Germany, it would be very different to induce them to accept Russian entry into the League. It would therefore be as well to have a second-best plan. (99)

Hurst's articles were therefore taken to Genoa as the British draft of a non-aggression treaty. At an early meeting there of the British Empire delegates Horne explained the objects which it was hoped that the conference would achieve. It was generally felt, he said,

98. Memorandum by Hurst, 16 Mar. 1922; Crowe to Hankey, 24 March, C 4356/458/62, FO 371/7423.

99. Hankey to Crowe, 25 Mar. 1922, C 4543/458/62, FO 371/7423.

that the main obstacle to European reconstruction was the difficulty of securing peace: hence if an agreement could be achieved that for a period of years no country would deliberately attack another, conditions would be created in which practical measures for reviving trade would have a chance of success. During discussion it was explained that there was no question of the obligations going beyond those of the Covenant. But it was agreed that a pact of this kind would have considerable moral value and that a signatory would hesitate long before wantonly breaking a pledge thus solemnly given. (100)

In public utterances at Genoa, as the prospects of agreement between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union diminished, Lloyd George laid increasing emphasis on peace as the main aim of the conference. (101) But even preliminary discussion of the terms of a pact soon revealed the difficulties. One was that an undertaking to respect territorial integrity necessarily involved definition and recognition of frontiers, and this was

100. B.E.D. 74th conference, 10 Apr. 1922, CAB 31/1.

101. For example at a press conference on 20 April he said that unless the conference ended in a general pact of non-aggression, he considered that it would have failed. At a dinner given to him by press representatives on 26 April, he said that without a real pact of peace Genoa would have accomplished nothing: "It may redress exchanges; it may improve currencies; but it will not have accomplished the main purpose for which it was summoned." J. Saxon Mills, The Genoa Conference, London 1922, pp.99, 120.

most difficult precisely in that area - eastern Europe - where Lloyd George thought the pact was most needed. On 23 April J.D. Gregory, Head of the Northern Department of the Foreign Office, wrote to Crowe from Genoa about the eastern frontier of Poland. He described the present frontier, laid down in the Polish-Soviet peace treaty of 1921, as a bad one which the smaller powers would probably not wish to guarantee. But any other frontier would be equally vulnerable, the Treaty of Riga had not been concluded under any particular duress, and the Russians had so far shown no sign of wishing to upset its territorial provisions. (102) The Foreign Office replied that the non-aggression pact should preferably be accompanied by an agreed definition of existing frontiers. If this would take too long to negotiate, it might be best to refer to de facto frontiers, reserving final settlement by arbitration. But this reservation should probably apply only to the Polish-Lithuanian frontier, since it would be almost impossible to touch the Polish-Russian frontier and Russia must recognise the incorporation of Bessarabia into Roumania. (103)

102. Gregory to Crowe, 23 April 1922, N 3952/646/38, FO 371/8188. Gregory said that the British Empire delegation were going to discuss the draft pact (a copy of which, dated 23 April, is B.E.D. 285, CAB 31/1) next day; but no meeting of the delegation is minuted between 22 April and 10 May.

103. Tel 48 to Genoa, 27 Apr. 1922, N 3952/646/38, FO 371/8188. The text of the Treaty of Riga is in B.F.S.P., Vol CXIV, pp.917-50; the Western Powers did not recognise the Russo-Polish frontier until March 1923.

Meanwhile the smaller powers' reluctance to underwrite any frontier of Poland had been expressed to Lloyd George by the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs. Beneš's remarks, as recorded by a British secretary, were somewhat disconnected but appear to amount to assertions: (a) that the Little Entente was a factor of stability in the region south of Germany and south of the Carpathians, but its strength did not extend farther north or east; (b) that Poland was not a factor of stability and could not take the place in French policy that Russia had once occupied; (c) that the French policy of trying to erect a barrier on Germany's eastern frontier was unsound, but it might be modified if France were relieved of her anxiety in the west by being given a British guarantee. Lloyd George remarked that if the Russians accepted the Treaty of Riga it was not for the Allies to quarrel with it. Beneš replied that if in the next few years the Soviet Union attacked Poland, Czechoslovakia would have to say that she had been against the frontier. (104)

Beneš also sent Lloyd George a memorandum on the non-aggression pact which, he wrote, must really be a guarantee and not just the appearance of one. To propose an illusion would be dangerous to peace. After

104. S.G. 17, 26 Apr. 1922, CAB 31/5. Although they may simply be an expression of Czechoslovak

this implied criticism of the British draft Beneš proceeded both to suggest turning the pact into an instrument serving the interests of the Little Entente while leaving open the frontiers of eastern Europe, and to revive Briand's conception of the Anglo-French pact as part of a wider European understanding. The non-aggression pact, he wrote, must contain an undertaking

104. (cont)

dislike of Poland, these statements could be construed as a reference to the Franco-Soviet exchanges of the winter of 1921-22 during which, according to what Karl Radek told the Germans, the French indicated that they would be willing to give up support for Poland and Roumania in return for a Franco-Soviet alliance and Soviet willingness to make claims on Germany under Art. 116 of the Treaty of Versailles: see W. von Blücher, Deutschlands Weg nach Rapallo, Wiesbaden 1951, p.155; G. Freund, Unholy Alliance, London 1957, pp.109-11; H. Helbig, Die Träger der Rapallo-Politik, Göttingen 1958, pp.67-8; G. Rosenfeld, Sowjetrussland und Deutschland 1917-22, [East] Berlin 1960, p.369. On 10 February St-Aulaire gave Crowe some information about the exchanges, according to which the initiative and all the running had come from the Russian side: minute by Crowe, N 1338/646/38, fO 371/8185. In view of the stiffness of the French Government's attitude towards dealing with the Soviet Government in 1922, Radek's statements about French offers should be treated with caution until confirmed from French sources. The meagre references in Dokumenty Vnashnee Politiki S.S.S.R., Vol IV, Moscow 1960, p.791, n.75; Vol. V, Moscow 1961, No.27, do not support Radek's statement. (For those and later references to Dokumenty Vnashnee Politiki I am indebted to Dr. Eleonore Breuning of the University College, Swansea.) Before the Genoa Conference the Polish Government tried to get the French Government to recognise the Polish eastern frontier and failed: Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, pp.258-9. Wandycz shows that the Polish Government had only a general idea about the Franco-Soviet exchanges, and it seems unlikely that Beneš had more.

to observe existing treaties, since otherwise attempts to enforce them could be denounced as aggression. The problem of unrecognised frontiers, especially the Russo-Polish frontier, the Polish-Lituanian frontier, and the position of Eastern Galicia, could be solved either by providing that they must be settled before the pact was concluded or by making the pact inapplicable to certain states until their frontiers had been settled. There could be regional arrangements whereby parties could agree in advance on measures to be adopted in case of violation: one such arrangement should be the Anglo-French pact. The non-aggression pact, Beneš concluded, presupposed as "an essential condition of all European policy an immediate understanding between Great Britain and France on European policy (and especially on that of Eastern Europe)." (105)

Talk of endorsing existing treaties aroused misgivings among some of the former neutrals as well as among the German delegation at Genoa. (106) On 2 May

105. Memorandum from Beneš, 26 Apr. 1922, C 8025/458/62, FO 371/7433; Lloyd George Papers, F/199/3/5. See also E. Beneš, Five Years of Czechoslovak Foreign Policy, Prague 1924, p.32. Beneš, who visited Paris and London in February, had acted as an intermediary in bringing about the meeting between Lloyd George and Poincaré at Boulogne and trying to promote Anglo-French agreement on the Genoa Conference and recognition of the Soviet Union: S. 42, 43, 45, 46, 16-20 Feb., CAB 23/36; Beneš to Lloyd George, 22 Feb., Lloyd George Papers, F/49/9/3; aide-mémoire from Beneš, 22 Feb., C 2931/458/62, FO 371/7421; minute by Grigg, 24 Feb., Lloyd George Papers, F/86/1/19; Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, p.257.

106. S.G. 23, 2 May 1922; S.G. 25, 4 May; S.G. 27, 5 May, CAB 31/5.

R.F. Wigram, a member of the Central Department of the Foreign Office, sent home from Genoa some comments on Beneš's proposal. If it were adopted, he wrote, it would be a great coup for France, the Little Entente, and Poland, but the neutrals as well as the ex-enemy countries were unlikely to be willing to subscribe to the peace treaties. Wigram repeated the British view of the nature and scope of the non-aggression pact and ended: "It was also, I think, considered that two essential preliminaries to the conclusion of such a pact were (a) an adjustment of the unsettled frontiers, etc., in Eastern Europe and (b) a general settlement with Germany." (107)

By the time that Wigram wrote hopes of an agreement with the Soviet Union at Genoa were waning, and in conversations with the German and Yugoslav delegates on 4 and 5 May Lloyd George said that if the Russians did not accept the latest Western memorandum there would be no non-aggression treaty. (108) A remnant of the idea was, however, salvaged by including what Hankey described as "sort of Truce of Non-Aggression" in the resolutions providing for further negotiations with the Soviety Union at The Hague at the end of

107. Wigram to Waterlow, 2 May 1922, C 6652/458/62, FO 371/7431. Wigram overestimated the benefit to Poland of Beneš's proposal, but he had perhaps not seen the record of Beneš's conversation with Lloyd George.

108. S.G. 23, 27, CAB 31/5.

June. (109) No more was heard of it thereafter.

The end of the Anglo-French negotiations

It is difficult not to agree with Crowe that the proposed non-aggression undertaking was mere verbiage. On a more practical level the signature of the German-Soviet Treaty of Rapallo, the failure of the Genoa Conference, and the prospect of a new crisis over reparations at the end of May, impelled the Foreign Office to consider once more Anglo-French relations and the guarantee. On 28 April S.P. Waterlow, a member of the Central Department, wrote a long memorandum on the reparation situation in the light of recent correspondence between the German Government and the Reparation Commission, and of Poincaré's speech at Bar le Duc on 23 April threatening unilateral action by France. Since the armistice, wrote Waterlow, the aim of British policy had been to reconcile and mediate. It was no particular credit to Britain that she had been quicker than France to recognise economic facts and work to bury the past, for she had not been invaded and her trade needed a return to stable economic conditions. It had been thought possible to achieve reconstruction within

109. Hankey to Chamberlain, 11 May 1922, N 4775/646/38, FO 371/8191. Clauses of 19 May in Cmd 1667 of 1922, Papers relating to the International Economic Conference, Genoa.

the framework of the Treaty of Versailles, so the British had tried "to apply the treaty in a spirit at once just and reasonable - to permit that economic recovery of Germany which is a necessity for ourselves, and at the same time to secure the disarmament which is equally a necessity if French fears are to be allayed." The task called for great wisdom and patience: there had been many difficulties; but Genoa was meant to resolve them and to be the culmination of the policy of turning the Versailles settlement into a "real peace." The opening stages of the conference, however, had coincided with two events - Rapallo and the deadlock over reparations - which were the negation of the whole of British policy. There was bound to be a strong reaction to Poincaré's speech: "It is intolerable that the intransigence of one Power, whose military strength dominates the Continent, and whose aerial and submarine projects are a potential threat to ourselves, should frustrate our efforts to bring Russia back into the economic orbit of Europe, to restore the general commercial and financial conditions that are vital to the British Empire, and to avoid any return to the European Group system that provided the conditions for the last war." If Genoa failed, and especially if Germany were driven to despair of a practical reparation settlement, Germany and the Soviet Union would be cemented in a union of hostility towards western Europe. Perhaps the time had come to make it clear to France that if she insisted on her own policy Britain must refuse

further responsibility and dissolve the partnership. But there were equally strong objections to a breach with France. It would bring little moral advantage, for Britain was as much responsible as France for imposing the reparation burden on Germany - or even more so, for it was Britain's doing that pensions had been included; and equally her record over the lapse of the 1919 guarantee was not good. New methods ought to be tried: the non-aggression pact was hardly the answer, for it was particularly aimed at eastern Europe and did not touch the question of Germany. However Waterlow found it easier to analyse the problem than to suggest a solution: his proposed new methods amounted to no more than the appointment of a politically weightier figure as the British representative on the Reparation Commission, and the adoption of a more positive attitude towards the League of Nations.

Sir William Tyrell, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State, had a much more sweeping proposal. "I am convinced," he minuted, "that we shall not achieve either peace or settlement until we arrive at a comprehensive settlement with the French based on our affording her [sic] security against attack on her eastern frontiers in return for which she will undertake to pursue a sane policy both in Europe and in the Near East.... To this end, I would begin by concluding a pact with her for the guarantee of her soil to which I should invite Belgium and Italy to adhere, with a view to the eventual inclusion

of Germany, and which should be in harmony with the requirements of the League of Nations. The demands of France for a guarantee of Poland I should meet by constituting the integrity of the countries and the frontiers created by the Treaty of Versailles as a special charge on the functions of the League of Nations, and, in order to enable the latter to discharge such a task, I would, jointly with France, make a declaration that for that purpose the two countries would place at the disposal of the League all their resources for the enforcement of its decisions."

Curzon liked neither proposal. Waterlow's suggestions he regarded as thin, Tyrell's as putting the cart before the horse: France was to behave badly everywhere and Britain was to "run round and conclude our Treaty of Guarantee and all will be well," all the more if the frontiers created by the peace treaty were to be placed under the protection of the League, which had been unable to get the Poles to leave Vilna and was unwilling to take responsibility for protecting Christians in Anatolia. It was no use asking him to put a new policy before the Cabinet unless it was "practical, practicable (two different things) and coherent." (110) Waterlow therefore revised his paper in an attempt to meet Curzon's objections. He strengthened the argument for an

110. Memorandum by Waterlow, 28 Apr. 1922, with minutes by Tyrell and Curzon, C 6200/6200/18, FO 371/7567.

Anglo-French pact: a statement, he wrote, at the time when the United States Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles, that the British guarantee would be maintained would have paid a hundred times over. As it was the French, although they never said so, had reason to feel that they had been led into "a characteristic British trap" as regards the security of their eastern frontier. The defensive pact ought to be taken up again, and not postponed until a settlement had been reached on other questions: it was putting the cart before the horse (Curzon's phrase turned against him) to aim at the periphery rather than at the central question. Waterlow then combined Tyrell's conception of the pact with his own concern over reparations. He had noted that France could not give up her demand for immediate financial relief: now he suggested, in addition to renewing the offer of the pact and combining it with a complex of agreements including Belgium and Italy and eventually Germany, offering to write down Britain's reparation claim, and perhaps offering to reduce France's debt to Britain, in return for a reasonable settlement of the whole reparation problem. (111)

The revised paper was not distributed, nor did Curzon see it: he was ill for some weeks in May and June and away from the Foreign Office. It would hardly have

111. Memorandum by Waterlow, 9 May 1922, C 6875/6200/18, FO 371/7567.

convinced him, running counter as it did not only to his own attitude but to that of the Cabinet as well. Here the line was still to keep the pact in reserve, although Lloyd George was now less confident about the effectiveness of this means of putting pressure on France. At the end of a long Cabinet discussion on reparations on 23 May Churchill asked whether fear of losing the treaty could not be used to induce the French to co-operate in finding a solution. Lloyd George replied that he did not think that Poincaré set much store by the treaty. (112)

It was in fact Poincaré who took the next initiative. He did, as Hardinge suspected, regard the German-Soviet treaty as an additional reason for concluding the pact, and on 11 May instructed St-Aulaire to take up the negotiations again. (113) The Ambassador at first demurred; but on 30 May he called on Balfour, who was acting in Curzon's place, and said that Poincaré saw no reason why the other subjects being discussed between the two countries should hold up consideration of the treaty. The French Government were interested in concluding it and were not trying to make it a contract under which a specified number of forces would have to be available for the defence of France. Balfour said

112. C. 29(22), CAB 23/30.

113. Poincaré to St-Aulaire, 2 May 1922, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71; Documents relatifs aux garanties, Nos. 32-3; Paris desp. 1002, 30 Apr. 1922, C 5922/458/62, FO 371/7427.

that he would look up the recent history of the negotiations and communicate with St-Aulaire again. (114) Crowe wrote to Curzon a couple of days later that St-Aulaire had tried to rush Balfour into agreeing to take up the negotiations again at once; but Hardinge was to be instructed to make it plain to Poincaré that the Government stood by their decision that outstanding questions must be settled before a treaty were concluded. (115)

The instructions in question were sent to Hardinge on 13 June. The outstanding matters referred to included more particularly the economic reconstruction of Europe, peace with Turkey, and Tangier. The prospect of an early settlement of such questions, it was said, seemed far from hopeful, largely owing to the attitude of the French Government, and in the circumstances no useful purpose would be served by discussing the treaty further at present. (116) Hardinge conveyed this message to Poincaré three days later. Poincaré, whose mood was civil but not amiable, said that he agreed that

114. Desp. 1787 to Paris, 30 May 1922, W 4880/50/17, FO 371/8251; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.46; St-Aulaire to Poincaré, 31 May, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.36. Poincaré had informed St-Aulaire as early as 23 January that all that he wanted on the military side was staff conversations on contingency plans, not an agreement fixing numbers of troops: A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 70.

115. Crowe to Curzon, 2 Jun. 1922, Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1922.

116. Desp. 1790 to Paris, 13 Jun. 1922, W 4880/50/17, FO 371/8251; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.47.

outstanding questions must be settled. But he indicated that he would not regard the treaty proposed by the British as worth paying for with concessions on other matters since, as he maintained, it added nothing to what Britain would be bound to do in her own interests if circumstances like those of 1914 arose again. He also claimed that the inclusion, in the list of questions to be settled, of the economic reconstruction of Europe was a means of escape for Britain from any obligation to conclude the treaty since the French attitude to negotiations with the Soviet Union was well known. (117)

On the same day as he saw Hardinge, Poincaré crossed to London to see Lloyd George. He had not proposed any subjects for the conversation, and the latter had declined to ask what Poincaré wanted to talk about or to raise any topics himself. (118) As neither Prime Minister raised it, the treaty was not discussed: the main topics of the conversation were reparations and the discussions about the Soviet Union at The Hague. (119)

117. Paris tel. 326, 16 Jun. 1922, W 4995/50/17, FO 371/8251; Cmd 2169 of 1924, No.48. Poincaré also told the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the British offer had moral value only, but the Belgians thought his detachment more apparent than real: D.D.B., Vol. I, No.230.

118. Crowe to Curzon, 15 Jun. 1922; Vansittart to Curzon, 17 and 20 Jun., Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1922.

119. I.C.P. 249C, CAB 29/96.

On 4 July the French Ambassador read to Balfour a note of reply to Hardinge's statement to Poincaré. It said that the French Government were ready to take part in a conference on Tangier, and that as regards Turkey the British and French Governments were acting together to bring about a settlement. As regards the economic reconstruction of Europe, to make the pact conditional on that would be tantamount to postponing it indefinitely. French co-operation in reconstruction had indeed been one of the conditions in Lloyd George's memorandum at Cannes, but that had meant French co-operation in calling the economic conference. The actual realisation of reconstruction was a different matter and no one could say at present how and when it would come about. (120)

With this reply the Anglo-French negotiations simply faded out. Technically it was for the British Government to answer the French proposals of 1 February; but the summer saw worsening disagreement over reparations - which was presumably what the British now meant by the reconstruction of Europe, all hope of a settlement with the Soviet Union having evaporated. In the Balfour Note of 1 August the British Government did offer to reduce their reparation claim on Germany and ask for repayment of war debts owed to Britain only to the amount needed

120. Desp. 2135 to Paris, 4 Jul. 1922, W 5657/5657/50, FO 371/8300; Cmd 2169 of 1924, Nos.49-50; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71; Documents relatifs aux garanties, No.38.

to pay Britain's debt to the United States. (121) This suggestion could not encourage the French to agree to a moderate reparation settlement, since under it the less France received from Germany the more she would have to pay to Britain herself. After the failure of the London conference in August to reach a new agreement, the inauguration of a French policy of taking "productive pledges" seemed only a question of time. At the same time Anglo-French differences over the Turkish settlement continued. They culminated in the near breach over the Chanak crisis in September, which marked probably the lowest point of Anglo-French relations since the armistice.

Conclusion

The records of the Cabinet discussion of 10 January 1922 and of Lloyd George's conversation with Poincaré on 14 January are sufficient to explain why the negotiations for an Anglo-French treaty failed. The discussions of the ensuing six months did little more than dot the i's and cross the t's of a basic difference of aim between the two countries, and reveal a remarkable degree of mutual incomprehension.

121. Cmd 1737 of 1922, Despatch to the Representatives of France, Italy, Serb-Croat-Slovene State, Roumania, Portugal and Greece at London respecting War Debts; C. 35(22), C. 36(22), C. 40(22), C. 42(22), CAB 23/30.

The fundamental French aim in the years immediately after the war was to gain lasting security against Germany and to extract from her the largest possible financial contribution to reconstruction in the shortest possible time. In the negotiations with Britain, therefore, the French desired a definite assurance of military assistance in case of war, and secondly a commitment to help in maintaining the European order set up by the peace treaties. On the need for some kind of military agreement Briand and Poincaré were at one, as the former was at pains to emphasise eighteen months later. (122) The two French Prime Ministers probably, however, envisaged the wider understanding on Europe in different ways. Briand's idea of a consultative European pact analogous with the Four-Power Washington treaty does not seem to have been fully worked out: he appears to have envisaged an Anglo-French agreement under which the two countries would concert their policies and lend each other aid if either were attacked directly; and secondly an agreement between France, Britain, Germany, and Italy, under which the four countries would confer to settle disputes among themselves, and concert together if peace were threatened by another power. (123)

122. Journal officiel, Chambre des députés, Compte-rendu, 23 Nov. 1923.

123. Memorandum, 28 Dec. 1921, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 69. Nothing is said here about the still wider grouping.

Poincaré's ideas seem to have been confined to strengthening the peace settlements. The desire for a link between Britain's commitment to France and France's commitment to Poland under the alliance of February 1921 was common to both, and indeed must have been shared by any French Government. To some extent this alliance lessened the immediate French need for a British guarantee; but although it was on the whole an asset to France in respect of Germany, it also proved a burden on French security as well as a potential source of trouble in respect of eastern Europe. Henceforth the function of the demilitarised Rhineland and the Rhine bridgeheads was not only to protect the French frontier but also to enable France to bring assistance to Poland (and from 1924 to Czechoslovakia).

The fundamental British aim, on the other hand, was to achieve a "real peace" - that is a pacification of Europe in which economic recovery could take place - without the assumption of further responsibilities. In the negotiations with France there was some acknowledgment both of the moral obligation to make up for the failure of the 1919 guarantee, which had been suggested by the British as part of a bargain over the left bank of the Rhine at the Peace Conference, and of Britain's own interest in the security of France. But renewal of the guarantee was conceived as part of a new bargain with France, and was not to involve either wider European obligations or military commitments.

As regards Poland, at the Peace Conference and throughout the 1920's successive British Ministers were willing to treat the Polish-German frontier on its merits, and Polish policy since Versailles bred in London a strong distrust. The territorial provisions of the peace treaties were not generally regarded in Britain as immutable even where they were regarded as just - and many people did not regard the German-Polish frontier as altogether just. All this, on top of the traditional dislike of involvement on the continent of Europe and the immediate desire for relief from foreign commitments, is enough to explain the refusal of successive British Governments to undertake obligations in eastern Europe.

As for the question of a concrete military commitment to France, it is understandable that the Government should not have considered a military convention necessary at present, since a German military threat was thought unlikely for a number of years. Furthermore the outcome of the staff conversations with France before 1914 was fresh in mind and Liberal ministers, in particular, were reluctant to repeat the experiment of undertakings at the military level. In the prevailing climate of demands for reduction of armaments and of Government expenditure, there was no incentive to abandon the traditional refusal to subject the level of British armaments to the influence of any other country. One noteworthy feature of the story of

the 1921-22 negotiations is the absence of any consideration, on the British side, of the proposed pact from the military point of view. No papers on it were submitted to the Committee of Imperial Defence, nor did the Committee ever discuss it. Early in April 1922 the War Office did send to the Foreign Office, uninvited, some comments on Curzon's Cabinet paper of 17 February. The General Staff favoured accepting several of the French proposals for the treaty since, they said, from the military point of view the French were right in wishing to forestall violation of their frontier and if British forces were to co-operate usefully they must do so from the outset. If the Allies waited until German forces crossed the French frontier they would lose the value of the demilitarised zone. But these comments came when the negotiations were already more or less at a standstill. They received little consideration in the Foreign Office and none elsewhere. (124)

Since the proposed treaty with France was never discussed in military terms it is impossible to say how seriously Lloyd George himself took the argument that he used to Poincaré on 14 January about the "real strength" of the British Empire - that is, that it had enormous manpower. One would suppose that Lloyd George realised that millions

124. War Office to Foreign Office, 5 Apr. 1922; Foreign Office to War Office, 18 Apr., W 2996/50/17, FO 371/8251.

of trained men were a wasting asset unless they were periodically retrained and renewed in some way such as, the French maintained, the German equivalents were being trained and recruited in police and paramilitary forces. Lloyd George should have remembered that however much better than her word Britain had been in 1914, it had taken two years of war before her contribution in manpower on the western front had been substantial. It seems unlikely that he should have expected France to be able and willing to bear the brunt for so long another time. It also appears that he never faced the contradiction between a refusal to give an undertaking to maintain land forces and continual complaints about the level of French armaments. One is driven to conclude that the British Government never intended the guarantee to be militarily meaningful. It was conceived purely as a political gesture, to pay an obligation outstanding since 1919 but mainly to induce France to fall in with British policy elsewhere.

Both Governments indeed attempted to use the pact as a bargaining counter in achieving other aims. Or more precisely Poincaré tried briefly to use Lloyd George's desire for the success of the Genoa Conference as a lever in securing the pact. The weakness of his attempt lay in the fact that he was not in any case in a position to commit France to full co-operation in a settlement with the Soviet Union followed by a moderate reparation settlement. Similarly the weakness of

British attempts to use the French desire for the pact to secure concessions elsewhere lay in the fact that the pact offered was not the pact that the French Government wanted, and no attempt was made to explore a compromise on the terms before the prospects of general agreement became worse in the summer of 1922. The British offer was not sufficiently attractive to induce the French to change their policy over Germany, the Soviet Union, Turkey or anything else. The British bargaining position was in fact weak because, as Poincaré pointed out to Hardinge on 16 June, treaty or no treaty Britain would be bound in her own interests to come to the help of France in the case of renewed German aggression. Similarly the threats which Lloyd George was fond of using about the end of the Entente or the end of the alliance were largely meaningless, since unless Britain were to withdraw even more completely than the United States had done from all organs set up to execute the peace treaties, she was inextricably tied to France in carrying them out. Although at times there would have been a good deal of support for the withdrawal of the occupation forces from the Rhineland, or even for withdrawal from the Rhineland High Commission, there was never any suggestion of withdrawing from the Reparation Commission or the military control commissions, or from the plebiscite commissions while they still existed. (125)

125. Hardinge wrote later than when in August 1921, at the time of the crisis over Upper Silesia, he asked Lloyd George and Curzon what their phrase "rupture with the French" meant, neither was able to say: Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, Old Diplomacy, London 1947, p.260.

The whole story, on the British side, reveals a lack of careful thought. Apart from two or three papers by Crowe and Waterlow the Foreign Office appear to have given little serious consideration to the proposals. They were not asked to do so: Curzon was not really interested in Europe and was not inclined, in this field, to challenge Lloyd George's control of policy; economic policy and reparations were outside their field of responsibility. Lloyd George for his part thought of the guarantee as part of a wider plan, and when that failed he was not interested in a different approach. It is a matter for speculation whether, if the British Government had declared the 1919 guarantee to be in force despite the American rejection of the Treaty of Versailles, or had agreed in 1922 to a real defensive alliance, French policy towards Germany would have been more flexible. The chief argument against is the distinctly right-wing composition of the Chamber of Deputies between 1919 and 1924. On the other the number of occasions, in 1919, in 1924, and in 1925, when French Governments of different complexions, faced with a choice between gaining British support and pursuing French interests single-handed, chose Britain, suggests that the same might have been true in 1922. Keeping the pact in reserve as a means of pressure was not only unlikely to succeed for the reasons pointed out above; it was also bad psychology.

A secondary point that stands out from this record is the attitude of the Governments at this time to the

League of Nations. It is clear that none of the four ministers particularly concerned considered the League seriously as a peace-keeping organisation. Briand's suggestion that France and Britain should form the "secular arm" of the League harked back to the French desire at the time when the Covenant was drafted for the League to have forces as its disposal. His suggestion that an Anglo-French alliance coupled with a European consultative pact would conduce to a political order more practical than the League is more strange. It perhaps bears a certain resemblance to his proposal of 1929 for a European union, but is ironical for a time when the League was widely regarded in the defeated and former neutral countries as an organ of French policy; and the use of the Pacific pact as an analogy suggests that Briand overestimated the strength of this instrument. On the British side, while on the one hand Curzon used the new international order as an argument against alliances, on the other hand it is worth noting that in none of the documents is the possibility discussed that membership of the League might seriously involve Britain in eastern Europe. The argument about the new international order sounds, indeed, unconvincing in Curzon's mouth. He clearly set no great store by the League, and was probably hankering after the days of British detachment from Europe.

Chapter 2

Defence Policy, the Far East and the United States 1920-22

Throughout the period covered by this study, British defence policy was concerned almost exclusively with the security of the British Empire. None of Britain's international engagements committed her to any precise military or naval action in defence of any other country.[1] The Covenant of the League of Nations, which by Articles 10 and 16 bound member states to preserve the integrity and independence of all against external aggression and to contribute effective military force to protect the covenants of the League, left it to the members to decide the extent and nature of their individual contribution. This fact was not explicitly stated in the Covenant but was made clear in a resolution approved by a majority of the Assembly in 1923. As will be shown in Chapters 3 and 4, successive British Governments resisted all attempts to make the sanctions of the Covenant more automatic, or applicable by a majority decision of the Council. It has

1. A list of Britain's treaty engagements in 1920 is in C.I.D. Paper 251-B, CAB 4/7. The only ones of a nature to involve the country in war or military action were: the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Article 44 of the Treaty of Versailles, the provision about the freedom of the Straits in the Treaty of Sèvres, and the Covenant of the League of Nations. A revised list of 1926 is printed in D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Appendix.

already been shown in Chapter 1 that the Government in 1922 rejected the French attempt to secure a commitment to maintain a specified amount of forces to implement a guarantee to France. Once the various plebiscites were completed in 1921 the only military obligation on the continent of Europe arising out of the peace treaties was that of contributing to the inter-Allied occupation of the Rhineland. A British force was maintained at the Straits until the final conclusion of peace with Turkey in 1923.

As before 1914 the problems of imperial defence were seen primarily in naval terms; but air power now became a factor of some importance, particularly in relation to the defence of the United Kingdom. In the immediate aftermath of a victorious but costly war, with no new major enemy as yet on the horizon, with demands for the reduction of armaments on principle, and with pressures for economy in government expenditure so strong as to cast all earlier struggles on the subject into the shade, defence planning was for several years limited and tentative. A difficulty which must not be underestimated was that of deciding what were the threats against which provision should be made. The major recent enemy, Germany, might in due course become a danger again but was not likely to be one for perhaps fifteen years: the countries currently most powerful at sea, on land and in the air were friends or allies. There were also continuing domestic and imperial problems such as the

relations between and proportional spending on the different Services, and relations between the United Kingdom and the Dominions. Towards the end of the period the question of the general limitation of armaments by international treaty became increasingly important. At a fairly early stage it had to be decided whether the strongest naval and air powers were to be taken as the yardsticks for fixing the level of British armaments regardless of political relationships, and whether existing friendships could be capitalised upon to secure agreed limitations. The answers reached for air and for naval armaments were in some respects different, reflecting the different political circumstances, but in both financial stringency played a dominant part with the result that British defence rested on a distinctly precarious basis.

In the air France was for years the strongest power and was also very close to the United Kingdom. Whether for that reason France should be not only taken as a yardstick but also regarded as a potential enemy was much discussed between 1921 and 1925. At sea the problem was even more complex: it was a matter of relations with the United States and Japan, of relations between those two countries, and of the whole strategic situation in the Far East and the Pacific. The war and the peace settlement had wrought far-reaching changes in the Far East: the allocation to Japan, as mandatory power, of the German islands north of the Equator; the temporary disappearance of Russian power and

the predominantly Japanese intervention in Siberia; the accelerated economic development of Japan and her increased hold on north China; American suspicion of Japanese policy in China and Siberia. In all these problems the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance was involved as well as naval policy. British and Japanese policy and interests in China had never been the same and had begun to diverge increasingly; the state of American-Japanese relations aroused anxiety. But at the same time the naval question, and the political risks of leaving Japan isolated, made it undesirable simply to terminate the alliance. The solution found at Washington at the end of 1921 was regarded as a great achievement; but it posed new strategic problems. It marked visibly the abandonment of a British claim to a position of primary influence among the external powers with interests in the Far East - a position which had never rested on massive strength, which had probably disappeared before 1914, and which would now be very expensive to reassert. It increased the dependence of British policy in the Far East in the last resort upon the United States; but it also raised the question of how far even together, supposing that they could agree on one, Britain and the United States could supply the backing for a Far Eastern policy. Once again financial considerations hampered the search for an answer.

Defence Planning 1920-21: capital ships and Singapore

Early in August 1919 the Cabinet began a consideration of their future policy in the light of the postwar state of the country. In connexion with the accepted need to reduce government expenditure the Service Ministers, Churchill and Long, suggested that policy decisions on the duties of the armed forces were needed before their size could be fixed. As a result first the Finance Committee of the Cabinet and then the Cabinet itself laid it down that in framing the Service estimates it should be assumed that the British Empire would not be engaged in a major war during the next ten years and that an expeditionary force would not be required; and also that the principal function of the military and air forces was to provide garrisons for India, Egypt and all territory under British control: obligations under the peace treaties were not mentioned.(2) As regards the navy the chief problem was whether the United States should for the first time be taken into account in framing the standard governing the size of the navy. Discussion on this question was inconclusive. For the time being it was decided that no alteration should be made in the pre-war standard and that no new naval construction should be undertaken. One of the objects of Grey's mission to Washington in the autumn of

2. W.C. 606A, 5 Aug. 1919; W.C. 616A, 15 Aug., CAB 23/15; Cabinet Finance Committee, 11 Aug., CAB 27/71.

1919 was to induce the United States Government to modify their naval programme; but owing to President Wilson's illness nothing concrete was achieved. By the end of the year parity with the United States was in effect accepted, but the naval estimates for 1920-21 were no more than a stop-gap. (3)

It was not until June 1920 that the Committee of Imperial Defence decided to explore the whole question of defence anew. (4) Having elicited papers from the War Office, the Admiralty, the India Office and the Foreign Office, (5) the secretariat summarised the naval, military and air obligations of the British Empire. Under the heading "Defence of British territory and naval bases at home and overseas," it was pointed out that despite the defeat of Germany it was not possible to dispense with a scheme of home defence. For the purpose of revising standing instructions the possibility of war with a revived Germany or with Germany and Russia

3. G.T. 7975, 12 Aug. 1919, CAB 24/86; W.C. 616A, CAB 23/15. The naval question is discussed by J. Kenneth McDonald, "Lloyd George and the search for a postwar naval policy, 1919", in Lloyd George, Twelve Essays, ed. A.J.P. Taylor, London 1971, pp.191-222; and more briefly by Stephen Roskill, Naval Policy between the Wars, Vol. I, The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929, hereafter cited as Naval Policy, London 1968, pp.214-19.

4. C.I.D. 133rd meeting, 29 Jun. 1920, CAB 2/3. The C.I.D., which had been suspended during the war, seldom met again as such until 1922, its business between 1920 and 1922 being mainly conducted by the Standing Defence Sub-Committee chaired by Balfour. The minutes of the sub-committee were subsequently renumbered as minutes of the C.I.D. See Roskill, Hankey, Vol. II, pp.154-7.

5. C.I.D. Papers 251-B, 252-B, 253-B, 255-B, CAB 4/7.

combined had been postulated. Alternatively the scheme of home defence could be based on the forces actually in existence which might be used for an attack on the United Kingdom: at present these forces were French. No air force was available for home defence. Under the heading "Treaties of Peace and Agreements with Foreign Powers," Mesopotamia, Palestine, Persia and Constantinople were discussed before Europe. Military liabilities in the plebiscite areas were said to be temporary, but the strength of the occupation force in the Rhineland bore no relation to the requirements if complications arose. It was suggested that provision for possible obligations to the League of Nations should not be made until the Council had given some indication of what members were expected to do. The chief British obligations were summarised as: (a) to maintain superiority at sea over any combination of powers liable to be arrayed against the Empire: (b) to keep sufficient forces in the United Kingdom to maintain internal order, to meet the Irish situation, and to provide drafts and reserves for overseas garrisons; (c) to have sufficient forces overseas to meet the situation in Egypt, Palestine, India and Mesopotamia and to give effect to British policy in Persia; (d) to garrison defended ports overseas; (e) to provide sufficient forces to fulfil British obligations under the peace treaties; (f) to have plans for the rapid expansion of forces in case of emergency. The paper ended with a list of questions which it was

suggested that the Committee of Imperial Defence might answer: (1) At what standard are naval forces to be maintained? Will it be enough for the time being to maintain them at a strength equal to that of the United States? (2) Will it be the policy of Great Britain in the future to support France, Belgium or the Netherlands in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany? (3) How far are the Government prepared to assist with military forces in enforcing the terms of the peace treaties with regard to the neutralised zone of the Straits [6] and the occupation of German territory? (4) Should the relief of military forces in Egypt, Palestine and Mesopotamia by naval and air forces be considered? (5) Is the defence of India to be reconsidered? (6) Is the scheme for home defence to be revised and if so should it be based for the time being on the possibility of France being the enemy? (7) Is the possibility of war with the United States being forced upon Britain to be taken into account in considering the defence of Canada and the West Indies? (8) Is the possibility of war with Japan to be taken into account in considering the Far East? [7]

6. The Treaty of Sèvres created a zone of territory, including both shores of the Straits and adjoining territorial waters, in which only Britain, France and Italy were to have the right of maintaining armed forces.

7. C.I.D. Paper 257-B, 20 Sep. 1920, CAB 4/7.

It was not to be expected that all these questions should be discussed, still less answered, at once. The three related questions of the naval standard, relations with the United States, and relations with Japan came up first in connexion with a request to the Cabinet from the Admiralty for authority to start four new capital ships in 1921-22 and four more in 1922-23, and to complete ships already partly built. (8) The Committee of Imperial Defence considered the question on 14 December, at a full-scale meeting with the Prime Minister in the chair. Lloyd George said that the problem before them was that of the kind of navy on which they would have to depend in the future for the protection of the Empire and its communications. It was partly a political and partly a technical question. In the first place there was the problem of identifying the "probable enemy". The German navy no longer existed, but there were two formidable new naval powers. They were now really building against each other, but the possibility that one or other fleet might be used against Britain had to be taken into account. The ground for the pre-war decision not to allow for the possibility of hostilities with the United States - that for economic as well as military reasons Britain could not fight her - was equally applicable now. Competition would be ruinous, not only because of the cost of the ships but also because, in the atmosphere of antagonism

8. C.P. 2176, 22 Nov. 1920, CAB 24/115.

that would arise, the United States would immediately demand full repayment of the British war debt. Competition with Japan would also be very expensive. No responsible statesman could commit Britain to what might be a disastrous rivalry except for the most compelling reasons; every means of amicable arrangement must be exhausted first. There were signs that the new Administration would prefer such an arrangement rather than continue with the previous one's naval programme. He suggested that they might explore the idea of dividing the seas - Britain to be supreme in "the North Sea, the Mediterranean, the Indian Seas, etc., while the United States should be conceded unchallenged superiority in her special seas" (unspecified). Secondly, there was the question of what types of ship should be built and how the lessons of the war should be examined.

The Ministers present all favoured trying to reach an accommodation with the United States. Churchill, however, said that he started from the standpoint that Britain must remain the strongest naval power. He did not see why this should cause offence to the United States. It was only for a few years before the war that Britain had avowedly built in competition with Germany: before that, her policy of naval supremacy had not been directed against any particular countries. But he could see that American-Japanese competition brought the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance into question. He had always favoured the alliance, but the terms might

have to be reconsidered, not least because of Dominion objections to Japanese immigration. Curzon remarked that reconsideration of the alliance had already been forecast, but said that he still regarded it as a useful check on aggressive Japanese policy in China and elsewhere.

Chamberlain, referring back to Lloyd George's opening remarks, said that before embarking on competition with the United States they must consider whether it could be carried through. Before 1914 there had been no doubt that Britain's resources were adequate for competition with Germany, despite the strain. But there could be little doubt that the United States would outstrip Britain unless the Dominions contributed on an unprecedented scale. He thought that they must take every possible step to obviate competition. Bonar Law considered that the United States might find it difficult to keep up naval expansion unless national pride were aroused by British competition. He was inclined to think, therefore, that it was worth running a little risk now rather than stir up American antagonism. The real problem, he suggested, was what could be done by diplomatic action to obviate competition between Britain, the United States and Japan.

The three Service chiefs contributed little to the discussion. Beatty stressed that the time factor was very important if equality were to be maintained. An accommodation with the United States had not been reached since the previous autumn, so a decision about a building programme must be made now. The Admiralty were not

hidebound by the idea that sea power must be measured in post-Jutland battleships; they were thinking in terms of total sea power, but they could not afford more than a small margin of inferiority in capital ships. Trenchard spoke of the importance of air attack both on the United Kingdom and on shipping, but he agreed that for the next two years surface vessels would be more important than aircraft in naval warfare. Wilson agreed that competition with the United States was impracticable, but said that the Empire could not be held together if tropps could not be moved freely from one part to another. (9)

The discussion was adjourned until the following week. On 23 December the Committee decided to set up a sub-committee to hear evidence about the place of capital ships in the navy. (10) This decision did not please the Admiralty, who would have preferred to conduct their own enquiry. Long, who was ill and had not attended the meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, complained to Lloyd George about the future of the navy being discussed without consultation with him, and wrote that "all questions about what we can afford, what alliances we can enter into, etc., are really subsidiary to the

9. C.I.D. 134th meeting, CAB 2/3.

10. C.I.D. 135th meeting, CAB 2/3. Wartime experience had raised questions about the vulnerability of capital ships to torpedo or even air attack. Naval, as well as civilian, opinion was much divided on the subject.

main question - are we, or are we not, to retain the supremacy of the seas." (11) In answer to a question from Beatty at the meeting of 23 December, Lloyd George affirmed that the one-power standard still stood, but he refused to agree to two capital ships being laid down in the coming summer.

Provision was made in the 1921 naval estimates for preliminary expenditure on four new capital ships, but talk of attempting to limit competition with the United States was now public and pressing. Conservative Ministers had doubts about the party political consequences of abandoning traditional policy; (12) but Lord Lee of Fareham, who succeeded Long as First Lord in February and had American connexions, felt that the only hope for the future was to come to an immediate understanding with both the United States and Japan. (13) Lee put out feelers for an agreement in a speech to the Society of Naval Architects and in the Admiralty's statement on the naval estimates, as well as through American contacts. On 19 March he wrote to Lloyd George

11. Long to Lloyd George, 13 Dec. 1920; Lloyd George to Long, 14 Dec.; Long to Lloyd George, 17 Dec., Lloyd George Papers, F/34/1/54, 57, 58.

12. Balfour to Bonar Law, 3 Mar. 1921, Bonar Law Papers, Beaverbrook Library, 100/3/3.

13. Lee to Lloyd George, 10 Feb. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/2/50.

that despite doubts expressed by Sir Auckland Geddes, the Ambassador in Washington, he was convinced that the present moment was favourable for an Anglo-American discussion. And the approach of the Imperial Conference made it the more important not to delay: if the Dominions could not be told the results of discussion with the United States and, if possible, Japan, the situation would not be clear enough for an approach to them on naval co-operation. (14)

The Admiralty, however, were still anxious to start on the new ships. On 15 July they appealed to the Cabinet against a Treasury ruling that the money was not available. The Washington Conference was now a coming reality, but Lee pointed out that if the ships were not laid down before the conference met, and if it decided against further laying down, Britain would be relegated to third place for twenty years. The Cabinet then decided to give the Admiralty authority to construct the four ships provided for in the 1921 estimates. (15)

Shortly before the Imperial Conference met in June 1921 the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Cabinet discussed the development of a naval base at Singapore.

14. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 139, cols. 1766-7; Lee to Lloyd George, 19 Mar. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/2/52; William Reynolds Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific 1909-1922, Austin, Texas, 1971, pp.553-4; E.J. Young, Powerful America, New York 1936, pp.48-54.

15. C.P. 3137, CAB 24/126; C. 60(21), 20 Jul., CAB 23/26.

Although there was no expectation of keeping a large fleet in the Pacific in peacetime, a base with reserves of fuel was necessary if the fleet were to be able to operate there at all. There was no dockyard capable of taking modern capital ships east of Malta; Sydney was regarded as too far from a possible theatre of operations; Hong Kong was too vulnerable. Singapore had been reasonably adequate before the war, but the docks could not take large modern ships, and the navy's change to oil fuel meant that new storage facilities would be needed. The total cost of development was expected to be nearly £5 million spread over eight years. The effect on Japan of developing a base in the Far East was considered, but it was argued that it would be less serious if the work were started soon and done gradually than if it were begun later when relations might be less good. In explaining the recommendations to the Cabinet Balfour said that the base would be needed even if the Anglo-Japanese alliance were renewed: they could not continue in a situation where it was impossible for whatever fleet it was decided to maintain to be used in the area where it was most likely to be needed. Some Ministers stressed that it was almost more important to be able to tell the Dominions that there was a naval policy than to start development immediately. On the understanding that no considerable expenditure was likely for the next two years, the Cabinet approved the development of Singapore and agreed to tell the Imperial

Conference that the more help the Dominions could give the sooner the programme would be completed. (16)

When the Imperial Conference reached defence questions on 4 July, Lee gave a survey of the political and financial position. A one-power standard had been adopted, he said, but it was doubtful whether Britain could afford even this unless the Empire shared the cost and responsibility. Proposals would be put before the Dominions showing what they could most usefully do. With the present American and Japanese construction programmes the position in another four or five years would be serious, and Britain could not fall too far behind. If it were argued that the world needed disarmament and that Britain should set an example, he would point out that the navy had already been reduced to below its 1914 strength while other countries were still building. Without international agreement the Empire could not possibly reduce its strength any further. Beatty then spoke about naval strategy and explained the reasons for the choice of Singapore as a Far Eastern base. It was not possible, he said, to rely on the United States to defend British possessions and communications in the western Pacific, since she would hardly be able to defend her own possessions of the Philippines and Guam. (17)

16. C.I.D. Paper 143-C, CAB 5/4; C.I.D. 140th and 141st meetings, 10 and 13 Jun. 1921, CAB 2/3; C.P. 3039, CAB 24/125; C. 50(21), 16 Jun., CAB 23/26. The Admiralty also prepared a paper for the C.I.D. recommending building up oil fuel reserves over a period of fourteen years: C.I.D. Paper 145-C, CAB 5/4.

17. E. 14th meeting, CAB 32/2.

On 19 July the conference agreed that "equality in fighting strength with any other Naval Power" must be the minimum standard for the Empire, but it proved impossible to agree on any proposal for sharing the cost. By this time the American invitation to a conference on the limitation of armaments had been announced, so that the question might seem to have lost urgency. The positions of the Dominion Governments were so different, however, that it is unlikely that agreement would have been reached in any case. Hughes of Australia and Massey of New Zealand were anxious that the whole Empire should bear a proportionate share of the cost; Meighen not only upheld the right of the Canadian Parliament to decide for itself but said that it was expecting disarmament and would not approve any expenditure. Hughes proposed that the Dominions should undertake to contribute in proportion to the numbers of their white population. Meighen, Smuts, and Edwin Montagu on behalf of India objected, and Smuts suggested that the Dominions should contribute from their share of reparation receipts. (18) Next day Treasury representatives were present to point out that the total Empire share of reparations was unlikely to be large enough. Meighen stressed that his objection was not based on cost but on the fact that the Canadian Parliament would not sanction any contribution to an imperial navy. Hughes enquired what right the

18. E. 26th meeting, CAB 32/2; E. 26A meeting, CAB 23/4.

Dominions could claim to discuss foreign policy if they made no contribution to sea power. Smuts referred to South African political difficulties but said that they must not leave the whole burden to the United Kingdom. Lloyd George said that the fleet was essential to the whole Empire, but the United Kingdom would go to the brink of bankruptcy rather than sacrifice her naval position if the Dominions would not contribute. The Canadian Minister of Marine, Ballantyne, was anxious to refute any suggestion that Canada was not concerned for the Empire, but said that just now Parliament would not agree to any contribution. Canada's position was different from Australia's; only British Columbia was at all affected by Pacific affairs. Smuts repeated that he had not suggested a contribution, but only a deduction from reparation receipts before they were distributed. Meighen replied that even this would be impossible. (19)

The only resolution on which, even after further discussion, it proved possible to agree was an extremely anodyne one recommending co-operation in providing for naval defence but stating that the determination of the method and cost was a matter for the several Parliaments,

19. E. 26B meeting, CAB 32/4. The Admiralty had in 1918 proposed a single imperial navy. After that had been rejected by the Imperial War Cabinet, Jellicoe visited several of the Dominions to advise them on building up their own naval forces. See Roskill, Naval Policy, pp.274-88.

and that any recommendations should be deferred until after the Washington Conference. Hughes felt bound to reserve the Australian position if Canada would not contribute, and was not moved by Balfour's observation that since the United Kingdom had always borne most of the burden one Dominion should not refuse to pay what it could just because another was paying less. Smuts's proposal was recorded, with an undertaking that each Prime Minister would approach his own Parliament. The Admiralty proposals for Dominion co-operation were held over until the position was more clear after the Washington Conference. (20)

The future of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

Discussion of the future of the Anglo-Japanese alliance began in the autumn of 1919 and proceeded largely independently of that on naval policy until the summer of 1921. The circumstances which the successive agreements of 1902, 1905 and 1911 had been intended to meet no longer existed. (21) The agreement of 1911 would

20. E. 26C meeting; E. 31A meeting, CAB 32/4; Cmd 1474 of 1921, Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, held in June, July, and August 1921. Summary of Proceedings and Documents.

21. Agreement of 1902 in B.F.S.P., Vol. XCV, pp.83-4; agreement of 1905, Vol. XCVIII, pp.136-8; agreement of 1911, Vol. CIV, pp.173-4.

reach its term in 1921. Although it would not then expire unless notice of termination had been given by 13 July 1920, (22) reconsideration and revision in the light of the changed circumstances in the Far East would be natural. Revision might also be necessary to make the agreement compatible with the terms of the Covenant. The problem fell into four interrelated parts: the future political alignment of Japan if the alliance were terminated; Japanese policy in China and the extent to which it could be influenced or checked; Britain's naval position in the Pacific; the possibility of co-operation with the United States.

British aims in the Far East were defined by the Chargé d'Affaires in Tokyo, in a letter of October 1919, as peace and the rehabilitation of China, close co-operation with the United States and, if possible, friendly relations with Japan and Japanese co-operation in the peaceful development of the area. Alston assumed that the alliance would at least have to be modified: he regarded a "union" between Britain, the United States and Japan as the ideal substitute. If this could not be achieved, an Anglo-American understanding might make it

22. Article VI of the 1911 agreement provided that it should remain in force for ten years from the date of signature. If neither party gave notice of termination twelve months before the expiration of ten years, the agreement would remain binding until the end of one year from the date on which either party did denounce it.

possible to dispense with Japan; but if Britain had to deal with Japan alone the position would be difficult, especially as Japan would probably seek friends elsewhere. (23)

The only factor not included in this analysis was the naval question. Once that was added, nothing in it needed to be changed in the next eighteen months. Discussion revolved in the main about the relative importance of the different factors. In the early months of 1920 the Foreign Office sought the views of the Service Departments, the Colonial Office and the India Office and then attempted to draw up a balance sheet. (24) In a memorandum of 28 February a member of the Far Eastern Department, C.H. Bentinck, wrote that the British Empire was in an exposed position in the Far East. Either Japan must be kept friendly or Britain would have greatly to increase her naval forces: on the other hand relations with the United States must not be embarrassed. A middle course between the two countries, however difficult,

23. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. VI, No.522. Alston also reported that influential opinion in Japan appeared to favour continuance of the alliance or some understanding, but that a German-Russian-Japanese alliance was not beyond the bounds of possibility: op. cit., Nos. 528, 598, 657.

24. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. VI, Nos.744, 789, n.; F 751/199/23, FO 371/5358.

must be found. (25) The balance of opinion in the Department at this time tended towards renewal of the alliance or continuance in some modified form, but the question had not yet been considered at higher levels. (26)

Before this consideration took place it was decided to inform the League of Nations that if the alliance were continued after July 1921 it would be in a form consistent with the Covenant. The initiative for this move came from the British side; the Dominion Governments were consulted; and the Japanese Government agreed. (27) There was some confusion later about the meaning of this notification, the Foreign Office legal advisers and the Law Officers of the Crown holding that it amounted to notice of termination of the 1911 agreement, the Japanese

25. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. VI, No.761.

26. Op. cit., No.789 n. Copies of the correspondence so far were circulated to the C.I.D. in March. At the request of the Colonial Office the C.I.D. secretariat produced an appreciation of the strategic consequences of terminating the alliance: C.I.D. Papers 121-C, 122-C, 124-C, 126-C, CAB 5/3.

27. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.41, 45, 46, 55, 65; C.O. 30450, 31254, CO 532/162; F 1230, 1266, 1290, 1399/199/23, FO 371/5359; League of Nations Official Journal, No.5, 1920, pp.252-3.

Government maintaining that it did not. (28)

At the end of July 1920 a more intensive, and higher level, discussion of future policy began in the Foreign Office. A new draft treaty was drawn up and sent for comment to some senior experts on the Far East - Sir John Jordan, until 1919 Minister in Peking, Sir Conyngham Greene, until 1919 Ambassador in Tokyo, and Alston, now in England before taking up the post of Minister in Peking. In a note on the draft treaty Sir Cecil Hurst commented that the Japanese desire for renewal was presumably based on a wish to prevent an Anglo-American combination in the Pacific. A German-Russian-Japanese combination would be very strong on the mainland of Asia but would not provide sufficient sea power. The only way by which Japan could ultimately withstand an Anglo-American combination was to gain complete control over China. The alliance was supposed

28. F 1509/199/23, FO 371/5360; F 2034/63/23, FO 371/6673; F 2316/63/23, FO 371/6674; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.277, 283, 287, 288, 291, 295, 301, 310, 320. The attitude of the Japanese Government at this time and later was extremely reticent. The Minister for Foreign Affairs did not mention the alliance after he had been told in July that there would be no negotiations until after the Imperial Conference (which was then expected to be held in the autumn of 1920). However in August Lloyd George mentioned the idea of a tripartite agreement with the United States to the retiring Japanese Ambassador, Viscount Chinda: D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.36, 44, 52, 70; I.H. Nish, "Japan and the ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," in Studies in International History, Essays presented to W.N. Medlicott, edd. K. Bourne and D.C. Watt, London 1967, pp.372-4; Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific, p.557.

to secure the Open Door in China, but in practice it had not served as an obstacle to the Japanese in strengthening their position. Hurst concluded that the advantage to Britain of renewing the alliance was less than that offered by an Anglo-American combination; but if the United States would not co-operate, it would be dangerous for Britain to allow Japan to join a German-Russian combination. (29) The threat of such a combination had recently been described by the new Ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Charles Eliot, as "hardly conceivable at the present moment," and he thought that the Japanese were unlikely to wish for a connexion with Bolshevik Russia. Nevertheless, Eliot wrote, "Japan, if she believed herself to be threatened by Great Britain and America, might join in a tripartite alliance, should the Germans ultimately prove able to take Russia in tutelage, and it is perhaps unwise to suppose that only the military and oligarchic party could make such an Alliance." (30)

Before he received the new draft, Alston, on arriving in England, had submitted a memorandum on an "Anglo-Saxon" policy for the Far East. He advocated an Anglo-American understanding on naval power in the Pacific and on maintaining the integrity of China. He

29. F 1914/199/23, FO 371/5360. I have not been able to trace the text of the draft treaty.

30. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.52.

considered that such an understanding could be achieved, and that it should suffice to keep Japan in check. (31) A memorandum by Wellesley, head of the Far Eastern Department, had accompanied the draft. In a revised version, dated 1 September, Wellesley showed less optimism than Alston with regard to the United States. He concluded that the alliance had been of greater benefit to Japan than to Britain, and had entirely failed in regard to the Open Door in China. The argument for a renewal of the alliance lay almost entirely outside its professed aims: they were powerful, if the agreement could be divested of the character of an alliance. Wellesley did not fear any danger from a strong, modern, united China. Taking the guiding principle of British policy in the Far East to be "a carefully planned constructive policy for China, and the creation of a proper equilibrium of economic interests in that country," Wellesley saw four possible courses of action on the alliance. The first was simply not to renew it. This would mean leaving it to the League of Nations to maintain Chinese independence and integrity, and relying on the recently established four-power consortium policy to maintain the Open Door. (32) Japan would probably

31. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.80.

32. For the consortium see D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. VI, Ch. II, and Vol. XIV, Chs. I-III, passim: Survey of International Affairs, 1920-23, pp.445-52.

become hostile. The second course was to renew the 1911 agreement with only such modifications as would bring it into line with the Covenant. In this case Britain would have rather more hold over Japan, but friction over China would increase and the position would be anomalous. The third course was to renew the agreement in a form less like an alliance, and open it to the accession of other countries. This would still meet the Service Departments' desire for a friendly Japan, but the United States could not be counted upon to join and the desired hold over Japan would be watered down. The fourth course was to renew the agreement in the same form as in the third course but without an accession clause, and to aim at a parallel agreement with the United States with the object of ultimately consolidating the two into a multilateral treaty including China and possibly other countries as well. (33) In their comments Jordan and Greene both generally agreed with the aim of the fourth course. (34) It was now decided to set up a small committee in the Foreign Office to consider the question of the renewal of the alliance

33. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.97. The first part of the memorandum, not there printed, is in F 2200/199/23, FO 371/5361.

34. Memoranda by Jordan, 24 Aug. 1920, and Greene, 11 Sep., F 2077, 2116/199/23, FO 371/5360; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.97, n.10.

and future British policy in the Far East. (35)

In all the discussion so far the desirability of co-operation with the United States featured largely; but equally doubts were expressed whether the United States would co-operate; still more whether she would join any kind of agreement. The authors of several of the papers, however, urged that it was vital to find out American views and intentions before any decisions were made. It was known that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was disliked in the United States, where it was widely, although erroneously, held to commit Britain to support Japan in the event of a Japanese-American conflict. (36) There was an American feeler in the summer of 1920 which would have made possible an informal exchange of views. On instructions from Washington the Counsellor of the United States Embassy told the Foreign Office that the State Department hoped that if the

35. The committee consisted of Tyrell, Jordan, Greene, and Wellesley. Further information and observations were sought from the Embassies in Washington and Tokyo and the Legation in Peking: D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.97, n.1, 139, 144; F 2396/199/23, FO 371/5361.

36. The 1911 agreement excluded from the scope of hostile action any state with which either party had a general arbitration treaty. An Anglo-American arbitration treaty was negotiated in 1911 but failed of ratification by the Senate. A more limited Peace Commission treaty was concluded in September 1914, and it was then made clear to the Japanese Government that Britain regarded it as equivalent to a general arbitration treaty and as thus covered by Article 4 of the 1911 agreement.

alliance were renewed some provision would be included about the Open Door and Chinese rights, and that it should specifically cover the Anglo-American Peace Commission Treaty. He also suggested that discussion on co-operation in China would be welcomed. (37) The suggestion was repeated a month later, but although Wellesley recommended that the approach be taken up, nothing was done. (38) Curzon was unwilling to say anything in public about the renewal of the alliance, but did not explain his disapproval of unofficial soundings. (39) It may have been due to the approach of the American elections, or to the expectation, soon afterwards abandoned, that the Imperial Conference was going to take place in the autumn. Whatever the reason, the lack of even informal discussion meant that when the Foreign Office committee reported at the end of January 1921 they

37. Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, hereafted cited as F.R.U.S., 1920, Vol. II, pp.680-1; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.40, n.2.

38. Op. cit., Nos. 40, n.7, 97, n.10. The U.S. Ambassador reported to the State Department that he had been assured that in any redrafting of the alliance it would be made quite clear that it was not aimed at the United States. M.G. Fry, "The North Atlantic Triangle and the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," in Journal of Modern History, XXXIX (1967), p.49, slightly misquotes this assurance.

39. Minute, 20 Jun. 1920, F 1028/199/23, FO 371/5359. Curzon wrote that if Geddes thought that the matter was exciting real alarm in the United States he would report it; but even when Geddes recommended that it should be made clear that the agreement was not being renewed but was merely not being allowed to lapse before the Imperial Conference met, no statement was made: D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.43.

still knew little about American intentions.

Since by then President Harding's administration had not yet taken office, their views could in any case hardly have been formulated precisely. Geddes's forecasts of their attitude were not particularly encouraging. He wrote on 15 November that American opinion was almost uniformly suspicious of Japan and would be really hostile to a renewal of the alliance unless it were so watered down as to be practically meaningless. He thought that sober opinion would probably welcome an exchange of notes affirming the principle of the Open Door, and an Anglo-American understanding on naval strength in the Pacific. But the Senate would not agree to anything like an alliance, and the country could not be relied upon to abide for long by any agreement unless it were clearly seen to serve American interests. Geddes thought that it would be unwise to decide now against renewal, unless it were considered so important to avoid friction with the United States that the Government were prepared to give way on any question that the United States might raise. He recommended instead renewing the alliance without military clauses for a period corresponding to an American presidential term, and trying to secure some agreement with the United States for the same period and in a form not requiring ratification. Eliot, in commenting on Wellesley's memorandum, also warned against risking the enmity of Japan and recommended renewing the

alliance in a form consistent with the Covenant. (40)

Eliot had also reported, as asked, on Japanese economic conditions. He considered that at present the main Japanese object was economic expansion: the middle classes wanted it, by cautious methods; but popular opinion might be more aggressive. There was, he believed, no carefully thought out government policy of expansion to the detriment of other countries. (41) The Legation at Peking also reported that despite the complaints of British merchants about the Japanese, there was little evidence that they were using illegitimate methods. Only where they had succeeded, through control over communications, in establishing something like a condominium, were they in a position to interfere with equal opportunity. (42)

At the end of December Wellesley informed Alston that the Foreign Office committee were going to recommend dropping the alliance and substituting an exchange of notes between Britain, Japan, and the United States. Alston replied that he agreed with this course: he also stressed the importance of consulting China before any

40. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.162, 175, 181.

41. Tokyo tel. 418, 5 Nov. 1920; Tokyo desp. 556, 26 Nov., F 2758, 3350/199/23, FO 371/5361.

42. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.195, 198.

agreement were made concerning her. (43) The final version of the committee's report was dated 21 January 1921. It stated that the problem of the Far East turned on Japan's policy towards China. The fundamental question for Britain was whether her traditional policy - peace, the protection of her possessions and interests, the independence and integrity of China, and equal opportunity - was sufficiently like Japanese policy to make renewal of the alliance on the basis of identic interests and common principles either practicable or desirable. An examination of the positions of China and Japan suggested that the answer was no. Japanese policy was one of expansion motivated by economic needs, aiming at the control of Chinese resources and even at hegemony over the Far East and the Pacific. Potentially strong but politically weak, China offered a standing temptation to Japan. Japanese activities so far had resulted in the exclusion of foreign competition. Expansion was a vital necessity for Japan but her aims were diverging increasingly from the principles on which British policy had always been based. If it were objected that non-renewal of the alliance would remove all restraint on Japan, it must be answered that the

43. Tel. unnum. to Peking, 23 Dec. 1920; Peking tel. unnum., 30 Dec., F 91, 92/63/23, FO 371/6671. Chinese hostility to renewal of the alliance, or to mention therein of China, had already been expressed, and such expressions multiplied in the first half of 1921. British residents in the Far East were also generally opposed to renewal.

alliance had not been an effective brake on her, and Chinese resentment at renewal would have a serious effect on British trade.

However the committee admitted the force of the arguments against leaving Japan isolated and potentially hostile. Her projected expenditure on armaments for the next few years was very large. If the present Japanese and United States naval programmes were maintained, Britain would be faced with heavy obligations unless she relinquished her position in the Far East. The solution proposed would not be a substitute for adequate naval forces, but the committee believed that it would help to discourage naval competition. The most important consideration was that if the cardinal element of future British policy were to cultivate close relations with the United States and secure American co-operation in maintaining world peace, renewal of the alliance in anything like its present form might be a serious obstacle.

The committee did not recommend departing from the principles which had determined British policy in the Far East in the past, but proposed rather a more positive approach - in particular a constructive policy for the rehabilitation of China. The independence and integrity of China depended on the real maintenance of the Open Door policy, for economic penetration led ultimately to political encroachment and the danger lay as much in China's weakness as in the aggressive tendencies of Japan.

But it would be hopeless to embark on such a policy singlehanded or without adequate naval strength. American co-operation was indispensable and might be hoped for since American ideals in China were identical with Britain's.

The recommendation of the committee therefore was that the alliance should be dropped, and be replaced if possible by a tripartite understanding between the United States, Japan, and Britain in the form of a declaration of principles which could be subscribed to without the risk of embarrassing commitments. Only if the United States found it impossible to enter into any such arrangement did the committee suggest a new Anglo-Japanese agreement, conforming to the spirit of the League of Nations and so framed as not to exclude eventual American participation. (44)

This report represented probably the best-informed British thinking about the Far East at the time. (45) The analysis of Japan's position proved accurate over the next twenty years. Subsequent events were to show that the committee were over-optimistic about China, both as to the extent to which she could be helped to resist Japanese encroachment and as to the attitude of a strong

44. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.212.

45. Not only official thinking: the committee took evidence from witnesses with business experience in the Far East.

modern China to the western world. Nevertheless the report did not receive wide circulation outside the Foreign Office and diplomatic service. It appears to have been shown to the India Office and the Colonial Office, (46) but it was not submitted to the Committee of Imperial Defence or the Cabinet, nor sent to the Dominions as one of the papers for the Imperial Conference. The committee was set up in the Foreign Office to advise the Secretary of State, and circulation would have implied that Curzon accepted its recommendations, whereas it appears from the later discussions in the Cabinet and the Imperial Conference that this was not altogether the case. However a wider distribution would have saved misunderstanding with the Canadian Government at the time, and could have saved later misconceptions about British views and the Canadian impact on policy.

On 15 February Meighen telegraphed to Lloyd George recommending termination of the alliance, a conference of Pacific powers, and preliminary soundings in Washington to find out the views of the new Administration, a task which Sir Robert Borden was prepared to undertake. (47)

46. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.139, n.1.

47. C.O. 7503, CO 42/1032; W.R. Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, Toronto 1963, p.71; summary in D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.261. The message was based on advice to Meighen by Loring Christie, legal adviser to the Canadian Department of External Affirs: A.R.M. Lower, "Loring Christie and the genesis of the Washington Conference," in Canadian Historical Review, XLVII (1966), pp.42-8.

A meeting of Ministers discussed the message on 18 February and agreed to invite Borden to London.[48] Lloyd George's reply appears to have caused so much misunderstanding in Ottawa that it is worth quoting in full:

"My colleagues and I have given the most careful consideration to your telegram of 15 February. We entirely share your view as to the importance of considering the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance from the point of view of future relations between the United States and the British Empire, and we are agreed that, in whatever action may eventually be decided upon, it is of utmost importance to carry the United States with us. We feel at the same time that there are certain considerations, which we should like you to consider, to be urged against the immediate adoption of your proposal. In the first place, we have throughout felt that nothing should be done to prejudice the complete liberty of action of the Imperial Cabinet in regard to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Question affects all the Dominions, and especially Australia, New Zealand and Canada. It also affects India and the British Possessions in the Far East. It is feared that the formulation, from an official quarter, in however tentative and informal a form, of a

48. Conference of Ministers No.79, CAB 23/38; C.8(21)A, CAB 23/24.

proposal to the United States that a round-table conference of all the Powers concerned should be summoned to discuss Pacific questions could, especially if it were favourably regarded by Washington, hardly fail to tie the hands of Conference next June. We think in any case that other Dominions would have to be consulted before such a proposal was approved. We think in the second place that, while there is much to be said for a conference of this description as a possible ultimate solution, there are very many questions to be settled before the decision to make such a proposal could be reached. The questions at issue affect the general foreign policy of the Empire and the international position of Great Britain. They are inseparably bound up with problem of naval shipbuilding, the future of the League of Nations, and its disarmament programme. For some months various expert committees have been sitting in this country considering the various political, military, naval and economic issues involved, with the object of placing members of the Imperial Cabinet in possession of all considerations necessary to enable them to arrive at a judgment. We think, therefore, that there are very strong arguments for having a full discussion between the various Governments of the British Empire of the whole problem in the light of the information which

is now being collected, before making any official approaches, however informal, to the United States of America.

"It is recognised at the same time that the attitude of the new United States Government towards foreign questions, the League of Nations and disarmament, must be a vital factor in our deliberations, and we should greatly welcome an interchange of views with the Canadian Government, both upon main problem itself and also on whether any special steps should be taken to sound American opinion before the Conference meets, and as to the manner in which this could be done without prejudicing the freedom of action of the Imperial Cabinet. Would it therefore be possible to ask Sir Robert Borden, after having discussed the question in all its bearings with you, to come over here to confer with us upon this subject? The benefit of his experience and advice would be greatly valued, and he could then place before you the tentative conclusions at which we had arrived during our conversations, and, if necessary, we could place them before the Governments of the Dominions." (49)

49. C.O. 9680, C042/1039; summarised in D.B.F.P., Ser.I, Vol. XIV, No.261, and in Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, pp.71-2.

This attempt to get the Canadian Government to recognise the wide ramifications of the question, and the fact that others were involved, misfired completely. Although drafted by Philip Kerr, with whom Christie had recently had conversation in London, (50) and most courteously worded, the telegram does have a slight tone of superior wisdom and the references to the wider issues were hardly explicit, although only those to the League of Nations might be misleading. It is hard to see, all the same, why Christie should have regarded the message as insincere and have concluded that the United Kingdom Government were moving away from Anglo-American co-operation. He apparently completely misunderstood the reference to naval questions, and believed that the British wished to blackmail the United States into ceasing naval building and entering the League. (51)

Meighen's answer to Lloyd George, on 1 April, was therefore argumentative. He dismissed the wider considerations, claimed that Canadians knew more about the United States than committees sitting in London, hinted that Canada might refuse to join a renewed Anglo-Japanese alliance, and repeated that his proposal

50. Lower in Canadian Historical Review, XLVII (1966), p.41.

51. Christie's comments summarised briefly in Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, p.72, and at greater length by M.G. Fry in Journal of Modern History, XXXIX (1967), pp.54-5.

should be acted upon. With greater injustice, he argued that the free decision of the Imperial Conference was more likely to be prejudiced if they did not know in advance the American attitude towards a possible alternative. (52) The threat of independent Canadian action was alarming, and the Far Eastern Department recommended sending the Foreign Office committee's report to the Dominions as soon as possible. (53) A soothing reply, drafted by Curzon, was sent to Meighen on 26 April, promising that the decision of the Imperial Conference would be completely free, pointing out that the Australian attitude made it essential not to prejudice the question of a Pacific conference, and urging the Canadian Government not to approach Washington independently at this stage. (54)

The reference to the Australian attitude is presumably one to Hughes's speech in the House of Representatives on 8 April, recommending renewal of the alliance in some modified form. Apart from an enquiry

52. C.O. 15957, CO 42/1033; summarised in D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.261, and in Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, p.72. Since the copy in the Borden Papers bears no date of despatch, Graham was uncertain whether the telegram was ever sent, and says that there was apparently no reply.

53. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.261.

54. C.O. 15857, CO 42/1033; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.261, n.13. Christie's memory was evidently at fault when he told A.R.M. Lower in 1938 that the British Government wished to leave the alliance off the agenda of the Imperial Conference and that the Canadians had had to press hard to get it included: Canadian Historical Review, XLVII (1966), p.41.

in April 1920, when it was still expected that the Imperial Conference would be held that year, asking for information about any conversations with the Japanese and saying that the Australian Government would wish to discuss the alliance in relation to the Far East situation as a whole, (55) no Australian representations on the subject appear to have been made in London.

The Cabinet discussed the whole question on 30 May. Curzon introduced the subject by rehearsing the history of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and the arguments for and against renewal. As to his own recommendations, Curzon said that the natural inclination was to suggest a tripartite agreement including the United States. The difficulty was that the anti-British party there would probably not tolerate one, and that it would fail in the Senate. Moreover, as Geddes had stressed, there was no guarantee of continuity in American policy. The alternative which Curzon was inclined to favour, and which he thought everyone but the Canadians would accept, was to admit at once that the present agreement must be modified and, while proposing to Japan to renew it in a revised form, to claim the right to consult other interested parties. He thought that the Government should take this line at the Imperial Conference. An

55. F 656, 733/199/23, FO 371/5358. The Times on 27 May reported Massey as telling a correspondent that there was a good deal to be gained from renewal and nothing to be lost.

agreement might be made with the United States at the same time, but he would not propose American participation in the Anglo-Japanese agreement at present.

Churchill said that Canada was certainly against renewal and had proposed a Pacific conference, and he thought that Australia and New Zealand were actuated more by fear of Japan than by friendly sentiment. All the same it was as well that they had advocated renewal, for it would be a very serious matter for the United Kingdom Government to override the Dominion Prime Ministers if they were united against renewal. He thought that it would be possible to get agreement, and that even the Canadians differed more over method than over the aim. It would be of enormous advantage if something could be done to bring the United States and Japan together. The one-power standard would be very expensive for Britain if American-Japanese competition continued, and the Anglo-Japanese alliance would spur the American on. Everything possible should be done to obviate rivalry with the United States, but he did not know what the Administration would say. (56) He would like to explain

56. On 23 May the Senate had passed the Borah Resolution authorising and requesting the President to invite Britain and Japan to a conference for the purpose of reducing naval armaments in the Pacific. The House of Representatives approved the resolution on 28 June. During the first half of 1921 evidence and advice reaching London about the attitude to limitation and the strength of the naval lobby in the United States was conflicting: file A 18/45, FO 371/5616.

to the Dominion Prime Ministers the importance of renewing the alliance, and tell them that the British Government favoured holding a conference, failing which the agreement should be renewed in a revised form with consultations to make sure that the United States Government understood that it was not in any way directed against American interests.

Chamberlain suggested that there would be a great difference between Britain summoning the conference and the United States doing so. He thought that it would be very useful if they could get the President to call it. Balfour suggested combining Curzon's and Churchill's proposals. He did not see why they should not tell the Japanese and the Americans that they thought a general agreement desirable. He favoured renewing the alliance for a short term, but at the same time they should say that they wanted a Pacific conference. Bearing in mind the restrictions on Japanese immigration elsewhere, they should be careful about trying to keep the Japanese out of China.

Lee stressed the importance of Anglo-American relations. He said that he had recently discussed the rivalry between the two countries with the former American naval commander in Europe, Admiral Sims. According to the Admiral, the American people were vehemently opposed to the alliance and as long as it continued it would be very difficult to curb the demand for more ships. There was no limit to the United States'

capacity to build ships: she could compete with Britain and Japan combined. He did not agree with Geddes's opinion that the alliance would restrain hot-headed Americans: on the contrary, he thought that they were determined to see the United States the strongest naval power. He was inclined to favour Churchill's view and would suggest that the United States Government should be prevailed upon to call a conference. It would be worth trying, and they could not afford a difference of opinion within the Empire. (57)

Montagu spoke of Japanese activities in India and the necessity of removing India from the scope of a new agreement. He favoured renewal in a modified form and the holding of a conference. Curzon said that a conference would take time to arrange and that the agreement, which was about to expire, would have to be renewed first. Lloyd George summed up by saying that if the agreement were not renewed Japanese resentment would be intense. He thought Curzon's arguments irresistible, and a German-Russian combination a future possibility. Japan had been a loyal ally: if Britain alienated her, it would be natural for her to respond to Russo-German advances. He sincerely hoped that no one would contemplate dropping Japan, and he did not see why they should. The Cabinet agreed to support at

57. In a memorandum written for the Cabinet on 21 May Lee had advocated a tripartite agreement on the Pacific, and sounding the Americans at once: C.P. 2957, CAB 24/123.

the Imperial Conference the proposal that the United States should be asked to summon a conference of Pacific powers, but only after it had been made clear to Japan and other countries concerned that Britain had no intention of dropping the alliance. They also agreed that the terms of the new agreement must be consistent with the Covenant and must be such as not to offend American susceptibilities. There should be conversations with the United States and China before the agreement was renewed, and Japan should be fully informed. Meanwhile the agreement would be renewed provisionally for three months at a time. The Cabinet also asked for a paper from the Committee of Imperial Defence on the strategic consequences in the Far East if the alliance were terminated. (58)

This paper was available on 17 June. Its conclusions were, first, that from the strategic point of view renewal of the alliance would have the advantage of making war with Japan a more remote possibility; second, that, leaving aside the political complications, Britain would have much to gain from renewal unless a friendly understanding with both the United States and Japan were a practical possibility; third, that whether or not the alliance were renewed the British naval position in the Far East must be improved and bases developed; but

58. C. 43(21), CAB 23/25; summarised briefly in Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, pp.72-3, and at length by M.G. Fry in Journal of Modern History, XXXIX (1967).

fourth, that if the alliance were terminated the provision of naval bases would become urgent and the whole strategic situation would have to be reviewed. (59)

Curzon also circulated to the Imperial Conference an account of opinions on the Pacific said to be held by the United States Government. That ocean, with Latin America, was expected to be the main theatre for promoting American interests and for an active foreign policy. The Atlantic would be virtually abandoned to Britain, but in return she must acknowledge American predominance in the Pacific and the Dominions there must look to the United States for protection. (60) Geddes was now revising his earlier view that renewal of the alliance would not cause particular difficulty with the United States, and was recommending an attempt to reach a tripartite agreement. He floated the idea to the Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes, on 23 June and was given some encouragement. (61)

The Dominion representatives had arrived in London by the middle of June, and Meighen's intention to

59. C.I.D. Paper 144-C, CAB 5/4, circulated for the Imperial Conference as paper E. 15, CAB 32/6.

60. E. 14, CAB 32/6. The information came indirectly from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt Jr: Washington desp. 565, 5 Jun. 1921, A 4202/2027/45, FO 371/5693. The views were similar to those of William Howard Gardiner, a leading figure in the United States Navy League, discussed by Fry in Journal of Modern History, XXXIX (1967).

61. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.294, 308; F.R.U.S., 1921, Vol. II, pp.314-16.

oppose renewal of the alliance was known. (62) When the conference began on 20 June the opening speeches of the various Prime Ministers, although couched in general terms, revealed their different views on the future of the alliance. Hughes and Massey recommended renewal, subject to specific exclusion of the possibility of conflict with the United States arising. Meighen claimed that Canada's voice should carry special weight in decisions affecting relations with the United States, and said that alliances of any kind were inconsistent with the purposes of the League of Nations. (63)

Serious discussion of the alliance in the conference began on 28 June. Curzon said that the 1911 agreement had effectively been denounced in July 1920 and was therefore about to expire. Four courses of action were open: to abandon the alliance altogether; to renew it in terms consistent with the Covenant; to expand it into a tripartite agreement; and to renew it in a different form during or after a conference of Pacific powers. He inclined, he said, to prefer the fourth course. (64) Next day Meighen and Hughes expressed diametrically opposed views. Meighen repeated that

62. Hankey to Lloyd George, 15 Jun. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/25/1/41.

63. E. 2nd and 6th meetings, 21 and 24 Jun. 1921, CAB 32/2.

64. E. 8th meeting, CAB 32/2.

Canada disliked all alliances, but laid greatest stress on the position of the United States. He believed that any kind of Anglo-Japanese agreement would harm relations with the United States and render agreement on disarmament impossible. He discounted Japanese resentment at non-renewal, but thought that American opinion would favour a tripartite agreement. Hughes questioned Meighen's interpretation of American opinion, which did not square with Geddes's earlier reports or with what the United States Ambassador had just said to Curzon.[65] The Empire, he said, must not have its policy dictated by the United States. The future of the alliance was a matter of security for Australia, and he would only support abandoning it if the United States would give assurances about security. The question must be discussed in relation to naval policy. Smuts temporised: on the one hand Japan must not be offended; on the other hand alignment with the United States was of fundamental importance. He favoured negotiations on the whole complex of questions. Massey supported Hughes, saying that New Zealand's position was the same as Australia's, and that she did not wish to look to the

65. On 28 June Curzon outlined the problem to Col. Harvey, and asked whether, if the conference decided on renewal in some form, this would necessarily meet an unfavourable reception by the United States Government. Harvey said not necessarily: whatever decision was taken would be treated respectfully by his Government. It only transpired a week later that Harvey was not representing his Government's views: D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.313, 317, 323, 326, 329.

United States for protection. (66)

Before the next meeting of the conference the Cabinet, on 30 June, discussed the position thus revealed. They noted that the Canadian objection to renewal was even stronger than they had expected, and that Geddes was now changing his advice. They were in a difficulty over alternative proposals because they did not know the views of the United States and Japanese Governments. They finally decided to investigate anew the legal position about the expiry of the agreement, and to propose to the conference a full exchange of views with the United States and Japan. (67)

The same afternoon Lloyd George put the proposal to the conference. Friendship with the United States, he said, was so fundamental a point of imperial policy that it seemed almost bad taste to mention it. Certainly they could never embark on a policy that would involve a breach. But he did not accept that renewing the alliance would mean a breach: it would, after all, not be a new policy. Refusal to renew, however, would certainly mean a breach with Japan. He did not regard a Japanese-American conflict as inevitable, and still thought it possible to influence Japanese policy in China. He thought that the positions could be reconciled,

66. E. 9th and 10th meetings, CAB 32/2. Discussion of naval policy did not begin until 4 July.

67. C. 56(21), CAB 23/26.

and that there was no need to do anything about the alliance before a conference was held, since the Lord Chancellor now advised that the notification to the League in 1920 did not constitute notice of termination. Birkenhead in his role of deus ex machina then explained his reasons for this opinion. It was greeted with general relief: the immediate problem was solved. (68)

There was still disagreement, however, about the future of the alliance. On 1 July Meighen argued that it should be denounced before the conference met: Hughes said that they should go to the conference with the intention of renewing it. Curzon explained that to denounce the agreement on the eve of the conference without Japanese consent would be an arbitary act, and suggested that they should wait to see whether the conference would produce a new arrangement. In the end it was agreed that nothing should be said about the agreement either way for the time being, but that Curzon should ask the United States, Japanese, and Chinese Governments whether they would join in a conference. (69)

Until the British archives were opened, writers dealing with the end of the Anglo-Japanese alliance mainly from the Canadian angle tended to overestimate Meighen's triumph in supposedly securing singlehanded a

68. E. 11th meeting, CAB 32/2.

69. E. 12th and 13th meetings, CAB 32/2.

reversal of imperial policy. (70) The defect of the Canadian position at the time was the failure to appreciate the Pacific problem in naval terms, which loomed so large for Australia and New Zealand that they in turn underestimated the importance of Anglo-American relations. Canadian blindness to sea power, natural for a continental people protected against outsiders by the British navy and dependent on the goodwill of their larger land neighbour, is reflected in the accounts of writers using mainly Canadian material. None of them,

70. The best of these accounts is that of M.G. Fry in Journal of Modern History, XXXIX (1967). Others include: J.B. Brebner, "Canada, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Washington Conference," in Political Science Quarterly, L (1935), pp.45-47; J.B. Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle, New York 1945, pp.281-3; J.S. Galbraith, "The Imperial Conference of 1921 and the Washington Conference," in Canadian Historical Review, XXXIX (1948), pp. 143-52; M. Tate and P. Foy, "More light on the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," in Political Science Quarterly, LXXIV (1959), pp.532-53; J.C. Vinson "The Imperial Conference of 1921 and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance," in Pacific Historical Review, XXXI (1962), pp.257-66; Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. II, pp.89-96; A.R.M. Lower, "Loring Christie and the genesis of the Washington Conference," in Canadian Historical Review, XLVII (1966), pp.38-48. In a recent study based on the British archives, British Strategy in the Far East 1919-1939, London 1971, Wm Roger Louis concludes that but for Meighen the British Government would have renewed the alliance. On the other hand M.G. Fry now concludes (Illusions of Security. North Atlantic Diplomacy 1918-22, Toronto 1972, pp.151-2) that Meighen's success was not great in so far as the British Government retained the option of renewing the alliance if a tripartite agreement were not achieved.

for example, seems to have put together the discussions in the Imperial Conference on the Anglo-Japanese alliance and on naval policy, or to have noted the Canadian refusal to contribute anything to naval defence. Neither the Canadians at the time, nor these writers, appear to have realised how greatly a tripartite agreement was desired in London as the ideal solution, nor on the other hand how doubtful, in the light of past experience both in the Far East and in Europe, the possibility of real American co-operation was bound to seem. However the idea of a conference of Pacific powers does seem to have come originally from Canada, and Meighen's intransigence at the Imperial Conference does appear to have brought it to the forefront for immediate action. It may well be, also, that Meighen's intransigence was responsible for producing Birkenhead's opinion that the 1911 agreement had not been denounced, an opinion which overruled that of the Law Officers and broke the immediate deadlock. This is not, however, to say that Birkenhead's opinion was simply a matter of expediency: it accorded with what Curzon himself thought, (71) although he felt bound to pass on the legal advice given to him, and with the view of the Japanese Government.

71. Minute, 14 Jun. 1921, D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.588, n.2.

The Washington Conference

In accordance with the decision of the Imperial Conference Curzon on 4 and 5 July asked the Japanese, Chinese, and United States representatives in London whether their Governments would join in a conference on Pacific questions, to be called by the United States Government. On 10 July the United States Government made known their intention to call a disarmament conference in Washington. There ensued some weeks of confusion as to whether there should be preliminary talks on Pacific questions while the Dominion Prime Ministers were still available; but owing to American refusal the idea was abandoned, and on 11 August the formal invitations to a single conference in Washington were issued. (72)

The list of subjects proposed for the agenda by the United States Government was extremely wide and general, (73) and doubts were felt in London whether without preliminary discussions the conference could be effective. Crowe did not rate the chances of a general disarmament agreement highly. (74) As regards the Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Prime Minister stated in the House of Commons that the Government would welcome its merging into a tripartite understanding, but would

72. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Ch. V; F.R.U.S., 1921, Vol. I, pp. 18-51.

73. F.R.U.S., 1921, Vol. I, pp.67-8.

74. Minute, 13 Aug. 1921, A 5907/18/45, FO 371/5618.

not abandon it unless something equally good could be substituted. (75) The Americans were told that Britain was prepared to discuss the alliance at Washington, but only privately. Geddes, reporting on 21 September that the atmosphere had entirely changed from the suspicions of July, said that Hughes was aiming at a tripartite agreement on East Asia and the Pacific. (76)

The Foreign Office drew up notes for the delegation to Washington on every possible topic relating to China, the Far East, and the Pacific. But as Wellesley pointed out in a covering memorandum of 20 October, all questions such as the Chinese Eastern Railway, tariff revision, and even the Open Door, were subsidiary to the really fundamental questions of a naval agreement and a tripartite understanding between Britain, the United States, and Japan. British policy at the conference should therefore be to concentrate on getting agreement on the two main subjects, as far as possible leaving the rest - so far as they could be solved at all in the present state of China - for settlement by other means. (77)

75. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 146, cols. 1704-06.

76. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.377, 380-1.

77. Op. cit., No.404. Of the papers annexed to this memorandum and not printed in D.B.F.P., the only one of interest for this study is one on British neutrality in a Japanese-American war. It concluded that such a war was not impossible but would be a disaster for Britain whatever its outcome: the only remedy was prevention: F 3012/2905/23, FO 371/6705.

On a tripartite agreement two suggestions were considered, both on the lines of a declaration of common policy. The first was what Geddes had considered in July to be the essential from the United States point of view, namely a guarantee [sic] of the territorial integrity of Pacific states, the firm establishment of a policy of equal commercial and economic opportunity throughout the area, and possibly a policy of international co-operation in developing other Pacific states besides China. The second was a formula drafted by Sir J. Jordan, in which the three countries would agree to respect one another's territorial possessions in East Asia and the Pacific and promote peace and stability in the region, would resolve to support the independence and integrity of China and the principle of equal opportunity, and would undertake to communicate frankly with one another in case of danger to the agreement. This last provision, it was thought, might have some practical value and be something positive to put in the place of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. But it was suggested that the initiative in putting forward a formula be left to the United States. (78)

The naval question was discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence on 14 October. The Admiralty had prepared a scheme based on limiting the number of capital ships, counting post-Jutland ships only, and giving

78. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.326, 405.

Britain and the United States equality and each of them a 3:2 superiority over Japan. The Committee agreed that ~~the~~ numbers of capital ships was the only possible basis for limitation, although all other ships being built should be declared. The size of the programme to be aimed at was not discussed, but there was general agreement that Britain must maintain a fleet equal to any other. (79) The Cabinet agreed that the one-power standard should be adhered to, and that the delegation should have discretion to use a notional building programme for bargaining purposes. (80)

Since the conference was called to discuss the question of disarmament in general, consideration was also given to land and air armaments. The General Staff pointed out that the strength of the British army was now 11,000 men less than in 1913 and said that in view of the strain of actual commitments no further reduction could be expected. They did not think that France was likely to increase her army, because of cost and the reluctance of public opinion; but she was equally unlikely to be able to reduce it to any great extent until she was reassured, over a period of five or six years, as to Germany's intentions and power to take revenge. The Air Staff opposed any discussion of air armaments, because limitations would be too easily evaded.

79. C.I.D. Paper 277-B, CAB 4/7; C.I.D. 145th meeting, CAB 2/3.

80. C. 83(21), CAB 23/27.

They also pointed out that the R.A.F. was fully extended and was even now inadequate for the defence of Great Britain. (81) The Cabinet, however, decided that the limitation of air armaments ought to be taken up at the conference, and that French agreement should be sought in return for support over the 1919 guarantee. (82)

During the weeks of preparation for the conference the British tried to maintain consultation with the Japanese and to demonstrate consideration for their feelings. The confusion about preliminary conversations added to the nervous defensiveness with which the Japanese reacted to the proposal for a Pacific conference. There was general welcome for a discussion of armaments limitation, but the Pacific conference was widely regarded as an attempt to summon Japan before a court where she would have to explain and justify her policy. (83) During August Eliot continued to report Japanese anxiety: the military authorities were said to be anxious to maintain the alliance with Britain and to emphasise Japan's special position in Asia. (84) When

81. C.I.D. Papers 276-B, 279-B, CAB 4/7; C.I.D. 146th meeting, CAB 2/3. For the question of home air defence see below, pp. 188-94.

82. C. 83(21), CAB 23/27. For the question of the guarantee see above, p. 25.

83. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.341, 355, 357, 365 (No.355 was sent at the instance of the Prime Minister); Tokyo desp. 402, 29 Jul. 1921, A 6282/18/45, FO 371/5618.

84. Tokyo tel. 291, 7 Aug. 1921, F 2960/2905/23, FO 371/6704; Tokyo tel. 310, 14 Aug., A 5966/18/45, FO 371/5618; Tokyo desp. 419, 15 Aug., A 6787/18/45, FO 371/5619; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.361, 365.

the American proposals for the conference agenda arrived the Foreign Office, at Lloyd George's instance, asked for the Japanese Government's views and suggested coming to an agreement about the agenda. (85)

However, although the Foreign Minister asked for British views, the Japanese did not prove forthcoming about their own preparations. Eliot explained their reticence by suggesting that they were anxious not to arouse American suspicion, and that they also found the British reserved. (86) In truth, despite their professions of consideration, neither Government took the other into its confidence. By their nature many of the British memoranda could not have been shown to the Japanese, and in any case the slowness of sea communication between London and Tokyo would have made an exchange of papers difficult. But whatever their reservations about Britain, the Japanese Government instructed their delegation that the alliance with her was preferred to a tripartite agreement. (87)

85. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.378; A 6804/18/45, FO 371/5619.

86. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.376, 382, 397, 548; Tokyo tel. 401, 14 Oct., A 7530/18/45, FO 371/5620; Tokyo desp. 541, 21 Oct., A 8647/18/45, FO 371/5623. S. Asada, "Japan's 'Special Interests' and the Washington Conference," in American Historical Review, LXVII (1961), p.65, stresses that the Japanese were determined to defend their special position in Manchuria and north China, and that the Americans were aware of their intention and had no intention of challenging it.

87. Nish in Studies in International History, edd. Bourne and Watt, p.380.

The Canadians also early showed a desire for information about British preparations. Before the end of August Christie at his level was asking for Foreign Office papers, and Meighen at his was asking for papers as well as enquiring about Dominion representation at the conference. (88) The form of Domination representation caused some difficulty with Smuts, who did not assert any South African interest in the subject matter of the conference but wished the other Prime Ministers to insist on separate invitations. Predictably Hughes of Australia disagreed and thought that Lloyd George's proposal of a single Empire delegation but separate full powers for the Dominion members went too far. This solution was adopted, and thus no difficulty was caused with the Americans, who for domestic reasons would almost certainly have objected to separate Dominion representatives. (89) The only remaining difficulty was the position of South Africa in any treaties signed at Washington, since Smuts did not nominate any South African representative. After a plea from Lloyd George on 1 December Smuts relented and provided full powers for Balfour to sign for South Africa. (90)

88. F 3176/2905/23, FO 371/6705; C.O. 42646, CO 532/174; Canadian Sessional Papers, 1922, No.47A, cited in R.M. Dawson, The Development of Dominion Status 1900-1936, London 1937, p.217.

89. C.O. 49075, CO 532/199; C.O. 49268, 49867, 49868, 50749, 52186, 53100, 53220, 53444, CO 532/175; C.O. 51750, CO 532/181. The Canadian share of the correspondence is in Canadian Sessional Papers, 1922, No.47A, cited by Dawson, op. cit., pp.218-20. The Australian position is discussed by J.C. Vinson, "The problem of Australian representation at the Washington Conference for the Limitation of Naval Armaments," in Australian Journal of Politics and History, IV (1958), pp.155-64.

90. C.O. 60173, CO 532/202; C.O. 6089, CO 532/176.

The proceedings of the Washington conference, both formal and informal, are so fully published [91] that space will only be devoted here to the negotiation of what became the Quadruple Treaty, to political aspects of the armaments negotiations, and to Chinese questions so far as they affected these two main preoccupations of the British delegation.

On his way across the Atlantic Balfour, who headed the British Empire delegation, [92] succeeded in separating the two questions which had hitherto been intertwined in the tentative formulae for a tripartite agreement, namely the respect of the three countries for each other's territorial rights and their joint or individual respect of China. This technical change enabled the problems to be discussed separately, and was certainly an improvement. The draft Pacific agreement which Balfour produced on the voyage was intended, he wrote: "(a) to enable the Americans to be parties to a tripartite arrangement without committing themselves to

91. Formal proceedings (plenary sessions and committees, but not sub-committees) in Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, Washington, November 12, 1921-February 6, 1922, Washington 1922; informal conversations and correspondence in F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I and D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Ch. VI. Accounts of the conference include Harold and Margaret Sprout, Towards a New Order of Sea Power, Princeton 1940, Chs.9-13; Roskill, Naval Policy, pp.310-28. Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific 1909-1922, pp.567-653, is very full and uses unpublished American and Japanese material.

92. Lloyd George had signified his intention of going for at least part of the time, but was retained in London by the Irish negotiations.

military operations; (b) to bring the existing Anglo-Japanese Alliance to an end without hurting the feelings of our Ally; (c) to leave it open to us to renew a defensive alliance with Japan if she should again be threatened by Germany or Russia; (d) to frame a Treaty which will reassure our Australasian Dominions; (e) to make it impossible for American critics to suggest that our Treaty with Japan would require us to stand aside in the case of a quarrel between them and Japan, whatever the cause of that quarrel might be." (93) In the draft the three countries undertook to respect each other's existing territorial rights in the Pacific islands and bordering territories and to consult whenever they were thought to be threatened by the action of another power. Further any two of them parties could, in the case of any such threat, protect themselves by a purely defensive alliance. Any previous treaty on the defence of territorial rights in the region was to be superseded. (94)

At his first conversation with Hughes on 11 November, Balfour altered the words "treaty" and "alliance" to "arrangement" throughout the draft. Since Hughes seemed worried at the suggestion that he might show it to the Japanese, Balfour at his first conversation with Prince

93. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.415.

94. Washington del. desp. 1, 11 Nov. 1921, F 4466/2905/23, FO 371/6706; F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.2-3.

Tokugawa confined himself to the general observation that he thought it might be suitable to have a tripartite agreement while retaining the right to renew the Anglo-Japanese alliance if necessary. (95) Balfour wanted the first overtures for close consultation to come from the Japanese, but nothing happened until 18 November. Then the Counsellor in the Japanese Embassy in Washington came to see Hankey and told him that Japan desired the renewal of the alliance but would welcome the extension of its principles to a tripartite agreement. (96)

The Japanese did not follow up this overture for some days, mainly because Baron Shidehara, the delegate responsible for political questions, was ill. On 23 November Balfour gave Baron Kato his draft. Prince Tokugawa, who spoke to Hankey later, was enthusiastic about it; but Shidehara apparently foresaw American objections to the provision for an alliance between two of the parties, and decided to drop it. (97) His new

95. F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.1-2; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.416.

96. S.W.2, CAB 30/27. Lord Lee, who arrived in Washington before the rest of the delegation and spent the intervening days renewing acquaintances, gathered not only that the Anglo-Japanese alliance was still intensely unpopular but that the Americans thought that the British wanted to renew it: Hankey to Lloyd George, 11 Nov. 1921, CAB 63/34.

97. Hankey to Lloyd George, 17 Nov. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/62/1/1; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.449, encl.

draft, however, included joint protection of the vital interests, as well as the territorial rights, of the parties "in the region of the Pacific Ocean and the Far East." (98) The next draft, an American one, omitted the Far East and the vital interests and confined the scope of the agreement to island possessions in the Pacific. This became the basis of the final text, which is said to have been largely the work of Hughes. (99)

The treaty was announced on 10 December at a plenary session of the conference. In it the parties agreed to respect each other's rights in their island possessions in the region of the Pacific, and to hold a conference if controversy arose between them out of any Pacific question. If their rights were threated by any other power, they would communicate with one another as to the measures to be taken. The treaty was to remain in force for ten years, and to continue in effect thereafter unless denounced. Upon its ratification the Anglo-Japanese agreement was to terminate. (100) The final treaty was a quadruple one: the inclusion of France

98. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.449; Washington del. tel. 50, 23 Nov. 1921, F 4326/63/23, FO 371/6676; Nish in Studies in International History, edd. Bourne and Watt, pp.380-2.

99. Asada in American Historical Review, LXVII (1961), p.66; Washington del. tels. 69, 70, F 4372, 4373/2905/23, FO 371/6706; F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.3-4; Braisted, The United States Navy in the Pacific, pp.621-2.

100. B.F.S.P., Vol. CXVI, pp.627-31, 633-4.

was Hughes's suggestion, and was not welcomed in London. (101) But neither this, nor the subsequent hitch over the question whether the treaty covered the main islands of Japan, affected the general feeling of satisfaction. As Hankey wrote to Lloyd George, one of the great tasks for which they had come to Washington had been accomplished. The change from the original atmosphere of American-Japanese suspicion and American antipathy to the alliance, to the present atmosphere of "utmost good will" was, Hankey wrote, mainly due to Balfour's skill and convincing sincerity. (102)

The Japanese are generally said to have resented the ending of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The resentment was directed more against the United States than against Britain, who was regarded with sorrow rather than with anger. The obvious conclusion, that if she had to choose between them, Britain would prefer the United States to Japan doubtless held significance for the future; but it is suggested that the ending of the alliance was taken less tragically than it might have been, because the Japanese could be no more sure than anyone else how effective the new agreement might prove. (103)

101. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.458, 478.

102. Hankey to Lloyd George, 12 Dec. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/62/1/9.

103. Nish in Studies in International History, edd. Bourne and Watt, p.384.

The Pacific agreement was negotiated outside the conference proper, the main subject of which was the limitation of naval armaments. The American proposals for this, put forward by Hughes at the opening session, had been kept entirely secret. Balfour wrote at the end that the statement was conceived in a spirit of statesmanship which raised the whole level of debate and which alone saved the lengthy technical discussions from being lost in petty disputations. (104) What enabled the statesmanship to be shown, however, was the strength of the American position, the fact that only three countries were really involved, and the desire of all three to limit expenditure. In the case of Britain, as already shown, the desire was almost overwhelmingly strong. In Japan too economic difficulties were growing, and Eliot reported that it was unlikely that the existing naval programme could be carried out. (105) Although financial considerations did not affect the United States to the same extent, there was strong demand for the reduction of taxes and the popular feeling for disarmament proved more powerful than the navy lobby. There was thus a considerable degree of common interest in limitation and despite the talk of an inevitable Japanese-American clash there was no immediate cause of quarrel, especially if the Americans decided not to

104. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.585.

105. Tokyo tel. 446, 15 Nov. 1921, A 8571/18/55, FO 371/5623.

challenge the Japanese position in Manchuria.

The ratio for capital ships to be allotted to Japan was regarded by Hughes as the core of the whole scheme of limitation; and after the experts had failed to agree the question became one of high-level negotiations in which the Japanese eventually reduced their claim from 70 to 60 per cent of the United States and British figures in return for a standstill on fortifications and naval bases in the western Pacific. (106) After some hesitation the United States delegation agreed to the standstill provided Hawaii was excluded and the Japanese accepted the quadruple treaty. (107) After prolonged discussion in Tokyo the Japanese Government, in turn accepted, and the standstill was extended to British and French bases as well. (108) The exact description of the area to which the standstill was to apply still caused some difficulty, but Singapore was definitely excluded. (109) The standstill provided, in Hankey's words, "a great neutralised area separating America and Japan." (110)

106. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.432, 460.

107. Op. cit., Nos.465, 470. F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.74-83.

108. Tokyo tel. 494, 10 Dec. 1921, A 9188/18/45, FO 371/5625; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.494; F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.90-9.

109. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.494, 541, 544, 545, 563.

110. Hankey to Lloyd George, 13 Jan 1922, Lloyd George Papers, F/62/1/13.

The Japanese insistence on retaining the nearly-completed battleship Mutsu was a matter of national pride and popular sentiment. Bowing to it did not alter the ratio between the three countries, since the total American and British tonnage was increased in proportion and the scrapping arrangements altered. The size limit on replacements caused Britain technical trouble and additional expense in abandoning the projected 48,000-ton "super-Hoods" and substituting smaller ships. (111) The American proposal for a ten-year cessation of capital shipbuilding raised considerable doubts among the British experts, who feared that the naval armament and construction firms would decay and then have to be reactivated at great expense for a period of feverish building. The United States delegation themselves had second thoughts, but the Cabinet favoured the proposal and it was accepted by the conference. From the British point of view there were practical advantages in preventing rivalry in design; the arguments about labour and subsidies were fairly evenly balanced; and the political and psychological arguments for a complete holiday as against continuous slow building were very strong. Moreover, as Hankey wrote, "the menance from American or Japan bears no comparison to the former menance from Germany, or, in earlier days, from France....

111. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.501, 502, 504; Washington del. tel. 169, 15 Dec. 1921; tel. 140 to Washington del., 18 Dec., A 9338/18/45, FO 371/5626.

We can take risks (if they can really be called risks) in the one case, which we could not do in the other." (112)

The greatest ill feeling in the conference itself (that is, apart from the Shantung question which was dealt with outside it) was undoubtedly caused by the French position and the British reaction to it. It appears that the French Government and French opinion as a whole approached the conference almost exclusively from the European and military standpoint. (113) It also appears that Briand hoped to reach an agreement with the United States, possibly a revival of the 1919 guarantee: it was even suggested that he hoped for an agreement at British expenses, or at least without Britain, perhaps as a reward for mediating in the Anglo-American disagreement which the French expected. (114) If Briand made an approach to Hughes he was evidently soon disappointed, for he told Balfour on 20 November that he thought Hughes knew and cared nothing about Europe. (115) Nevertheless, bound by his own declarations

112. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.417, 420, 426, 430, 456, 463, 485; tel. 140 to Washington del., 18 Dec. 1921, A 9338/18/45, FO 371/5626; Hankey to Lloyd George, 25 Nov., Lloyd George Papers, F/62/1/5, CAB 30/31.

113. L. Archimbaud, La Conférence de Washington, Paris 1923, pp.70-2. From this charge Archimbaud, and Briand's biographer Suarez, make and exception of Albert Sarraut, then Minister for the Colonies.

114. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.437, 438; Lord Burnham to Lloyd George, 13 Dec. 1921, LLoyd George Papers, F/5/8/9.

115. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.437.

made before leaving France, Briand continued the theme of France's need for security and for guarantees which alone would permit her to limit her armaments. His speech at the plenary session of the conference on 21 November, with its plea for Allied solidarity in the face of German potential, won applause for its eloquence; but it was out of tune with the mood of the conference, and aroused an angry reaction in London. (116)

The Cabinet had a report of Briand's speech before them on 22 November. The view was expressed (by whom is not stated) that as long as France retained her powerful army in being the state of Europe would remain unsettled, and that it would be a serious matter if as a result of the conference Britain were the only European power to be disarmed. No one is recorded as having pointed out that Britain's military and air disarmament were entirely voluntary. The Cabinet referred to Briand's speech to the Committee of Imperial Defence and their views were sent to Balfour. (117) At the Committee's meeting next day, with Churchill in the chair, Briand's statements about German strength were criticised. The General Staff believed that Germany could at present put into the field 10 fully equipped divisions supported by artillery: another 4-5 million

116. Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, pp.116-35; Suarez, Briand, Vol. V, pp.267-79.

117. C. 88(21), CAB 23/27; D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.439; Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary, Vol. I, p.178.

men could probably be mobilised, but there were not enough small arms for them, no artillery, no tanks, and very few aircraft. France on the other hand, from the forces in the country itself and not counting troops overseas or in Germany, could immediately put 49 divisions into the field and her total strength after mobilisation would be about 100 divisions. Briand had also referred to the capacity of German industry to manufacture equipment at short notice, and the possibilities of concealed manufacture. He certainly underestimated the time that it would take to start production again, but the Committee of Imperial Defence made no attempt to reach a better estimate. In this case they were concerned only with the present, and concluded that Germany was not now a military threat to France. But when it came to the French programme of submarine building they were alarmed for the future, and unanimously concluded that a very serious situation might arise if France were strong on land and sea and in the air while Britain was weak all round: in such circumstances "the Empire would be merely existing on the good will of her neighbours - a situation which had not been tolerated in the past and could not be tolerated in the future." (118)

118. C.I.D. 150th meeting, CAB 2/3. On German rearmament the C.I.D. remarked merely that it was impossible to say how long, once the Control Commissions were withdrawn, it would take Germany to manufacture the material to equip the formations for which she had the manpower. They do not seem ever to have discussed the execution of the

Many of these considerations were telegraphed to Balfour the same night. "The position of this country vis-à-vis France," the telegram stated, "will become impossible if British navy is to be restricted in accordance with American proposals while French army continues on the scale of at least a hundred divisions together with overwhelming aviation and the intention to build a very large fleet of submarines. ...Anxious as we are and have proved ourselves to disarm and to march hand in hand with the United States, we cannot contemplate a situation where Great Britain would be in a few years at the mercy of France if the present happy relations were to deteriorate. We think that the Americans ought to be made to understand the gravity of the situation and to join with us in endeavouring to procure a general disarmament rather than disarmament by Britain alone." A second telegram, in Lloyd George's name, suggested that the most vital question was submarines. The delegation should take an uncompromising line on land and air armaments, but might modify their attitude if by so doing they could secure the total abolition of

118. (Cont)
disarmament of Germany. The War Office and the Foreign Office dealt with this matter with the Ambassadors' Conference in Paris and their military advisers: both, and especially the Foreign Office, were sceptical about the possibility of maintaining German disarmament for any length of time. For the difficulties of the Military Control Commission see Brigadier-General J.H. Morgan, Assize of Arms, London 1945; General C.M.E. Nollet, Une Expérience du désarmement, Paris 1932.

submarines. (119)

Meanwhile a meeting of the conference committee on limitation on 23 November had been about to end with speeches of farewell to Briand, who was going home, when Balfour received the telegram sent after the Cabinet meeting the previous day, and in consequence felt bound to revive the question of land armaments. (120) But he deprecated his instructions. The great danger when the conference began, he telegraphed back to London, was the United States capital ship programme. Thanks to American statesmanship this problem was on the way to solution, but agreement could still fail if France insisted on having a battle fleet comparable with the one she had had before the war. Would it not be foolish to wrangle over her army, which only affected Britain in so far as it made general land disarmament impossible? In any case, as the General Staff had recognised in October, France would not reduce her army unless the United States ratified the treaty of guarantee - and this was not going to happen. "I am to try," Balfour went on, "if possible to induce the French to agree to a very small battle fleet, so as to leave us free to accept American proposals without modification. Having persuaded them to deprive themselves of this form of

119. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.442, 443.

120. Op. cit., No.447, Briand's reply, Conference on Limitation of Armaments, pp.438-41.

naval defence, I am then to persuade them that they really require no submarines, because a war between France and England is unthinkable. This task being successfully accomplished, I am to ask them to reduce the number of their aircraft, seeing that we cannot sleep securely in our beds lest in a war with France London should be burned to the ground! For a task so complex as this I fear a trained diplomatist is required." Balfour also pointed out that the conference could not deal with land disarmament because all the interested powers were not present. The Americans had tacitly admitted as much when Hughes in his opening speech had not mentioned land armaments. (121)

On 26 November the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who had been absent from the previous meeting, injected some military common sense into the proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence. He pointed out that the French army was the only effective one in Europe, that in the present state of the continent it was lucky that one of the most pacific of all nations should have realised that power was needed to carry out the orders of the Supreme Council, and that Britain was

121. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.448. On 13 November Balfour had asked the other United States delegates, Senator Lodge and Elihu Root, what they proposed to do about military limitation. They replied that the American people thought of armaments limitation solely in naval terms, and they apparently did not expect the conference to deal with other aspects: Hankey to Lloyd George, 14 Nov. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/62/1/2.

very fortunate to have such a friend at such a time. (122) Lloyd George, however, was unrepentant. He telegraphed again to Balfour that Briand must not be allowed to get away with "faked and disingenuous figures," and that the American public should be made aware of the facts about Germany's impotence lest they believe France to be in danger of renewed German aggression. (123)

Lloyd George has been accused of instigating an anti-French press campaign before and during the conference. Anti-French articles certainly appeared in the British press, but the denunciation in Washington of the French naval claim was started by Lord Riddell. (124) Curzon and Churchill both included references to militarism in speeches at the end of November. Lloyd George, however, does seem to have become particularly excited about the French position. His motives are obscure; but some Ministers became alarmed at the public quarrel. Lord Lee telegraphed from Washington that it might affect the prospects of the conference. He hoped that Lloyd George would have an early meeting with Briand, and enquired whether in the meantime Lloyd George would consider publicly renewing the pre-war British undertaking to defend the French coasts. This, he thought, would effectively counter the French claim

122. C.I.D. 151st meeting, CAB 2/3.

123. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.452.

124. Op. cit., No.517; Balfour to Jusserand, 19 Dec. 1921, CAB 30/31.

to naval armaments and save the naval agreement with its "incalculable boon" of the disappearance of the United States and Japanese capital ship programmes. He agreed with his experts in Washington that the present French naval strength offered no menace to Britain even if her fleet were reduced in accordance with the American proposals. (125) Churchill, who had taken the chair at the Committee of Imperial Defence and at Lloyd George's request had been responsible for at least one of the angry telegrams to Balfour, felt bound to record his general view of Anglo-French relations. He thought that willingness to keep the promise about guaranteeing the French frontier ought to be the foundation of Anglo-French and Anglo-German relations whether or not the United States came in. He would include this willingness in any discussion with the French about armaments; on that basis he would go to great lengths to stop the French building a large submarine fleet and would use the French army and air force as bargaining counters. Churchill also favoured bringing British policy on Turkey into line with the French, a move which he knew Lloyd George would not like, and thought that they ought to work for an understanding between Britain, France and Germany for the reconstruction of Central Europe and Russia. "All these aspects require to be treated together. I am not at all

125. Lee to Lloyd George, 25 Nov. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/31/2/67.

in agreement with the way in which our relations with France are now being treated. It would be an enormous shock to the British public, who have 600,000 graves in France, if their statesmen were to tell them that we backed the wrong horse." (126)

Land armaments were now tacitly dropped at the Washington Conference: it also became clear upon examination that limitation of air forces was impossible.(127) But French naval demands and the general question of submarines remained to trouble proceedings. In the first stage of negotiating the capital ship ratios Hughes regarded it as essential to fix the allocation between the three great naval powers before embarking on subsidiary questions. On 28 November Balfour reported that the French delegation had privately agreed to a ratio of 5:15 with Britain and the United States and 5:9 with Japan (slightly less than the 1.75:5:3 which they ultimately accepted); and as late as 9 December Hughes was not expecting great difficulties. (128) Therefore the French claim, put forward on 15 December, to retain their ten capital ships and to start replacing them without a naval holiday came as a shock and touched Hughes

126. Churchill to Lloyd George, 28 Nov. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/10/1/48.

127. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.440, 476, 477.

128. Op. cit., Nos.432, 456, 489.

on the central point of the conference. (129) During the interval between Hughes's appeal to Briand to reduce the claim and the French reply, (130) Lee reverted to his suggestion that Britain should guarantee the security of the French coasts. He thought that such an offer would help to get the French out of their present impossible position, which threatened to wreck the conference, and could hardly be refused. He also thought that if the French were compelled to give way over capital ships they would be more intractable over submarines, and he hoped that Lloyd George might be able to exact, in return for the offer, a French undertaking to abandon their submarine programme. (131)

The original United States plan provided for the limitation of all classes of naval vessel, including submarines. The smaller naval powers were generally averse to limiting vessels other than capital ships, and the question was technically much more difficult.

129. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.305, 506. Geddes commented later: "France has done much more than ask for surface ships and submarines in excess of all reasonable needs for security, she has committed the heinous offence of interfering with the first great international conference held in America, and this particular effect of the attitude is the one which will be remembered": Washington desp. 37, 13 Jan. 1922, A 587/2/45, FO 371/7247.

130. F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. I, pp.130-3, 135-6.

131. Balfour to Lloyd George, 18 Dec. 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/10/1/70.

The French demand for smaller vessels, including submarines, greatly exceeded the figures in the American plan. For their part the British, as has been said, were anxious to secure the total abolition of submarines. Although the British case, based on humanitarian grounds, made a considerable appeal to American public opinion, it was opposed by all the other naval powers including the smaller ones not at the conference. (132) Lee stated the British case, for the record, in the committee on limitation on 22 December, and it was discussed on subsequent days. The only outcome was the Root resolutions on submarine warfare, embodied in a treaty signed on 6 February 1922 which was never fully ratified. (133) Abolition of submarines having been rejected, Britain too insisted on complete freedom in

132. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.513, 547.

133. Text in Cmd 1627 of 1922, Conference on Limitation of Armament, Washington, 1921-22, Treaties, Resolutions, etc. In stating the British case Lee made use of an article by a French naval officer expounding, and commending, German policy on submarine warfare. The French resented this attack, maintaining that the officer had only been describing German views: later a statement was issued in Washington that he had been expressing a purely personal view. Capitaine de frégate R.V.P. Castex, Synthèse de la guerre sous-marine Paris 1920 (the book was a republication of articles which appeared in the Revue maritime in the first half of 1920); Paris desp. 3254, 23 Nov. 1921, A 8729/18/45, FO 371/5623; Paris tel. 1, 1 Jan. 1922; Washington del. statement, 4 Jan., A 3, 169/2/45, FO 371/7245; tel. 208 to Washington del., 19 Jan., A 487/2/45, FO 371/7246.

building smaller surface vessels. The five-power naval treaty signed on 6 February limited only the numbers, size and armament of capital ships and aircraft carriers.(134)

British sensitivity to the French submarine programme seems to have been excessive. It was largely confined to the politicians, none of whom seems to have imagined that the French might, for example, want submarines to protect troop shipments from North Africa against Italian interference. The reaction may be partly ascribed to propinquity (in the sense of Hankey's observation that a powerful neighbour was much more of a threat than a powerful distant country), and partly to the generally suspicious state of Anglo-French relations at the time and fears about French policy. The contrast with the generally dispassionate discussion of competition with the United States and Japan is marked. But Hardinge in Paris thought from the start that the French programme was to a large extent intended as a bargaining counter, or that the French, desperately anxious for a British guarantee, would not come to terms

134. Tel. 140 to Washington del., 18 Dec. 1921, A 9338/18/45, FO 371/5626; Washington del. tels. 193, 22 Dec.; 197, 23 Dec.; 199, 25 Dec., 209, 30 Dec., A 9591, 9595, 9602, 9711/18/45, FO 371/5627. Naval treaty, B.F.S.P., Vol. CXVII, pp.453-70.

on submarines without it. (135) As has been seen in Chapter 1, the French programme featured substantially in the general settlement discussed in January 1922, but thereafter it receded from view.

The Chinese issues at the Washington Conference, many of them of a technical nature, formed the subject of a declaration of principles in the Nine-Power Treaty of 6 February 1922 in which the parties undertook to respect the sovereignty, independence and integrity of China, to provide to China the fullest opportunity to develop a stable government, to establish and maintain the principle of equal opportunity, and to refrain from seeking special privileges. A treaty on tariffs was also signed, and resolutions passed on such matters as extra-territoriality, foreign armed forces, and postal agencies. (136) The question of Shantung was dealt with outside the conference, in direct

135. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, Nos.438, 527. A particular cause of British resentment in the autumn of 1921 was the signature by a French representative, Franklin-Bouillon, of a separate agreement with the Turkish nationalists.

136. Nine-Power Treaty, B.F.S.P., Vol. CXIX, pp.562-7; Tariff treaty, op. cit., pp.557-62; resolutions in Cmd 1627 of 1922.

Sino-Japanese negotiations aided by Hughes and Balfour. Pressure on both sides was needed to bring about agreement, which was the more essential because from the American point of view Shantung was probably the key to the quadruple treaty and the naval agreement. Of the resulting Sino-Japanese treaty Balfour wrote that, with the Nine-Power Treaty, it was "in complete harmony with the general policy of His Majesty's Government ... and will provide the foundation of a solid and enduring peace in the regions of the Pacific and the Far East." (137)

On the texts of the various agreements, such official optimism was perhaps not excessive. But the actual state of China did not encourage it: the execution of the tariff treaty and the resolution on extra-territoriality were continually held up in subsequent years by civil war and disorder. The Nine-Power Treaty conformed to the policy recommended by the Foreign Office, of seeking a declaration of principle on Chinese integrity and the Open Door without embarrassing commitments. No means of enforcing respect for the independence and integrity of China were ever contemplated: even before 1914 neither Britain nor the United States had for years considered armed intervention on the mainland except to protect their own subjects. Now, with American power excluded

137. D.B.F.P., Ser. I, Vol. XIV, No.585; Sino-Japanese treaty, B.F.S.P., Vol. CXVI, pp.676-88.

from the western Pacific and British power reduced, the maintenance of a "solid and enduring peace" would depend on what kind of China emerged from the revolutionary turmoil, on Japanese restraint, and on such influence as the United States and Britain were still able and willing to exercise.

The defence of Great Britain against air attack

The alarm felt in Britain about the French submarine programme in the winter of 1921-22 was paralleled in 1922 by alarm over the prospects of air attack. One of the questions asked by the secretariat of the Committee of Imperial Defence in their survey in September 1920 of the military, naval and air obligations of the British Empire had been: "Is the scheme for home defence to be revised and if so should it be based for the time being on the possibility of France being the enemy?" (138) For most of 1921 consideration of this question was postponed while on the one hand the more urgent problem of naval policy was discussed, and on the other hand the R.A.F. struggled for independence of the other Services. In the autumn, while the organisational problem was still unsettled but the preparations for the Washington Conference had been made, the Air Ministry were ready to press for examination of an air programme of

138. C.I.D. Paper 257-B, CAB 4/7: see above, pp. 113-15.

home defence.

The Committee of Imperial Defence deprecated making plans for defence against France, but agreed to set up a sub-committee of Service advisers to consider the vulnerability of the British Isles to air attack and the measures necessary to meet the danger. (139) The Air Staff disclaimed any intention of arguing that air attack was likely, but held that it was a more probable threat to national security than United States or Japanese naval building. They asserted, as an example, that France now possessed bombing aircraft sufficient to deliver, at the outbreak of hostilities, daily attacks of 31 tons of high explosives by day and 13 tons by night, compared with the heaviest German air raid of the war of 10.5 tons. (140) Before the sub-committee reported, a new French programme of aircraft construction, which was supposed to produce 150 machines a month, caused the Cabinet to agree that French air development constituted a formidable danger. (141)

The sub-committee, consisting of the three Chiefs of Staff and other officers from each Service, reported in April 1922. They began by saying that they had not taken political considerations into account. Although

139. C.I.D. 147th meeting, 31 Oct. 1921; 148th meeting, 9 Nov., CAB 2/3.

140. C.I.D. Paper 156-C, CAB 5/4; C.I.D. Paper 102-A, CAB 3/3.

141. C. 18(22), 15 Mar. 1922, CAB 23/29; C.P. 3901, CAB 24/136.

war with France could not now be regarded as within the bounds of reasonable possibility, France had been taken as the basis of the enquiry because she was the nearest neighbour and had the most powerful air force in Europe. Any measures that would meet an air attack from France would therefore be more than enough to meet an attack from any other European country. On Balfour's instructions they had discussed air attack on its own, but it was unrealistic to assume that the other two Services would not be involved, and the military as well as political factors which would deter France from attacking ought to be borne in mind. Even on the narrow problem put to them, the sub-committee warned that the Air Staff's picture of the scale and effects of air attack was based on estimates of the possible future effectiveness of air power, not on actual experience. The Air Staff had calculated that the French air force was at that time in a position to drop 1,500 tons of bombs a month on Great Britain, and that attacks on this scale would dislocate the machinery for putting the country on a war footing and would probably make it necessary to move the seat of government from London to the north of England. They considered that if a continuous day and night attack were maintained indefinitely, "railway traffic would be disorganised, food supplies would be interrupted, and it is probable that after being subjected for several weeks to the strain of such an attack the population would be so

demoralised that they would insist upon an armistice." The Air Staff recommended that in order to meet the danger the establishment of the air force at home should be increased, in order to enable an offensive organisation to be built up, and that a zone of defence should be organised.

The sub-committee recognised that it was not practicable to safeguard the country against all the contingencies of war, and that it was for the Government to decide whether the risk of air attack was sufficiently serious to necessitate providing defences to meet it. If a greater state of preparedness were regarded as necessary, they recommended that the air force at home should be strengthened by increasing its size, forming a reserve, and fostering civil aviation. (142)

This report was discussed in the Committee of Imperial Defence on 24 May. Balfour said that the question was very embarrassing. If the Air Staff's forecast were correct, an enemy could strike a blow that would render the country almost powerless: but from the political point of view such an attack by France was almost inconceivable. The question was so important that there should be a special meeting with the Prime Minister, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer should also attend. (143) Balfour then wrote a paper setting out the problem as he

142. C.I.D. Paper 106-A, CAB 3/3. Meetings of the sub-committee and memoranda, CAB 16/39.

143. C.I.D. 157th meeting, CAB 2/3.

saw it - largely accepting the Air Staff's picture - and the possible courses of action. The first was "to leave things as they are, and trust to the impossibility of the two Allies coming to blows. The objection to this course is that the impossible may after all occur; and that even if it does not occur, the mere fear of it may, in quite conceivable circumstances, greatly weaken British diplomacy and may put temptation in the way of French statesmen which they would find hard to resist." The second course was to expand the air force at home. This would be expensive but could be done. (144)

Thus the Service advisers' cautioned in using France merely as an example was discarded, France was taken as a possible enemy, and the problem of air defence was now being discussed with a mixture of realism and distaste which, as Collier points out, had the long-term drawbacks that, on the triple ground that economy was paramount, the threat unreal, and the remedy uncertain, effective measures to meet an air attack from any quarter were postponed until the cost became very high.(145)

However the threat from France was now used to obtain some action that would probably not have been taken

144. C.I.D. Paper 108-A, CAB 3/3.

145. Basil Collier, The Defence of the United Kingdom, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series, London 1957, p.8.

otherwise. The full-dress meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence for which Balfour had asked took place on 5 July with Lloyd George in the chair and with Horne and Churchill present in addition to Balfour, the Service Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff. Trenchard expounded two alternative schemes, one costing £600,000 a year and providing six squadrons for home defence, the other costing £2 million a year and providing fifteen service squadrons, five auxiliary squadrons and an auxiliary air force as reserve. Horne said that money spent on the air force ought to be saved on the other Services, but Lee, Worthington-Evans and Balfour all said that this was impossible. Some Ministers were doubtful whether the programme was large enough, since the French were said to have 220 squadrons, but the R.A.F. were not anxious to expand more. (146)

Further meetings and papers were devoted to the question of cost, and to a slightly revised Air Ministry scheme, until on 2 August the Committee of Imperial Defence agreed to recommend the adoption of a scheme, starting in the autumn of 1922, to provide 501 aircraft for home defence at a cost of £2 million a year. Further expansion was not to be precluded, and would be considered next year in the light of the financial situation and the air policy of other countries. The Cabinet accepted the recommendation on the following day;

146. C.I.D. 158th meeting, CAB 2/3.

and the programme was announced to Parliament. (147) Meanwhile in March the Government had confirmed the separate existence of the Air Ministry and the autonomy of the R.A.F., but had decided to institute an enquiry into the proper method of achieving co-operation between it and the navy. (148)

Thus a beginning was made in providing for the air defence of Great Britain. Although the Air Staff's forecast of the consequences of air attack were not fully worked out until the spring of 1922, the ideas were sufficiently current earlier to account for the attempts to secure some measure of air disarmament at the Washington Conference and later. If France could have been induced to cut down her air force, the necessity of spending money on a home defence air force might have seemed to disappear. The twenty-three squadron scheme was not in fact large enough to meet a real threat from France, but despite the drawbacks of using her as a yardstick it was something to have any yardstick at all in 1922.

147. C.I.D. Papers 109-A, 111-A, CAB 3/3; C.I.D. 162nd meeting, 163rd meeting, CAB 2/3; C. 43(22), CAB 23/30; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 157, col. 1662.

148. C.I.D. Papers 135-C, 136-C, 139-C, 140-C, 141-C, 149-C, 150-C, 151-C, 153-C, 159-C, 160-C, 163-C, CAB 5/4; C.I.D. 147th meeting, CAB 2/3; C. 16(22), C. 18(22), CAB 23/29; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 151, col. 2457.

Chapter 3

General Security and Western Europe 1923-24

After the negotiations for an Anglo-French pact came to an end in the summer of 1922, the question of regional security in western Europe was not discussed again in London for almost a year. In the meantime the first proposals for general guarantees of security additional to those contained in the Covenant, and linked with reduction of armaments, were produced at Geneva.

The British Government were confronted thereby with the divergence, which had been apparent at the Peace Conference, between those countries who "desired written guarantees and those who desired moral obligations only; ... those who expected to receive under the Covenant and those who expected to give," (1) and by the equivocal position of their country, left by the abstention of the United States as the chief producer of security and with a public which believed emotionally in the League but ignored the implied obligations. The draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance satisfied practically no one and was easy to reject even though one of its principal authors was British: the more carefully worked out proposal of

1. J.R.M. Butler, in History of the Peace Conference of Paris, ed. H.W.V. Temperley, Vol. VI, London 1924, p.441. Sir Alfred Zimmern, The League of Nations and the Rule of Law, London 1936, pp.325-32, gives a masterly summing up of the position in the League in its early years.

1924, to be discussed in the next chapter, presented a more difficult problem.

The question of French security came to the surface again in 1923 in connexion once more with reparations. The question now was whether the fundamental French motive for occupying the Ruhr was a desire for security and, if it were, whether any offer on the latter would bring about a settlement. The British and German Governments both considered the question, but neither found a satisfactory answer. When a dispassionate examination of the reparation problem at last began early in 1924 the new British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, shelved the security question. MacDonald's ideas on security were as different from those of his predecessors as they were from those of the French, of both Left and Right. For a short time he and Herriot seemed to come together at Geneva, but it was not only the fall of the Labour Government that doomed the Geneva Protocol.

The Treaty of Mutual Assistance

The proposals of 1922-23 for general guarantees of security arose out of the discussions in the League, from 1920 onwards, about the general reduction of armaments in

in accordance with Article 8 of the Covenant. (2) After a suggestion in 1921 by Lord Esher for a limitation of land forces according to a fixed ratio had been criticised by European members for taking no account of varying needs for security, Lord Robert Cecil took the initiative in trying to link reduction of armaments with general guarantees of security.

Cecil submitted propositions to this effect to the Temporary Mixed Commission in July 1922 and at the same time showed them to certain members of the Government in London. One of the features was a proposal that the obligation to give assistance should be confined to countries in the same part of the globe as that where an attack took place. This attempt to overcome the reluctance of countries far from the likely scene of trouble to undertake general obligations was to prove one of the major objections to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance so far as Britain and the Dominions were concerned, and both Worthington-Evans and Balfour criticised it at once. They were also both, although for rather different reasons, critical of the advance

2. Summarised in F.P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, London 1952, Vol. I, pp.219-23, and in Survey of International Affairs, 1924, pp.17-21.

military planning suggested; and Balfour doubted whether France would ever be satisfied with anything that the British Empire would be willing to give. (3)

However on 22 September 1922 the Assembly of the League of Nations adopted a resolution commending the suggestions of the Temporary Mixed Commission as to the methods by which a treaty of mutual guarantee could be made effective, and stating that (1) No scheme for the reduction of armaments could be fully effective unless it were general; (2) Many countries could not seriously reduce their armaments unless they received a satisfactory guarantee of their safety; (3) Such a guarantee could be found in a defensive agreement, open to all countries, binding them to render immediate and effective assistance according to a prearranged plan, provided that the obligation to give assistance were limited in principle to the countries situated in the same part of the world; (4) Previously consent to the reduction of armaments was the first condition for the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. The Assembly asked the Council to examine the proposals and send them to the various governments for observations,

3. Worthington-Evans to Cecil, 11 Aug. 1922; Cecil to Worthington-Evans, 14 Aug.; Balfour to Cecil, 15 Sep., Cecil Papers, British Museum Add. MS 51095. At some stage Cecil saw the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Cavan, and asked him to have the plan studied in the War Office; but he was given no encouragement: Cecil to P. Noel Baker, 22 Mar. 1924, BM Add. MS 51106.

and the Temporary Mixed Commission was asked to prepare a draft treaty. (4)

During the remainder of 1922 and the first half of 1923 discussion of the proposal for a treaty proceeded in London at the same time as drafts were discussed in Geneva by the Temporary Mixed Commission and the military advisers of the Council, the Permanent Advisory Committee. But British Government Departments have never liked discussing hypothetical proposals, and there was no sense of urgency. On 14 December the Committee of Imperial Defence decided to ask the Service Departments for papers. (5) Cecil was anxious for an early discussion. He wrote to Hankey that the French Government were taking the scheme seriously and were trying to use the Permanent Advisory Committee to get schemes of specific pacts adopted which would give France security but involved no disarmament. He had had very little success in getting the matter considered in London, and nothing much would be done until the Committee of Imperial Defence set the Departments moving. The Temporary Mixed Commission was due to meet in January and he was hoping to present an elaborated scheme for a treaty; but he would immediately

4. League of Nations, Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Assembly during its Third Session, Geneva 1922, pp.24-7.

5. C.I.D. 168th meeting, CAB 2/3. The Admiralty had already sent in some critical observations: C.I.D. Paper 381-B, CAB 4/8.

be asked what the Government thought, and at present he would have to reply that "the British Government do not think." (6) Cecil also sent in the text of his draft treaty and a note on its working. The proposal was for a general treaty with supplementary conventions relating to any country which believed itself to be in particular danger. Cecil wrote that if the treaty were universal it would certainly prevent aggression. If it were accepted by a majority of states, he believed that aggression would be prevented and disarmament secured provided that the majority included the Great Powers (among them Germany and Russia or at least one of them). If Great Power co-operation were not secured, the project would fail. (7)

All the Service Departments criticised the scheme. The Air Staff and the General Staff both considered that the plan would not provide for effective assistance and therefore could not be a basis for reduction of armaments. The General Staff thought that partial treaties could give a greater possibility of advance planning but would not necessarily lead to disarmament: they also considered that the continental limitation was impossible for the British Empire. (8) The Admiralty sent in a

6. Cecil to Hankey, 15 Dec. 1922, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51088.

7. C.I.D. Paper 383-B, CAB 4/8.

8. C.I.D. Paper 387-B, CAB 4/8; C.I.D. Paper 395-B, CAB 4/9.

second paper in February, in which they maintained that a treaty of this kind would involve Britain in commitments of unknown magnitude. The spread of the Empire committed her in all parts of the world regardless of the continental limitation. Naval forces were likely to be called on first, and a large part of the burden would be found to fall on Britain: if the treaty did involve fresh commitments the navy would have to be expanded. The Admiralty thought that it would be dangerous for a signatory state to reduce its armaments in reliance on assistance from others while non-signatory states were free to develop their strength as they chose. (9)

The Foreign Office were also asked for a paper on guarantees in general. Discussing what was wanted with a member of the Western Department concerned with League of Nations affairs, C.W. Orde, Hankey pointed out that the existing guarantee in Article 10 of the Covenant had not brought any military help to Poland in 1920. He also thought it necessary to consider how far it would be possible to fulfil such guarantees without increasing forces. At present if Britain earmarked, say, a quarter of her forces for League of Nations purposes the whole army would be immobilised. (10) A memorandum sent to the Committee of Imperial Defence on

9. C.I.D. Paper 405-B, CAB 4/9.

10. Hankey to Crowe, 7 Feb. 1923 and minutes, 15 Feb., W 1075/30/98, FO 371/9418.

3 April stated the current position: unless Article 10 were given a peremptory interpreation, which seemed unlikely, the Covenant imposed on Britain no obligations to take military action without the concurrence of her representatives on the Council. In a second part to the paper the Historical Adviser to the Foreign Office wrote that in the past general guarantees had not been effective in preventing war, but they had always been for limited periods. Cecil's proposal was in effect one for a general defensive alliance of unlimited duration, and if kept might tend to produce a political union. Headlam-Morley thought that the question whether treaties of guarantee could be depended on was really one of political will, which only the Government, Parliament, and the nation could answer. If a British Government, after full discussion and debate, felt themselves authorised to become parties to such a treaty and make its maintenance a permanent part of British policy - including defence policy - then Britain's power and influence were such that in the long run the treaty would succeed. But if the Government were half-hearted, then the treaty would break down. (11)

Meanwhile Cecil had been sounding the views of the Labour Party, without finding much encouragement. MacDonald wrote that his hopes for the future were based more on political and voluntary organisations such as

11. C.I.D. Paper 416-B, CAB 4/9; W 2878/30/98, FO 371/9418.

the international socialist movement rather than on an organisation of governments such as the League. But since he was aware that he might have governmental responsibility before long, he offered some criticisms of the scheme: he thought that partial agreements might turn into alliances, and that giving the power to make decisions to the Council would lead to a Great Power directorate. (12)

Work by the Committee of Imperial Defence was stimulated by a request from Geneva for the observations on the Assembly resolution and by the imminence of the next meeting of the Permament Advisory Committee, which was to examine Cecil's draft. The draft itself was being amended. To meet criticisms that assistance could be paralysed by lack of unanimity on the Council, Cecil proposed that the Council should decide on the identity of the aggressor by a three-quarters majority. The Service Departments at once objected that this meant that the Council would be able to commit British forces against the vote of the British Government. (13) The Committee of Imperial Defence agreed on 11 April that the draft treaty should be considered by the Cabinet and that meanwhile the British representatives on the Permament Advisory Committee might discuss practical questions but not political issues. The latter were

12. MacDonald to Cecil, 22 Feb. 1923, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51081.

13. C.I.D. Papers 406-B, 408-B, 412-B, CAB 4/9.

defined as the questions whether mutual guarantees should be given at all, whether they could be considered effective, whether the Council should decide by a majority vote, whether members should provide a fixed proportion of their effectives, whether there should be a general treaty with special conventions or partial treaties leading to a general one. (14)

On technical grounds alone the Permanent Advisory Committee decided that Cecil's treaty was unworkable and would involve an increase rather than a reduction in armaments. But the French were anxious to keep the idea of mutual guarantees alive, and the Temporary Mixed Commission set to work again. Cabinet consideration, however, was still postponed. Instead the Committee of Imperial Defence discussed the proposed treaty on 29 June. The whole conception of general guarantees was questioned by Amery, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and by Curzon who also thought that the treaty was unlikely to satisfy France. Cecil, who was now a member of the Government, said that he thought that the French considered that a general treaty could be valuable, although it would have to be supplemented by special agreements. The Committee decided that memoranda on

14. C.I.D. 171st meeting, CAB 2/3; C.O. 18855/23, CO 532/241.

the treaty should be circulated to the Cabinet. (15)

The first of these memoranda was by Amery, who questioned the whole idea of pursuing disarmament through security guarantees. He denied the contention, so frequently advanced after the First World War, that armaments were a cause of war. He argued that where competition had grown up without a real conflict of interests, it could be reduced by frank discussion: this had been achieved at Washington over capital ships and he thought that it should be tried with France over air forces. But where there were fundamental differences of policy disarmament either was impossible or, if achieved, would not lead to peace. Furthermore a treaty of mutual guarantee was bound to be a guarantee of the status quo; it therefore would not lead to peace because it would be unacceptable to the former enemy countries. And British public opinion would not agree to being dragged into war to preserve every detail of a settlement which by its nature could not be wholly equitable. As he had done at the meeting of the Committee

15. C.I.D. 173rd meeting, CAB 2/3. Among papers submitted for this meeting was one by Cecil defending the treaty and two by Hankey, questioning whether countries would in practice fulfil a general guarantee at any moment and reissuing a paper of 1905 to the same effect by his predecessor as secretary of the C.I.D.: C.I.D. Papers 415-B, 420-B, CAB 4/9; C.I.D. Paper 431-B, CAB 4/10.

of Imperial Defence, Amery also maintained that British commitments under such a treaty would far outweigh the advantages gained, and he saw no reason why Britain need become involved in European conflicts. The continental limitation, he said, if carried to its logical conclusion would mean the end of the British Empire. (16)

The Foreign Office did not succeed in producing a Cabinet paper before the end of the summer. The head of the Western Department, G.H. Villiers, wrote a short paper intended for the purpose, pointing out that experience over Article 10 of the Covenant had already shown that a general guarantee with commitments would not be accepted, and that partial treaties were likely to revive the system of alliances and would not reduce armaments. (17) This memorandum was submitted to Curzon in August, but Curzon kept it because, as he said, nothing was likely to be done at the end of the parliamentary session. (18) Meanwhile Crowe had written

16. C.P. 311(23), CAB 24/161.
17. Memorandum by Villiers, 21 Jun. 1923, W 5252/30/98, FO 371/9419.
18. Minute by Curzon, 7 Oct. 1923, W 7982/30/98, FO 371/9421. In a debate in the House of Commons on 23 July, on a motion by MacDonald asking the Government to summon an international disarmament conference, Baldwin said that the draft treaty, when presented, would be examined with sympathy and interest and with "an earnest desire, at the first moment when it appears to be practicable, that the aims of the League, if not in the exact form in which the League have suggested they should be brought about, shall be brought into effect in Europe." MacDonald in his speech said that he did not believe that a scheme of guarantees of assistance would ever work out: the only possible foundation for peace was a feeling of security based on justice, fair play, open decent conduct and neighbourliness: H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 167, cols. 75-182.

some more far-reaching criticism. In the first place he believed that a general scheme for the reduction of armaments was impossible. He doubted whether the Washington naval treaty would ever have been negotiated had not Britain been "inspired by the wish to save money and by a suspicion that capital ships might be, under conditions of modern warfare, a bad investment." He doubted whether France would agree to any substantial reduction of her forces even in return for a general or a particular guarantee: "Do we expect her to diminish the number of her divisions, or the strength of her artillery and air squadrons in reliance on a powerful British expeditionary force coming to her assistance? Can we honestly ask her to do so?" He also doubted whether disarmament, if achieved, could be maintained: "Germany is 'disarmed' owing to the operation of the Treaty of Versailles. Yet it is the recorded opinion of all the allied authorities that it is in practice quite impossible to prevent her from reconstituting a formidable force, more or less surreptitiously, and that preparations for so doing are undoubtedly in existence." Crowe also maintained that Article 8 of the Covenant did not bind members of the League to reduce their present armaments. In the second place he questioned the idea that general guarantees could be effective. Headlam-Morley had written that guarantee alliances in the past had been effective: in so far as this was true, Crowe argued, it was because such treaties had laid down very

precise conditions for their operation. The proposed treaty contained only general stipulations: if threatened states were to be induced to cut down their armaments the guarantees would have to go beyond what was contemplated in Articles 10 and 16 of the Covenant, but even in their present form these articles had already caused difficulty. Crowe also put his finger on one of the fundamental points that divided, and was to continue to divide, the protagonists of collective security from those whom Cecil called the "reactionary elements": "Lord R. Cecil endeavours to meet the objections raised in respect of the serious burden thrown upon this country in particular in virtue of the far-reaching nature of the commitments involved in the draft treaty, by urging that these are not in fact likely to arise, and need not therefore be seriously considered. But this argument is hardly calculated to inspire the absolute confidence that if a situation did arise which brought the commitments into play, we should unhesitatingly stand by them." Without such confidence nations would not reduce their armaments. Crowe thought that they were unlikely to do so in any case, and that Britain ought not to go on taking the initiative. (19)

19. Memorandum by Crowe, 24 Jun.1923, W 5047/30/98, FO 371/9419. Ever since 1920 Canada had been trying to delete Article 10 from the Covenant. At the Assembly of 1923 a resolution was passed by a majority stating that the Council should take into account the special circumstances and geographical position of each member when recommending military

In August the Temporary Mixed Commission approved by a majority a new version of the treaty, now renamed the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, which was a compromise between the drafts of Cecil and the French Colonel Réquin. The text was just ready in time to be put before the Assembly of the League in September. It passed through a committee without substantial amendment, but the Assembly was not prepared to approve or disapprove it, and it was sent to the governments without comment. Among the countries which had sent observations on the 1922 resolution was Canada - the only Dominion to do so - who replied briefly on 27 July that she could not participate in a treaty of mutual guarantee.

Cecil's position in the whole affair was anomalous. In 1921 and 1922 he was neither a member of the Government nor a British representative at the Assembly: instead, he represented South Africa. While members of the Permanent Advisory Committee were military

19. (Cont)
measures, and that it should be for the constitutional authorities of each state to decide in what degree it was bound to use its military forces. The resolution received one adverse vote and therefore did not become binding, but nevertheless carried much weight. In 1921 the Assembly had resolved that the Council might, in the case of particular members, postpone the coming into force of any economic measures decided on, if such a postponement would facilitate the attainment of the object of the measures or was necessary to minimise loss and inconvenience to such members: League of Nations, Monthly Summary, 1923, p.198; Resolutions and Recommendations adopted by the Assembly during its Second Session, Geneva 1921.

representatives of governments members of the Council, members of the Temporary Mixed Commission were chosen as individuals. Cecil became Lord Privy Seal in Baldwin's Cabinet in May 1923, charged with League of Nations affairs, and British representative on the Council. His relations in this capacity with Curzon were uneasy: Cecil complained of Curzon's refusal to give him a room in the Foreign Office and of lack of consultation about League matters; Curzon complained about Cecil talking to foreigners about British policy in general and sending papers on League matters to the Cabinet without consulting the Foreign Office. (20) Curzon was certainly jealous of his authority as Foreign Secretary and was clearly not much interested in the League, having been content with the previous arrangement whereby Balfour and Herbert Fisher represented Britain without any continuing responsibility. But it is also clear that Cecil was demanding, and that he pursued his own view of a League policy without attempting to relate it to foreign policy in general. Cecil's personal prestige in League of Nations circles was great, and he could not but appear at Geneva as representing the influence of

20. See their correspondence of June 1923 in FO 800/149 and Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51077; Cecil to Baldwin, 20 Jun., BM Add. MS 51080 and Baldwin Papers, University Library, Cambridge, F.2 (Vol. 114); also Viscount Cecil, A Great Experiment, London 1941, pp. 145-6, and All the Way, London 1949, p.178. Until October 1922 League of Nations work was channelled through the Cabinet Secretariat. Thereafter it was transferred to the Foreign Office.

Britain. It was therefore, as Villiers wrote, "undoubtedly awkward that the originator and prime mover of a scheme which is violently opposed by every Dept. of H.M. Govt should be the principal representative of H.M.G. at Geneva." (21) Matters became even more difficult when Cecil, without instructions, voted at the Assembly of 1923 in favour of resolutions on budgetary limitation and the manufacture of arms, based on the work of the Temporary Mixed Commission. The Service Departments disapproved of several of the resolutions and Cecil himself, as British representative, would therefore probably have to register the Government's objection to them when they came before the Council. Another member of the Western Department wrote to Curzon that it was difficult to see how Cecil could continue both as a member of the Temporary Mixed Commission and as principal British representative on the Council, and he recommended the dissolution of the Commission. Curzon sent the

21. Minute by Villiers, 14 Sep. 1923, W 7127/30/98, FO 371/9420. Amery also wrote to Curzon expressing concern at Cecil going ahead with the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and practically forcing on the Government the odium of rejecting a scheme of which their representative had been the principal architect. Amery was the more against the treaty now that Canada had rejected it: Amery to Curzon, 21 Sep., Curzon Papers, Box 65, Letters 1923.

memorandum to Cecil and asked for his views. (22)

Cecil replied that the difficulty was real, but he did not think that it would be cured by dissolving the Temporary Mixed Commission. It might be that his views on the Treaty of Mutual Assistance were so different from those of the rest of the Government that he would have to resign, but that point had not yet been reached since the Government had not considered the revised treaty. He took the opportunity of stressing that it was no use the Service advisers taking a purely negative attitude. The treaty might be objectionable, but they had to consider how what he regarded as the obligation in Article 8 of the Covenant was to be carried out; and any plan that France regarded as a practical step towards disarmament was worthy of consideration. (23)

The Treaty of Mutual Assistance was sent by the Assembly to the Council for transmission to governments on 29 September: it did not reach London in time for Departments to comment on it before the Imperial Conference met in October. At the Committee of Imperial Defence on 2 October Amery suggested that the question should be discussed at the Conference since it was the last opportunity for personal consultation with the Dominions before the next Assembly. But other members

22. Memorandum by Campbell, 26 Nov. 1923, W 9218/30/98; Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51077.

23. Cecil to Curzon, 28 Nov. 1923, W 9336/30/98, FO 371/9421; BM Add. MS 51077.

felt that the Cabinet should consider the treaty first, and this was not done. Cecil suggested that he should explain the treaty to the conference, but he would appear to have been discouraged. He gave an account of League matters to the conference on 11 October, without at first mentioning the draft treaty. The Australian Prime Minister, Bruce, said that his country would be very much afraid of it, and Cecil then said that he did not know whether there would be time to discuss the treaty; he would only say now that joining it would be voluntary. (24) There was no further mention of the treaty in the Imperial Conference. The main reason thereafter for lack of discussion in the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Cabinet was no doubt the political upheaval caused by Baldwin's espousal of the cause of protection. Government Departments did, however, send their comments to the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Curzon, as has been said, had held up the draft of a Foreign Office paper in the summer. Now he wrote that the situation had been changed by the redrafting of the treaty, by the Assembly resolution on Article 10, and by the present aspect of the European situation. He also thought Villiers's paper too general, and asked for it

24. C.I.D. 176th meeting, CAB 2/4; Hankey to Cecil, 3 and 5 Oct. 1923, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51088; Salisbury to Baldwin, 7 Oct., Baldwin Papers, F.4.1 (Vol. 192); E. 6th and 7th meetings, 11 Oct., CAB 32/9.

to be rewritten. (25) In a fresh memorandum Orde pointed out that in the revised treaty the original obligations had been reduced, the Council was no longer directed to determine the nature of the help to be given, and the necessity for unanimity in the Council had been restored. Neither the general nor the partial guarantees were to come into effect for any country until the Council certified that it had at least begun to reduce its armaments in accordance with the plan of reductions contemplated. He commented: "The general guarantee offered is dependent on the explicit consent of each individual State called upon to help. It is needless to consider whether it would in practice work: the obvious risk of its not working will clearly be sufficient to prevent any State from thinking any reduction of armaments possible on the strength of it." The treaty might produce certain political advantages, but against this there was the danger of illusory guarantees and the possibility of conflict between the League and individual states as to the existence of an obligation. It was hardly conceivable that the United States would join the treaty until she joined the League; and whatever a small continental European state might do, it would be impossible for the British Empire to restrict its armaments so long as a powerful or potentially powerful

25. Minute by Curzon, 7 Oct. 1923, W 7982/30/98, FO 371/9421.

country in any part of the world stood aloof. (26)

The Service Departments did not change their views on the treaty. The Government of India also expressed their opposition. (27) There the matter rested until it was taken up, still without urgency, by the Labour Government.

The Committee of Imperial Defence considered the Treaty of Mutual Assistance on 3 April 1924. Then, in view of the unanimous opposition of the Departments, little discussion was required before the Committee decided that they could not recommend the treaty to the Cabinet. The main objections were the unlimited nature of the obligations, the difficulty for the British Empire of the continental limitation, the difficulty of defining an aggressor, the impossibility of preparing plans in advance, the inevitable slowness of operation,

26. Memorandum by Orde, 18 Oct. 1923, W 8091/30/98, FO 371/9421. The United States Government to which, with those of other states not members of the League, the treaty was sent in December 1923, rejected it in June 1924: League of Nations, Official Journal, Aug. 1924, pp.1035-6; F.R.U.S., 1924, Vol.I, pp.74-83.

27. C.I.D. Papers 464-B, 465-B, CAB 4/10; C.I.D. Paper 484-B, CAB 4/11; India Office to Foreign Office, 28 Dec. 1923, W 10050/30/98, FO 371/9421. The Secretary of State for Air, Hoare, forwarding the Air Staff's paper, expressed sympathy for the idea of a general moral guarantee and regional arrangements with definite commitments without, however, discussing what the moral guarantee would add to the Covenant nor how it might contribute to a reduction of armaments.

the danger of new alliances, and the extension of the powers of the Council. (28) MacDonald was not anxious to announce the Government's decision at once, possibly because he wanted to deal with the problem of reparations before taking up security and guarantees in a different way. (29) The draft reply to the League was not sent to the Dominions for comment until the end of May: the Government's rejection of the treaty was finally sent to Geneva on 5 July. (30)

The Treaty of Mutual Assistance brought into the open all the difficulties about general security guarantees which were implicit in parts of the Covenant of the League of Nations. The fundamental problem, as Headlam-Morley pointed out, was that of the will of the governments and peoples; and as Crowe pointed out, the protagonists of general guarantees did not in the long run do their cause any good by arguing that if the guarantees existed they were unlikely to be needed. On paper, Article 10 of the Covenant was such a guarantee;

28. C.I.D. 183rd meeting, CAB 2/4; C.P. 311(24), CAB 24/167.

29. Hankey to Crowe, 28 Apr. 1924, W 3539/134/98, FO 371/10568; T. Jones, Whitehall Diary, Vol. I, pp. 272-3.

30. W 3539, 4368/134/98, FO 371/10568; W 4857, 5558/134/98, FO 371/10569; C.O. 20417/24, CO 532/186; C.O. 28235/24, CO 532/274; C.P. 309(24), CAB 24/167; C. 34(24), C. 35(24), CAB 23/48; Cmd 2200 of 1924, Correspondence between His Majesty's Government and the League of Nations respecting the proposed Treaty of Mutual Assistance; League of Nations, Official Journal, Aug. 1924, pp.1036-9.

but in practice no state had yet regarded this article as binding it to any positive action. When, in the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the attempt was made to provide machinery for applying the guarantee and supplying actual assistance, it came up against the second fundamental problem, that any such assistance, to be effective, must involve a sacrifice of national decision such as no power that was in a position to provide assistance was willing to make. Compared with these problems most of the other points criticised in the treaty - the difficulty of defining the aggressor, the impossibility of preparing plans to defend all countries against all other countries, the fear that it would lead to increases rather than reductions in armaments - were subsidiary.

For Britain the problem of the Dominions was also of great importance, in both military and political terms. The continental limitation was an imaginative attempt to limit liabilities and so to overcome the well-known reluctance of non-European countries to become involved in European conflicts: it could also have been regarded as a safeguard for the Monroe Doctrine. But it could not satisfy Britain, for three reasons. (31) The first was the spread in every continent

31. It did not satisfy the Dominions either, nor Uruguay, the only Latin American country to submit observations, who pointed out that difficulties of communications made the northern countries of South America farther away from her than much of Europe: Survey of International Affairs, 1924, pp.32-4.

of the Colonial Empire, for the defence of which Britain was directly responsible. The second was the Indian Army's position as the main source of the readily available manpower for imperial defence. The third was the fact that Britain, by providing the navy, was also responsible for all but the minimum local defence of the Dominions. This last fact never seems to have been stated in these terms, presumably for political reaons and because imperial defence was still treated in London as a whole, while none of the Dominions was in danger. In political terms, the treaty raised the still unsettled problem of imperial foreign policy and the constitutional status of the Dominions. (32) It had been possible since 1919 to envisage a British commitment to France that did not necessarily involve the Dominions, although even this aroused doubts and heartburnings down to 1926. But when it came to general security arrangements it was inconceivable that Britain could undertake commitments outside Europe and that the Dominions would not themselves consider. Cecil might protest that while the Dominions must be consulted they could not be given a liberum veto over British policy: (33) in cases such as the Treaty of

32. The position in the 1920's is discussed fully in Nicholas Mansergh, Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy 1931-39, London 1952, pp.49-81.

33. Cecil to MacDonald, 25 Jun. 1924, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51081; H.L. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 58, cols. 994-5.

Mutual Assistance and, later, the Geneva Protocol, their objections were bound to weigh very heavily indeed with any British Government. In the former case the Dominions' objections were not decisive: both Baldwin's and MacDonald's Governments were sufficiently opposed to the treaty themselves, and neither suggested to the Dominions that they might consider an alternative.

French security in 1923

Among the arguments used by Cecil in support of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance was one relating particularly to France: that disarmament on land was impossible without France, and that there was reason to believe that the treaty would promote a reduction of French armaments. French representatives certainly put a good deal of work into the treaty in 1923 as a step towards security, presumably intending that one of the partial treaties to accompany it would be one concerning their country. But Cecil was surely deceiving himself if he believed that without such a partial treaty, and one that included Britain, France would disarm.

As the French Government, from the London conference of August 1922 onwards, insisted more and more upon "productive pledges," the connexion between reparations and French security was in the minds of many people in Europe. However the attempt of the German Chancellor, Cuno, in December to stave off the expected French

seizure of pledges by making a security offer was not well conceived. Although the British Ambassador in Berlin, Lord D'Abernon, later became enamoured of the Cuno offer, he had nothing to do with its origins. (34) The proposal, that the powers interested in the Rhine should solemnly agree among themselves, and promise to the United States as trustee, that they would not go to war with one another for a generation without being authorised to do so by a plebiscite, was formally made to Hughes on 15 December with the intention that if it were found acceptable the United States Government would put it forward as their own. Hughes consulted the French Government only, and on learning that Poincaré rejected the proposal he told the German Ambassador that there

34. For the origins of the Cuno offer, and of the proposal for an expert committee to examine Germany's capacity to pay reparations put forward in Hughes's speech at New Haven on 29 December 1922, see F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. II, pp.163-203 and D.B. Gescher, Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika und die Reparationen 1920-1924, Bonn 1956, pp.114-35. The security proposal was suggested to the State Department by the United States Ambassador in Berlin, A.B. Houghton, on 22 October: according to L. Zimmermann, Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Ära der Weimarer Republik, Göttingen 1958, pp.138-42, the idea probably came originally from a German official and the Austrian Minister in Berlin. The two proposals, although kept distinct, were connected in the minds of Houghton and R.W. Boyden, the American observer with the Reparation Commission, who thought that evidence of Germany's will to peace would be necessary to secure from the Allies the concessions necessary for German financial and economic rehabilitation.

was no object in pursuing it. (35) The news of the proposal leaked to the press in Paris and Cuno therefore referred to it in a speech at Hamburg on 29 December, without mentioning the United States by name. This was the first that D'Abernon had heard of it. Having sought details from the Chancellor and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, he commented to the Foreign Office that there was justification for Cuno's contention that the offer was more important for coming from a government supported by all parties. He therefore thought it important not to let the present occasion pass or allow the proposal to be dismissed without examination. (36) Curzon, however, regarded the proposal as a "piece of impertinence," and when the British Chargé d'Affaires at the Vatican reported that the Cardinal Secretary of State was wondering whether the Pope should put forward the proposal again in a modified form, he was instructed to make no comment. (37)

35. F.R.U.S., 1922, Vol. II, pp.203-11; German Foreign Ministry archives, Rosenberg tels. to Wiedfeldt (Washington), 13, 20, 27 Dec. 1922; Wiedfeldt tels. to Rosenberg, 15, 19, 28 Dec., 3243/D718462-64, D718492, D718553-54, D718641, D718684-85. The documents and the files of the German Foreign Ministry cited here and subsequently are identified by the serial and frame numbers of the collection of microfilm copies in the Public Record Office.

36. Berlin tel. 3, 2 Jan. 1923; Berlin tel. 4, 3 Jan.; Berlin desp. 13, 4 Jan., C 178, 186, 432/178/18, FO 371/6696; memorandum by Rosenberg, 4 Jan., 3243/D718858-59. Poincaré described the offer to the conference at Paris on 2 January, stressing that there had been no formal proposal or refusal.

37. Vatican tel. 2, 13 Jan. 1923; tel 2 to the Vatican, 17 Jan., C 721/178/18, FO 371/8696.

By this time the Reparation Commission had declared Germany to be in default and the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr had begun. It is not part of the purpose of this study to examine the course of the Ruhr occupation. But in so far as it involved, or was believed to involve the question of security, some account of Anglo-French relations concerning the occupation is necessary for the discussion of the security question itself.

With the rejection of Bonar Law's reparation plan at the Paris conference of early January 1923, (38) it was evident that the occupation of the Ruhr was imminent. However much this was deplored, since the Government believed that it would neither help to solve the problem nor produce much money, there was no desire for a breach with France and no intention of undertaking mediation. (39) Extraordinary French measures in the Allied-occupied Rhineland caused difficulties throughout the year, but

38. See Cmd 1812 of 1923, Inter-allied Conferences on Reparations and Inter-Allied Debts held in London and Paris, December 1922 and January 1923; France, Documents diplomatiques, Demande de moratorium du governement allemand à la Commission des Réparations (14 novembre 1922), Conférence de Londres (9-12 décembre 1922), Conférence de Paris (2-4 janvier 1923), Paris 1923.

39. C. 1(23), 11 Jan. 1923, CAB 23/45; desp. 41 to Berlin, 8 Jan., C 499/1/18, FO 371/8626; D.D.I., Vol. I, No. 344. Immediately after the occupation began St-Aulaire found his position in London easier than for some time: Confession d'un vieux diplomate, pp. 649-54, 656-60, 664.

the Foreign Office were reluctant to contemplate withdrawing British troops or the High Commission unless their position became intolerable, and on the whole the British representatives in Belgium, France and Germany agreed. (40) The Cabinet decided that the forces should be maintained, and every effort made to avoid incidents that might rouse public opinion to demand withdrawal. (41)

For the first few months little was done even to try to elucidate French and Belgian motives, although reports about them were collected. In the second half of February the Belgians took pains to disclaim any political motive for the occupation. (42) But the French motives seemed to be more mixed: during March there was a good deal of press discussion about the terms of a possible settlement, in which security was a feature. Pertinax and Philippe Millet, in particular, wrote about a permanent organisation of the left bank of the Rhine to

40. Grahame to Waterlow, 23 Jan. 1923, C 1898/313/18, FO 371/8708; Berlin tel. 52, 24 Jan; D'Abernon to Lampson, 25 Jan., C 1567, 1558/313/18, FO 371/8707; Paris tel. 106, 27 Jan.; Kilmarnock to Lampson, 27 Jan., C 1709, 1861/313/18, FO 371/8708; Central Dept. memorandum, 8 Feb., C 2258/313/18, FO 371/8710.

41. Meeting of Ministers, 24 Jan. 1923, CAB 21/270; C. 3(23), 26 Jan., CAB 23/45; tels. 14 to Coblenz, 19 to Berlin, 43 to Paris, 24 Jan., C 1301/313/18, FO 371/8706.

42. Brussels desp. 137, 16 Feb. 1923, C 3109/313/18, FO 371/8714; Brussels tel. 30, 24 Feb.; desp. 202 to Brussels, 26 Feb., C 3472, 3626/313/18, FO 371/8716.

ensure its continued demilitarisation after the end of the Allied occupation. (43) Later in the month there was some discussion of an Anglo-French pact, which French correspondents in London believed was being reconsidered. Phipps, the Chargé d'Affaires in Paris, suggested that Poincaré might be holding out the prospect of a pact to the French public as a consolation for the day when it became necessary to admit that the Ruhr occupation had failed. (44) French discussion of security was further stimulated by the cessation of the activities of the Military Control Commission in Germany owing to the risk of incidents; and Grahame from Brussels reported signs that the French were trying to stiffen Belgian resolution by introducing the question of German armaments. (45) At the end of the month Phipps found the President of the Comité des Forges and a director of the Banque de Paris chiefly interested in security and demanding permanent international control over the Rhineland and the Ruhr. (46)

43. Écho de Paris, 1 and 2 Mar. 1923; Europe nouvelle, 3 and 10 Mar. Millet's views were said to have been generally approved by Poincaré and Millerand: Paris desp. 551, 5 Mar.; Paris tel. 260, 6 Mar., C 4167, 4184/1/18, FO 371/8632.

44. Paris tel. 315, 19 Mar. 1923; Paris tel. 334, 25 Mar.; Paris tel. 341, 27 Mar., W 2080, 2261, 2338/1585/17, FO 371/9394; Paris desp. 829, 2 Apr., C 6110/313/18, FO 371/8726.

45. Paris tel. 311, 18 Mar. 1923; Brussels tel. 64, 19 Mar., C 5019, 5179/313/18, FO 371/8723.

46. Paris tel. 345, 28 Mar. 1923, C 5825/313/18, FO 371/8723.

But officially Poincaré now, as later, denied any security motive for the occupation. Security was not mentioned in the communiqué issued at the end of a meeting between French and Belgian Ministers on 12 March, an omission for which the Belgians claimed credit. (47) In preparation for an impending debate in Parliament Curzon asked the French Ambassador on 21 March for a statement on France's aim in the Ruhr and on how the measures being taken were expected to bring about its realisation. The French reply stated that the aim was reparation, and confirmed earlier statements that France would only evacuate the Ruhr as Germany carried out her reparation obligations. (48) Poincaré made another statement to this effect on 27 March and again denied any annexationist aims in a speech in the

47. Brussels tel. 55, 14 Mar. 1923; desp. 273 to Brussels, 15 Mar., C 4811, 4835/313/18, FO 371/8722.

48. Desp. 1011 to Paris, 21 Mar. 1923, C 5302/313/18, FO 371/8724; memorandum from French Ambassador, 23 Mar., C 5783/313/18, FO 371/8725. On 26 March Curzon turned down a suggestion by Crowe that it might be worth enquiring whether the French Government would see a way out of the Ruhr if Britain renewed the offer of a pact: minute on W 2261/1585/17, FO 371/9394.

Chamber two days later. (49)

Meanwhile D'Abernon had been encouraging the Germans to repeat the Cuno offer or make new proposals on security. The idea of reviving the Cuno offer had been in D'Abernon's mind since January, and on 11 March he wrote to ask Crowe whether it might not be possible to reopen the discussions. (50) The occupation of the Ruhr convinced him that Germany needed security against France more than France needed security against Germany, and he was now turning over in his mind the possibility of mutual guarantees of non-aggression. The Germans themselves were considering various ideas: the Minister for Foreign Affairs told Houghton that the proposal that the Government were about to make would be based on a

49. Journal officiel, Chambre des députés, 29 Mar 1923. In fact different French personalities seem to have had different expectations and motives. President Millerand hoped for advantages in both reparations and security, but Poincaré seems to have been primarily concerned to put pressure on Germany - and also indirectly on Britain and the United States to take some initiative on reparations and war debts. See in particular Jacques Chastenet, Raymond Poincaré, Paris 1948, pp.240-6; Raoul Persil, Alexandre Millerand, Paris 1949, pp.150-1; Bertrand de Jouvenel, D'une guerre à l'autre, Vol. I, Paris 1940, pp.305-06. A recent article by Denise Artaud, "À propos de l'occupation de la Ruhr," in Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, XVII (1970), pp.1-21, is based on the procès-verbaux of Senate committees.

50. Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace. Lord D'Abernon's Diary, London 1929-30, Vol. II, pp.157, 184-5, 186, 190, 196, 200-01, 203-04; D'Abernon to Crowe, 11 Mar. 1923, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48926.

Rhine pact guaranteeing French security. (51) This feature did not, however, appear in the German approach to the British and United States Governments of 16 March, which merely repeated the proposal for a committee of experts to examine Germany's capacity to pay; but the reception of the approach suggested that the security question might usefully be raised again. (52) Accordingly on 22 March the German Ambassador came to see Curzon with a reply to the advice which Bonar Law and Curzon had given him, that Germany should make substantial proposals. Sthamer said that his Government could neither propose nor agree to anything that would impair German sovereignty, and the French demand for additional security was unjustified; but they were willing to renew the Cuno offer. Curzon said that he did not believe that it gave any hope for an early settlement: even without the plebiscite idea (which Sthamer said could be dropped) he did not think that the French would accept it. The German Government should produce a plan that really met the present situation instead of repeating proposals which had already been rejected. (53)

51. Gescher, Die Vereinigten Staaten und die Reparationen, p.168.

52. Minute by Crowe, 10 Mar. 1923, C 4585/313/18, FO 371/8721; C. 15(23), 14 Mar., CAB 23/45; desp. 394 to Berlin, 14 Mar., C 4876/1/18, FO 371/8632; Sthamer tel., 16 Mar., 3116/D639167-70; Rosenberg to Sthamer, 18 Mar., 3116/D639171-73; Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, London 1926, Vol. III, p.347; Gescher, Die Vereinigten Staaten und die Reparationen, pp.168-9.

53. Desp. 450 to Berlin, 22 Mar. 1923, C 5439/313/18, FO 371/8724.

Sthamer's instructions had said that if the Rhine pact offered in December would not suffice, it could be replaced or extended by a far-reaching German-French arbitration agreement. Provided that the engagement were reciprocal, Germany could declare herself ready to submit all political disputes to an international body in accordance with the Bryan system, and in no case to go to war before this body delivered its opinion. Sthamer did not succeed, on 22 March, in convincing Curzon that this suggestion was any better than the Cuno offer, and he was therefore instructed to try again. He was told that the plebiscite proposal could be retained for use if either party refused to accept the award of the international body. It was hard to see what other guarantees would be more real. An international gendarmerie in the Rhineland, and control by the League, were objectionable as infringements of German sovereignty. Sthamer saw Curzon again on 29 March, but was merely told that the German Government must make proposals on reparations without attaching impossible conditions. (54)

54. Tel. to Sthamer, 20 Mar. 1923, 2406/D501196-97; Sthamer tel., 22 Mar.; tel. to Sthamer, 25 Mar., 3116/D639181-82; D639184-90; desp. 490 to Berlin, 29 Mar., C 5906/313/18, FO 371/8725. The "Bryan system" is evidently a reference to the Peace Commission treaties between the United States and a number of European and Latin American countries, concluded in 1913 and 1914. They were not arbitration treaties in the full sense but provided for conciliation machinery.

An international gendarmerie in the Rhineland was one of the proposals brought to London in the first week of April by Loucheur, who was out of office but came with the knowledge and probably with the approval of Poincaré and Millerand. The suggestions which Loucheur put to Bonar Law on 7 April were for a reparation settlement based on Germany restoring her finances, the total debt being fixed at 40 milliard gold marks plus the total of Allied debts to the United States (all other inter-Allied debts being cancelled), a series of international loans, and evacuation of the Ruhr by stages related to German payments. Loucheur further proposed that the Rhineland should be separated from Prussia and completely demilitarised, with an international gendarmerie under League of Nations supervision; that the railways should be managed by an international board under the League; and that the Saar should become a special state under League control and the mines remaining French property. (55)

The immediate Foreign Office reaction was that League control presented obvious difficulties, because it would be an infringement of German sovereignty, because it might not be covered by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, and because the League was hardly equipped

55. Foreign Office memoranda of 7, 13 and 17 Apr. 1923, C 6300/1/18, FO 371/8632; C 6338/129/18, FO 371/8660; C 8383/313/18, FO 371/8730; Curzon Papers, Box 22, Rhineland; Loucheur, Carnets secrets, pp.117-18.

to organise it. Nevertheless some members of the Central Department thought that something on these lines offered the least objectionable solution if it were the case that reparations could not be settled until France were given additional security. However, although Loucheur returned to Paris optimistic that British and French views were drawing closer together, discussion of his visit brought a disavowal from the French Government. (56) Semi-official statements on 17 April were uncompromising on reparations and said that so long as the left bank of the Rhine and the bridgeheads were held France was assured against aggression. No further inter-allied agreement would be needed until the end of the period of occupation, and in the French Government's view that period had not yet begun to run. (57)

D'Abernon, however, was still recommending transferring the centre of discussion from reparations, on which he thought agreement impossible, to what he regarded as the more fruitful subject of security. When he returned to Berlin from leave at the end of the first week in April, he advised Rosenberg to return to the

56. Paris tels. 377, 382, 10 Apr.1923, C 6480, 6482/1/18, FO 371/8633; conversation between Bonar Law and St-Aulaire, 12 Apr., C 6697/313/18, FO 371/8727; memorandum by Tyrell, 13 Apr., C 8384/313/18, FO 371/8730; Paris tel. 410, 17 Apr., C 6913/313/18, FO 371/8727.

57. According to one French interpretation of the Treaty of Versailles the period of occupation only began with the fulfilment of the peace terms. The British view was that it began with the entry of the treaty into force on 10 January 1920.

Rhine pact and to say that Germany was ready for any agreements which were based on reciprocity and left German sovereignty unimpaired. (58) He reported to the Foreign Office that German opinion was ready to furnish far-reaching guarantees provided that the pledges were reciprocal, and he thought that many Frenchmen would not resent reciprocity. (59) But Phipps thought that the French would be even more intransigent if security were raised before reparations were settled. They would not contemplate reciprocal guarantees that would place Britain in the position of arbiter, and he doubted whether any French Government for a generation would be strong enough to end the occupation of the Rhineland and the bridgeheads. (60)

During the last week in April the Germans were preparing a new note on reparations, and they considered including an offer on security. One of the proposals, submitted by Gaus, the legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry, and Schubert, head of the department dealing with the British Empire and the United States, was different from anything considered before. It foreshadowed

58. Memorandum by Rosenberg, 8 Apr. 1923, 3243/D719345-47.

59. Berlin desp. 259, 11 Apr. 1923, C 6880/313/18, FO 371/8727; D'Abernon to Phipps, 16 Apr., D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48926; Berlin desp. 268, 17 Apr., C 7315/313/18, FO 371/8729.

60. Phipps to D'Abernon, 24 Apr. 1923, BM Add. MS 48926.

the proposals of January 1925 in suggesting that: (1) The Western European powers (Germany, France, Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Luxembourg) should undertake to respect the integrity of their present territories and mutually and severally guarantee to fulfil the undertaking; (2) In the same sense the powers would guarantee the fulfilment of the obligations laid on Germany in the Treaty of Versailles in respect of the demilitarisation of the Rhineland; (3) Germany and France would undertake, under the guarantee of the other Western European powers, to deal with all disputes arising between them which could not be settled by diplomacy by an international procedure consisting of arbitration for disputes of a juridical nature and for other disputes a conciliation procedure on the model of the Bryan treaties; (4) the pact would have a duration of 99 years. (61)

However neither this proposal nor a repetition of the Cuno offer was spelt out in the German reparation note of 2 May. A detailed offer at this stage would not have achieved any result. In addition to the French semi-official statement of 17 April, Curzon had said in

61. Memorandum by Schubert, 25 Apr. 1923, 3243/D719278-82; undated drafts of reparation note, 3243/D719150, D719162, D719170-80. The proposal was included in some of the drafts of the note, and one version contained the further proposal that alongside this pact Germany would be ready to conclude a general treaty of arbitration with her other neighbours as well.

the House of Lords on 20 April that security was not immediately relevant to the reparation question. (62) The German Chargé d'Affaires in Paris, Hoesch, also reported that security was now in the background in France. (63) As it was sent, the German note contained only a brief general statement on security, to the effect that the German Government were ready for any agreement calculated to secure peace which was based on reciprocity. More especially they were ready for an agreement binding Germany and France to an international procedure for settling disputes. (64) So far as the main subject-matter, reparations, was concerned, the note was bound to seem inadequate to all the Allies; but the action of the French and Belgian Governments in rejecting it without consultation with Britain caused not merely annoyance in London but also doubts whether

62. H.L. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 53, col. 794.

63. Hoesch desp. 24 Apr. 1923, 3243/D719469-78. The German Ambassador had been withdrawn from Paris when the Ruhr was occupied. Hoesch did so well as chargé d'affaires in difficult circumstances that at Poincaré's request he was appointed ambassador in February 1924.

64. France, Documents diplomatiques, Documents relatifs aux notes allemandes des 2 mai et 5 juin 1923 sur les réparations, 2 mai-3 août 1923, Paris 1923, No.1; Belgium, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux réparations, du 26 décembre 1922 au 27 août 1923, Brussels 1923, No.20; desp. 674 to Berlin, 2 May; note from German Ambassador, C 7832, 7896/1/18, FO 371/8633.

Poincaré wanted a settlement at all. (65) The British reply to the German note was also a rejection, but it ended with an invitation to the German Government to submit a better offer. (66)

Although D'Abernon denied press reports that the German Government were consulting him on what to do next, he did in fact suggest to Rosenberg that before answering Curzon's note they should make soundings in London to find out what would be an acceptable answer, and gave his own opinion. (67) On 29 May the Germans approached the British and Italian Governments for advice on the likely acceptability of a new communication. Stahmer was instructed to say that since the British note did not mention security the question was not dealt with in the present memorandum; but Germany was ready to give France and Belgium any political guarantees so long as they were based on reciprocity and did not affect the freedom of the Rhineland. But Curzon declined to receive

65. Tels. 191 to Paris, 66 to Brussels, 3 May 1923; desp. 1535 to Paris, 3 May, C 7832, 7837/1/18, FO 371/8633; Brussels tel. 92, 3 May; Paris tel. 454, 3 May; tel. 69 to Brussels, 4 May; tel. 192 to Paris, 4 May; Paris tel. 457, 4 May; Brussels tel. 101, 5 May; Brussels tel. 102, 5 May; ~~Brussels tel. 102, 5 May;~~ tel. 201 to Paris, 5 May; tel. 72 to Brussels, 5 May, C 7899, 7903, 7966, 8049, 8050, 8071, 8072/1/18, FO 371/8634.

66. Note to the German Ambassador, 13 May 1923, C 8311/1/18, FO 371/8635.

67. Memorandum by Rosenberg, 14 May 1923, 3116/D638581; Berlin tel. 212, 25 May, C 9274/1/18, FO 371/8637.

the German note and refused to give advice on what the French and Belgian Governments might accept. (68)

Curzon was, however, being driven to the conclusion that Britain would have to do something if the next German proposals were reasonable and were rejected by France. He hoped for Italian support, and even hoped that it might be possible to win the Belgians over. (69) The next German note, presented to the Allied and the United States Governments on 7 June, declared willingness to accept the decision of an impartial international tribunal as to the amount and method of payment and to provide financial guarantees, and asked for a conference. When delivering the note Sthamer told Curzon that his Government would offer any guarantees on security that were consistent with German sovereignty. (70) In the discussion of the answer to be sent to this note, the crucial question was the demand of the French and Belgian Governments for the abandonment of passive resistance in the Ruhr before any discussion of reparations could take place, and their inability or

68. Instructions to Sthamer, 27 May 1923, 3243/D720185-89; desp. 802 to Berlin, 29 May, C 9451/1/18, FO 371/8637; D.D.I., Vol. II, No.62.

69. Desp. 704 to Rome, 31 May 1923, C 9592/1/18, FO 371/8638; D.D.I., Vol. II, No.65.

70. Cmd 1943 of 1923, Correspondence with the Allied Governments respecting Reparation Payments by Germany, No.2; France, Documents relatifs aux notes allemandes des 2 mai et 5 juin, No.17; Belgium, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux réparations, No.27; desp. 836 to Berlin, 7 Jun., C 9940/1/18, FO 371/8638.

unwillingness to state either what they would accept on reparations or what would happen to the occupation if passive resistance ceased. The Foreign Office decided not to raise the security question, mainly because it was not clear how important it was to the French at present. (71)

Attempts during the remainder of June and the first week of July to secure clarification of the French terms were unsuccessful, and although the Belgian Government were more conciliatory in tone the hopes of detaching them from France proved vain. Finaly on 6 July Curzon told the French Ambassador that he would draft a joint reply to the German note: if the Allied Governments could not agree to it, it would be sent by the British alone. (72) Renewed suggestions that security might be considered came from the Italians and from the Ambassador in Paris, Lord Crewe. Curzon therefore told St-Aulaire on 10 July

71. The Temps had published, on 10 May and 6 June, some more articles about an Anglo-French agreement for mutual protection of sea communications and air defence; but even these stressed that security had no place in financial negotiations with Germany, and Poincaré had again stated publicly on 17 May that the Ruhr occupation had nothing to do with security: Paris desp. 1334, 4 Jun. 1923; Paris tel. 565, 6 Jun., C 9831/313/18, FO 371/8732; memorandum by Crowe and minute by Curzon, 9 Jun., C 10092/1/18, FO 371/8639.

72. Correspondence between 8 June and 6 July printed in Cmd 1943 of 1923; France, Documents relatifs aux notes allemandes des 2 mai et 5 juin; Belgium, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux réparations. Also desp. 1955 to Paris, 11 Jun., C 10185/1/18, FO 371/8639; desp. 2021 to Paris, 15 Jun., C 10512/1/18, FO 371/8640; desp. 2185 to Paris, 2 Jul., C 11506/1/18, FO 371/8641; desp. 720 to Brussels, 3 Jul.; desp. 2227 to Paris, 3 Jul.; desp. 733 to Brussels, 6 Jul.; desp. 2267 to Paris, 6 Jul., C 11638, 11639, 11802, 11803/1/18, FO 371/8642.

that Britain would certainly discuss it if the French Government wished; but the Ambassador said definitely that France did not regard the Ruhr issue as in any way bound up with the question of security. (73)

The note to the Allied Governments, with a draft reply to the German Government, was sent on 20 July. It proposed the end of passive resistance, progressive evacuation of the Ruhr, and independent enquiry into Germany's capacity to pay and the nature of suitable guarantees, and inter-Allied discussions on a comprehensive financial settlement. The note ended with a statement that Britain was ready to discuss security if desired. (74) The French and Belgian replies were both unfavourable. The French one, which Curzon described as a rebuff, restated the previous French position and ended by saying that the French Government would be glad to talk about security but the question had nothing to do with the Ruhr. The Belgian note welcomed the offer of a discussion on security but was no more satisfactory about reparations. (75)

73. Crewe to Curzon, 21 Jun. 1923, 25 Jun., 7 Jul., Curzon Papers, Box 22, Crewe letters; Crewe Papers, University Library, Cambridge, C/12; D.D.I., Vol. II, Nos. 110, 111, 112; desp. 855 to Rome, 6 July.; desp. 2307 to Paris, 10 Jul., C 11801, 12052/1/18, FO 371/8642.

74. Cmd. 1943 of 1923, No.5; C 12540/1/18, FO 371/8644.

75. Cmd. 1943 of 1923, Nos.6-7; France, Documents relatifs aux notes allemandesdes 2 mai et 5 juin, No.35; Belgium, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux réparations, Nos. 43-4; desp. 827 to Brussels, 30 Jul.; C 13160, 13162/1/18, FO 371/8645.
desp. 2497 to Paris, 30 Jul.)

The Italian Government, after some hesitation, replied favourably, and so did the Japanese. (76)

The possibility of Britain taking independent action, such as setting up an enquiry into Germany's capacity without France and Belgium, had been discussed in London and discarded as impracticable. (77) The Cabinet now decided not to pursue the correspondence with the German Government but to publish what had already passed, with a final note in the nature of an appeal to world public opinion. (78) The note sent on 11 August to the French and Belgian Governments was Curzon at his most magisterial. Near the end it said that, since according to the French Government the Ruhr had nothing to do with security, there was no object in pursuing the question. (79)

76. Cmd 1943 of 1923, Nos.8-9; D.D.I., Vol. II, Nos. 146-8, 152.

77. See Foreign Office memorandum, 29 Jun. 1923, C 11456/1/18, FO 371/8641; Curzon to Crowe, 17 Jul., memorandum by Cadogan, 19 Jul., Curzon Papers, Box 22, Germany 1921-4; memorandum by Crowe, 31 Jul., C 13652/1/18, FO 371/8648.

78. C. 44(23), 1 Aug.; C. 46(23), 9 Aug., CAB 23/46. There was some disagreement among Ministers on the nature of the final note: C.P. 376(23), CAB 24/161; Churchill, Lord Derby, pp.512-17. Cecil saw Millerand in Paris on 4 August and spoke to him about a new distribution of reparation receipts. For doing so he was rebuked by Baldwin and Curzon: tel. 296 to Paris, 7 Aug.; Paris tel. 740, 7 Aug., C 13536, 13547/1/18, FO 371/8647; Curzon to Baldwin, 7 Aug., Baldwin Papers, F.2 (Vol. 114); Cecil to Baldwin, 9 Aug., BM Add. MS 51080, also 51096.

79. Cmd 1943 of 1923, No.10.

Entering upon a discussion with Poincaré by published note was not likely to advance a settlement. Curzon himself did not like proceeding in this way; (80) Poincaré's powers as a draftsman were certainly not inferior to his; and the public argument did little but harden opinion on both sides. The French reply of 20 August was lengthy and contentious although courteous in tone. After dealing at length with the occupation, it declared again that France was ready to examine security at any time, but even effective guarantees against aggression (and those offered in 1922 had not been effective) could not deprive France of her right to reparations. The Belgian reply was less argumentative and contained a hint that an agreement on security would make Belgium more forthcoming on other matters, but it too offered little hope of progress. (81)

There was now some fear in London that Poincaré might succeed in putting the blame for a breach on to Britain, but there seemed to be nothing more that the Government could do except wait for the end of passive resistance in Germany. (82) But hints came from Paris

80. Minute by Curzon, 23 Aug. 1923, C 14380/1/18, FO 371/8650; Curzon to Baldwin, 27 Aug., Baldwin Papers, F.2 (Vol. 114).

81. France, Réponse du gouvernement français à la lettre du gouvernement britannique sur les réparations, 20 août 1923; Belgium, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux réparations, No.54.

82. Minutes by Tyrell and Curzon, 23 and 29 Aug. 1923, C 14380/1/18, FO 371/8650.

that Poincaré was anxious for a settlement with Britain and that a meeting between him and Baldwin ought to take place while the latter was on holiday at Aix. The Belgians too were said to be anxious for talks. (83) However when Baldwin stopped in Paris on 19 September on his way home, his conversation with Poincaré did not produce anything definite, nor even much improved understanding. Baldwin talked of the state of public opinion in Britain, the fear that further delay would make a settlement more difficult, the dislike of military occupations, the doubt whether present methods would produce the desired payments from Germany. Poincaré claimed that he was supported by 99 per cent of French public opinion and that the trouble was due not to the occupation but to German resistance. As for the lack of understanding between Britain and France, this was due not so much to the failure of the pact negotiations the previous year - for French opinion was well aware that the proposed pact was valueless without a military convention - as to the fact that at every inter-Allied conference France had made sacrifices and Britain had not supported her. Poincaré did say that he would welcome consultations as soon as passive resistance ceased, but

83. Paris tel. 778, 23 Aug. 1923, C 14484/1/18, FO 371/8650; Paris tel. 791, 28 Aug., C 14752/1/18, FO 371/8652; Paris tel. 801, 30 Aug.; Brussels tels. 198, 199, 31 Aug., C 14872, 14950, 14951/1/18, FO 371/8654.

Baldwin concluded that he had no plan. (84)

The meeting between the two Prime Ministers may have done some good in showing the desire of both to prevent a breach, but it advanced matters not at all. (85) Meanwhile the sands were running out for Germany. Stresemann had become Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs on 13 August. From the end of the month he told D'Abernon that the German Government would accept the policy outlined in the British note of 20 July; he asked for British recognition of this acceptance when he made it public at Stuttgart on 2 September; and he appealed for British help in averting a complete collapse. (86) Stresemann also tried to secure from the French and Belgian Governments some promise of better conditions in the Ruhr when passive resistance ceased. In his Stuttgart speech and in these negotiations, Stresemann expressed German willingness to join in a pact of powers interested in the Rhine to guarantee the status quo in

84. Notes of conversation, CAB 21/271; interpreter's notes in Baldwin Papers, F.1.1 (Vol. 108).

85. British observers in Paris thought that the meeting had done good: Crewe to Curzon, 21 Sep. 1923, Crewe Papers, C/12; Sir I. Malcolm to Baldwin, 3 Oct., Baldwin Papers, F.2.1 (Vol. 114). But Keith Middlemas and John Barnes in their biography Baldwin, London 1969, Ch. 9, in my opinion over-estimate its significance.

86. Berlin tel. 292, 31 Aug. 1923, C 14921/313/18, FO 371/8740; Berlin tel. 296, 1 Sep.; Berlin tel. 303, 4 Sep.; Berlin tel. 306, 6 Sep.; Berlin tel. 312, 11 Sep., C 15052, 15320, 15459, 15797/1/18, FO 371/8654; Berlin tel. 316, 14 Sep., C 16013/1/18, FO 371/8655.

the area. (87)

It seemed to the Foreign Office that since Poincaré had made clear his intention of keeping security distinct from reparations, there was no point in discussing Stresemann's suggestion at this stage. (88) Anxiety was expressed about the possibility of exclusive Franco-German agreements, but intervention in the negotiations was not thought possible. This position was maintained when passive resistance ended and as it became clear that the French had no plan beyond local industrial arrangements and were unwilling to negotiate with the German Government about anything. (89) But on 3 October Curzon told St-Aulaire that the French Government must take an initiative in re-starting conversations on reparations, and that he was going to say so in that part of his statement to the Imperial Conference on foreign affairs that would be published. (90)

This Curzon did. The Dominion Prime Ministers, with

87. Gustav Stresemann, Vermächtnis; der Nachlass in drei Bänden, ed. Henry Bernhard, Berlin 1932-3, Vol. I, pp.100, 104; Berlin tel. 302, 4 Sep. 1923; Brussels tel. 200, 5 Sep.; Berlin desp. 606, 6 Sep.; desp. 2877 to Paris, 8 Sep., C 15335, 15404, 15714, 15565/1/18, FO 371/8654.

88. Foreign Office memorandum, 10 Sep. 1923, C 15855/1/18, FO 371/8655.

89. Correspondence 18 Sep.-1 Oct. 1923, files C 1/18, C 313/18, FO 371/8656, 8742-4, passim.

90. Desp. 3174 to Paris, 3 Oct. 1923, C 17141/313/18, FO 371/8743.

the exception of Smuts, generally expressed sympathy for France and anxiety for an early settlement; but they had no proposals to make. Smuts, as expected, was anti-French and called for a conference. (91) Curzon had foreshadowed to the Cabinet on 26 September a fresh attempt to get the United States Government to help by rejoining the Reparation Commission, but he was not confident either that they would agree or that the French would join in inviting them. (92) It does not appear that Curzon had taken any steps in this direction before President Coolidge stated on 9 October that the United States Government stood by Hughes's speech of December 1922, a statement which, taken up by the British Government, led eventually to the setting up of the two Expert Committees under General Dawes and Sir Reginald Mackenna.

During these weeks there was no discussion of security. When in the middle of December the German Government decided to approach the French and Belgian Governments to negotiate an administrative modus vivendi for the occupied territory, D'Abernon heard that they were prepared to renew the offer of security guarantees

91. E. 3rd, 4th, and 5th meetings, 5 and 8 Oct., 1923, CAB 32/9. Smuts had been demanding independent British action and support of Germany since March: telegrams exchanged between him and Bonar Law and Baldwin are in CO 532/238. For his efforts for a conference and American support when he was in London, see W.K. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. II, The Field of Force, London 1968, pp.132-9.

92. C. 47(23), CAB 23/46.

if the French raised the question. (93) But the Foreign Office thought that such an offer would be premature, and in fact the question was not raised until February 1924.

MacDonald and Herriot

The French encouragement of separatist movements in the Rhineland and the Palatinate at the end of 1923 convinced D'Abernon more than ever that the urgent question was security rather than reparations (which in any case had now been removed from the political sphere by the appointment of the Expert Committees), and that what was needed was protection not for France against Germany but for Germany against France. Diplomats frequently take on something of the colour of the country in which they reside, and it is not strange that D'Abernon, the "Lord Protector," who had no previous diplomatic experience, should have so completely shared German apprehensions. It is somewhat surprising, in view of his financial expertise, that he should apparently, in assessing the relative strength of the two countries, have ignored the basic economic superiority of Germany over France. However in the circumstances of the winter of 1923-4, it was natural that D'Abernon's thoughts on

93. Berlin tel. 491, 10 Dec. 1923, C 21359/313/18, FO 371/8751.

security were concentrated on the Rhineland and the Ruhr.

The Germans themselves, after the negative results of the approach to Poincaré for a modus vivendi in December, were thinking of trying to get negotiations on a broader basis and of enlisting British help. They were made the more anxious to do so because, even though the threat of separatism had collapsed, the French press was again discussing neutralisation of the Rhineland and permanent control over the railways. At the beginning of February Hoesch, who had been recalled for consultation, returned to Paris with instructions for a new approach to Poincaré; (94) but before instructions were sent to Sthamer to talk about Germany's position with MacDonald, D'Abernon raised the security question himself. On 2 February he came to see Schubert about an article in the Temps advocating a neutral Rhineland under League of Nations supervision, and suggested that a régime might be possible that would make the Rhineland a barrier to aggression from either side and still preserve German sovereignty. (95) After this conversation D'Abernon

94. Hoesch's instructions were confined to the search for a modus vivendi in the occupied territory and said nothing about security: K936/K239303-09.

95. Memorandum, 2 Feb. 1924, marked "Not sent," D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48927; memorandum by Schubert, 2 Feb., 2368/490724-28. D'Abernon had written in December that he still thought that the Cuno offer would be a better security for France than an independent Rhineland: memorandum, 6 Dec. 1924, D'Abernon Papers, loc. cit.

reported to the Foreign Office that he believed that the German Government were prepared to make an offer for the demilitarisation of the Rhineland going beyond Articles 42-44 of the Treaty of Versailles, provided that German sovereignty were not impaired and the security protected both sides. The Cuno offer could perhaps be revived and combined with some scheme involving the League of Nations. (96) A few days later D'Abernon talked about the matter with the Minister for Foregin Affairs. According to him, Stresemann said that he saw no difficulty in declaring the Rhineland and the Palatinate demilitarised provided German sovereignty remained intact; but it would have to be neutralisation, prohibiting use of the territory for military purposes in ~~peace and in~~ peace and in war by France as well as by Germany. (97)

Meanwhile the German Ambassador in London had received instructions to speak to MacDonald about security and to tell him that although the German Government

96. Berlin tel. 49, 5 Feb. 1924, C 2048/2048/18, FO 371/9818; memorandum by Schubert, 5 Feb., 2368/490734-37. It should be noted that Schubert, according to his own record of 2 Feb., was non-committal about any offer that the German Government might be prepared to make. Where it is possible to compare both parties' records of D'Abernon's conversations, it is found that there are sometimes more than the normal discrepancies between them.

97. Diary entry, 7 Feb. 1924, BM Add. MS 48927, not in Ambassador of Peace. Berlin desp. 105, 11 Feb., C 2564/737/18, FO 371/9801, reports a conversation with Stresemann that day. In view of the apparent lack of a German record of Stresemann's conversation and the existence of a record of a conversation between Schubert and D'Abernon on 11 February,

considered that the Treaty of Versailles provided ample guarantees for French security, they were prepared for an agreement on the lines of the Cuno offer or Stresemann's Stuttgart speech, or indeed any safeguards conceivable between independent and equal states so long as they did not diminish the sovereignty of the Reich over the Rhineland. The French talk of a demilitarised Rhineland under the League of Nations, however, was clearly meant as a first step to the separation of the territory from Germany, and no German Government could lend themselves to such a step. Infringements of German sovereignty going beyond the Treaty of Versailles could only be discussed if France accepted the same conditions for herself. (98) Sthamer left a memorandum to this effect at the Foreign Office on 11 February, but he was not able to discuss it

97. (Cont)
F.G. Stambrook," 'Das Kind'- Lord D'Abernon and the origins of the Locarno Pact," in Central European History, I (1968), pp.233-63, is in some doubt whether D'Abernon did see Stresemann. According to his diary D'Abernon had tea with the Stresemanns on 7 February and the social nature of the occasion may account for the lack of a German record. D'Abernon reported in his despatch of 11 February that Stresemann said that he was anxious for a meeting with MacDonald, a statement unlikely to be made by Schubert. It seems probable that D'Abernon did see Stresemann about this time, but whether once or twice, and on which day or days, is not clear.

98. Desp. to Sthamer, 4 Feb. 1924, K126/K102934-46.

with MacDonald. (99) On the same day Schubert gave D'Abernon a similar paper; this one said that the question of an agreement over the demilitarisation of the Rhineland had been raised by D'Abernon, but the latter asked for his name to be deleted. It also said that a proposal on the subject should preferably come from France. (100)

The British Embassy in Paris commented that the French were unlikely to favour neutralisation and would probably insist on the continuance of control over the demilitarisation of the Rhineland. The line of the Rhine, they said, was vital to France even if she had a pact with Britain. (101) The line of the Rhine was also vital for France's allies: this would have been one of the advantages of neutralisation from the German point of view. D'Abernon ignored this factor. If the Germans needed reminding of it, which is unlikely, it was pointed out by Poincaré and the French Ambassador in Berlin, both of whom stressed that France could not

99. C 2602/2048/18, FO 371/9818; K126/K103012-16.

100. Memorandum by Schubert, 11 Feb. 1924, 2368/490748-56; Berlin desp. unnum., 19 Feb., C 2842/2048/18, FO 371/9818. D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48927, contains two drafts of an agreement on the permanent demilitarisation of the Rhineland.

101. Paris desp. 587, 14 Mar. 1924; Paris desp. 600, 16 March, C 4393, 4411/2048/18, FO 371/9818.

confine her concern to her own security. (102)

The Foreign Office did not wish to discuss security at present; (103) but they were discussing the implications for Britain of French policy in the Rhineland. Early in December the idea of an autonomous Rhineland under League of Nations auspices was not dismissed out of hand if it were to form part of a new settlement. (104) At the beginning of February a member of the Central Department, J.C. Sterndale Bennett, raised the question of French policy for more detailed consideration. He started from the premise that Poincaré's aim was to secure that control of the Rhineland which Clenenceau had had to abandon at the Peace Conference in

102. Hoesch tel., 12 Feb. 1924, 3243/D722655-61; memorandum by Stresemann, 12 Feb., 3243/D722671-75, Vermächtnis, Vol. I, pp.295-8; Hoesch desp., 4 Mar., K1885/K474497-99. In view of this consideration Stresemann at the beginning of March consulted Hoesch and the Minister in Warsaw, Rauscher, about the advisability of taking pre-emptive action by offering Poland a conciliation or arbitration treaty without recognition of the frontier. Rauscher was discouraging and the idea was not pursued; 4356/E148361-68, E148359, E148354-57, E148345-46.

103. The Embassy in Berlin were instructed to tell Stresemann that MacDonald thought that a solution of the problem should be aimed at "not through regional combinations of individual States, which might savour of the old system of alliances, but through general and more universal arrangements for neutralisation and non-aggression." MacDonald spoke in very general terms to Sthamer on 17 March: desp. 363 to Berlin, 26 Feb. 1924, C 2564/737/18, FO 371/9801; Sthamer tel. 17 Mar., K126/K013037-40.

104. Crewe to Tyrell, 7 Dec. 1923 and minutes, C 21579/129/18, FO 371/8691.

return for the guarantee treaties, and he suggested that permanent French control might be an economic threat to Britain. An arrangement would therefore have to be found to take the place of the guarantee treaties and so to induce France to give up control over the Rhineland. The various plans that had been proposed for neutralisation called for sacrifices by Germany that would not be warranted without some compensating advantage. Might not Alsace and Lorraine be demilitarised as well? (105)

MacDonald and the Lord President, Parmoor, were inclined to doubt whether the French really were actuated by a feeling of insecurity, but the Service Departments, the Board of Trade, and the Embassies in Paris and Berlin were asked for their comments. Phipps, from Paris, at once dismissed the idea of neutralising Alsace and Lorraine as beyond the realm of practical politics. (106) Addison, the Counsellor in Berlin, wrote that satisfaction for both sides was needed, and repose, and this implied evacuation of German territory and some guarantee that France would not be attacked. There would be difficulties about neutralising a substantial part of German territory, but a combination of the demilitarisation of a strip with a mutual pact of non-aggression might give time for

105. Memorandum by Sterndale Bennett, 5 Feb. 1924, C 2028/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

106. Phipps to Nicolson, 20 Feb. 1924, C 2946/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

attitudes to change. (107)

As for the effect on Britain of a permanent French control of the Rhineland, the Board of Trade considered that the customs and the railways would not matter, but an industrial combination of the Ruhr with Lorraine would be detrimental to British interests. (108) The Air Staff thought that control over the Rhineland by any power at war with Britain, whether it were Germany or France, would be a threat because it would enable that power to influence the Netherlands and Belgium. (109) Similarly the Admiralty were chiefly concerned with the Low Countries. (110) The General Staff, however, were quite firm that the only threat came from Germany and that the dangerous time would come when the Rhineland was evacuated. They had for the time being abandoned the advocacy of a British guarantee to France. Instead they now recommended strengthening the League and signing a short-term alliance with France providing for naval and air assistance only. (111)

107. Addison to Nicolson, 1 Mar. 1924, C 3814/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

108. Board of Trade to Foreign Office, 12 Mar. 1924, C 4218/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

109. Air Ministry to Foreign Office, 18 Mar. 1924, C 4640/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

110. Admiralty to Foreign Office, 22 Mar. 1924, C 4893/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

111. War Office to Foreign Office, 28 March. 1924, C 5185/1346/18, FO 371/9813.

Lampson, the head of the Central Department, was less sure than the General Staff that "war between Britain and France is as impossible as war between Britain and Germany is inevitable"; but having explored the question thus far the Department were able to drop it in view of MacDonald's decision to concentrate first on reparations. Lampson's parting thought for the time being was that eventually something might prove possible on the lines of a non-aggression treaty between Germany and all her neighbours. But even this was open to the objection that it would implicitly involve a British commitment.

With the advent of the new British Government the French too began new approaches on security. On taking office MacDonald exchanged civil letters with Poincaré, which included some general references to security. (112) Poincaré's language in public was as intransigent as ever, but the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay, Peretti della Rocca, told Phipps that Poincaré's one wish was to come to a speedy agreement with the British Government on security and reparations. He agreed with Phipps that negotiations about reparations would be pointless before the expert committees reported; but Poincaré told Phipps that St-Aulaire was going to approach the Foreign Office on security. (113)

112. The Times, 4 Feb. and 3 Mar. 1924.

113. Paris tel. 173, 17 Mar. 1924; Paris tel. 175, 17 Mar.; Paris tel. 177, 18 Mar., C 4545, 4546, 4604/1288/18, FO 371/9813.

St-Aulaire had his interview with MacDonald on 24 March and, in contrast with the previous year, said that it was the view of the French Government that security and reparations were bound up together. He had brought no definite proposals, but said that his Government were willing to take a wider view of security than merely an Anglo-French arrangement, and to bring in the League. MacDonald said that he was not willing to discuss security until agreement had been reached about reparations; and he indicated, in somewhat cloudy language, that he thought that a satisfactory reparation settlement which Germany could accept would go far towards solving the security problem as well. (114)

After the publication and acceptance, in April, of the Dawes Report the security question was in abeyance while the Allies discussed putting the plan into effect. The chief problem initially was the French and Belgian desire for guarantees of joint action in case of future German default, whereas MacDonald refused to discuss specific sanctions. When the Belgian Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Theunis and Hymans, visited him at Chequers on 2 and 3 May, MacDonald said that he would be willing to declare that a wilful German default would automatically bring the Allies together to take common action; but he would hold out no hope of going further.

114. Desp. 961 to Paris, 24 Mar. 1924, C 4992/32/18, FO 371/9730; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71.

Security was not discussed. (115)

The Belgian Ministers' visit was to have been followed by one from Poincaré, but this had to be cancelled when, as a result of the general election in France, he announced his Government's intention to resign. In a letter to MacDonald on 14 May Poincaré set out what he would have wished to discuss, presumably, since the letter was published, with the intention of embarrassing his successor. He was anxious, he said, for agreement on guarantees and control of the Rhineland railways; and he would have hoped to talk about security in view of the evidence of German breaches of the military clauses of the peace treaty and the need to make up for the Anglo-American guarantees for the time when the Allied occupation of the Rhineland ended. (116)

After a pause for a new French Government to be formed, a visit by the Prime Minister, Herriot, was fixed for 21-22 June. Before leaving for England, Herriot, in a statement in the Chamber of Deputies, drew a distinction between guarantees for the executive of the Dawes Plan which he intended to discuss with MacDonald, and guarantees for security which he said were necessary but implied that he did not mean to raise now. But to Hymans, who was passing through Paris, Herriot stressed

115. Record of conversation, 2-3 May 1924, C 7427/70/18, FO 371/9743.

116. The Times, 29 May 1924.

the need for some arrangement about security as well as for guarantees. (117)

Accompanied by Peretti and another official, and by an interpreter, Herriot spent the night of 21-22 June at Chequers. MacDonald was accompanied by Crowe. The greater part of the conversation was about putting the Dawes Plan into effect. Herriot accepted MacDonald's promise to declare publicly that a wilful German default would bring the Allies together to take common action, instead of agreeing on sanctions in advance. He gave way to some extent on the question of negotiating with the Germans about the application of the Dawes Plan in so far as it went beyond the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. MacDonald suggested an expert examination of the question of inter-Allied debts, after refusing to have them discussed at the conference to be held in London about the Dawes Plan.

Finally Herriot raised the question of security and asked whether, once reparations had been settled, Britain would join in studying a pact of mutual guarantee within

117. Journal officiel, Chambre des Députés, 19 Jun. 1924; Brussels tel. 89, 20 Jun., C 9842/70/18, FO 371/9748. MacDonald had recently commented in the Foreign Office that Britain must not raise the question of security in any form: if it were to be raised at all the initiative must come from France. After this Phipps was warned to go very slowly on security: minute by MacDonald, 11 Jun., C 9078/2048/18, FO 371/9818; Lampson to Phipps, 26 Jun., C 9313/2072/18, FO 371/9820.

the framework of the League of Nations and including Germany. He envisaged first a pact between allies and then another offered to Germany under the guarantee provided by the League. Peretti added some details about organising the guarantees arising out of the military and the Rhineland clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and suggested that they should also try to agree on the text of a new pact, perhaps analogous to the recent Franco-Czechoslovak treaty. (118) Once such an Anglo-French pact had been concluded a non-aggression pact with Germany could be considered, and finally the two pacts could be included as regional arrangements in the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. MacDonald said that he was very desirous of going deeply into the whole question of security but he must mention various difficulties. The Dominions were one, Lloyd George another. But apart from these, his own view was opposed to a pact. The Treaty of Mutual Assistance was not likely to be accepted. He would agree to a full examination of the whole question of security, and he threw out some ideas of widening it by bringing in the United States in connexion with disarmament. Herriot replied with a speech about France's danger if one day Germany refused to pay

118. B.F.S.P., Vol. CXX, pp.181-3. The treaty provided for consultation and concerted action in case of threats to the two countries' security or to the situation created by the peace treaties. There was no military convention. See Wandycz, France and Eastern Allies, pp.297-301.

reparations and expelled the control organs. France could not rely only on an international conference and the United States was far away. France could not face a new war: could they not try to find a formula of guarantee against a danger of a kind that would make the Dawes Plan useless?

MacDonald said that he would do all in his power to avoid a new war and would join in a study of the question, but he was not able to offer France a military guarantee of security. He offered to visit Paris, once the Dawes Report was out of the way, and discuss debts and security and other matters. He said that he had no complete plan in mind but a profound conviction, and he indicated that the conviction was mainly concerned with enlightening public opinion. He spoke of "a vast conception of broad policy and continuous collaboration," and Herriot summed up the result of their meeting as "a sort of moral pact of continuous co-operation." On that note the talks ended. (119)

Since the French is the main record of the

119. Record of conversations, 21-22 Jun. 1924, C 11976/70/18, FO 371/9751. The accounts of the meeting in Georges Suarez, Herriot 1924-32, Paris 1932, pp. 55-148; Édouard Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, Paris 1952, pp.139-45; Michel Soulié, La Vie politique d' Édouard Herriot, Paris 1962, pp.159-61, are all based on the French record of the talks, which Suarez prints in full. The notes were made by the French interpreter, M. Camerlynck, and the British record is a translation.

conversations and is perfectly clear on this point it seems unlikely that, as Snowden wrote in his Autobiography, (120) Herriot derived a different impression from MacDonald as to what they had agreed. It is more likely that in reporting an interview with Herriot on 24 June the Indépendance Belge misconstrued Herriot's reference to MacDonald's promise of solidarity in case of future German default as being a promise of solidarity in case of future German aggression, although Herriot did not say so precisely after MacDonald's denial in the House of Commons. (121) Hymans at any rate was clear that Herriot told him that security would be discussed after the London Conference and that MacDonald had refused to offer a new guarantee. (122) It does seem, however, from the record of the Chequers talks that MacDonald did not explain his own dislike of guarantees.

Publication of an aide-mémoire sent to the Italian Government with the invitation to the London Conference caused agitation in France because it seemed to ignore French views about negotiations with the Germans, defaults, and the relationship between the Dawes Plan and the Treaty of Versailles. (123) MacDonald therefore visited

120. London 1934, Vol. II, pp.667-9.

121. Soulié, Vie politique d'Édouard Herriot, pp.162-3; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 175, cols. 593-6. Confusion was the easier because the word "guarantee" was used in both connexions.

122. Brussels tel. 94, 25 Jun. 1924, C 10151/70/18, FO 371/9748.

123. Cmd. 2184 of 1924, Correspondence concerning the Conference which it is proposed to hold in London on July 16, 1924, to consider the measures necessary to bring the Dawes Plan into operation.

Paris on 8-9 July. Besides these matters, security was discussed again. The subject was raised by the French. Their draft of proposals concerning the London Conference ended by saying that the problem of security was tied to that of reparations; the Government did not think that any of the problems that concerned France could be regarded as completely resolved until a satisfactory solution had been found for that of security; and the present German attitude on disarmament made the security question particularly urgent. As Herriot said: "on the day that Germany finds herself strong enough to refuse to pay us she would inevitably bring about a new war."

MacDonald said that the danger was possible, but all that they were concerned about at the moment was the wording of a paragraph in a joint memorandum on the London Conference. The other was a difficult problem to be settled between the two countries. His difficulties were that the Dominions would not agree to Britain joining a military pact, and British public opinion would not agree to a pact with any country. He had already said that when the question of security was dealt with two considerations should be kept in mind. First, the greatest security was that it was a question of honour; secondly, in his view the only guarantee lay not in armaments or alliances but in an entente between the two countries, generally security, and the establishment of peace in Europe. It would be really unfortunate if they could not find a way of bringing about a complete entente

between them: it would be necessary to begin to work out a common policy by educating public opinion in both countries. He knew the French difficulties, but if they would help him they would together succeed in "establishing psychological conditions which will permit us to dissipate the reasonable fears of your country in regard to security. This security will be achieved to the greatest possible extent if we succeed on obtaining disarmament." (124)

After dinner MacDonald reverted to the subject and asked Herriot what could be said that would satisfy the Chamber without contradicting the declarations that he himself had already made. Herriot said that in general French opinion remained wedded to the idea of a pact with Britain, but he had explained at Chequers the idea of a mutual pact of non-aggression into which Germany could be introduced. The fact must be faced that when the guarantees on the left bank of the Rhine expired France would be exposed: if there were no defensive system he

124. Record of conversation, 8 Jul. 1924, C 12031/10794/18, FO 371/9869. In a minute on a General Staff paper on strengthening the League, sent to the Foreign Office on 24 June, MacDonald wrote: "The one thing that matters is psychology. All the sage materialists and self-styled realists will never be able to produce anything but wars. That is their natural offspring. Unless we change the qualities of our minds we had better arm to the teeth. From that point of view we ought to consider League of Nations problems." On a further memorandum by the Central Department MacDonald noted on 17 July that "a definite military agreement would be the very worst possible security"; C 10067, 11164/2048/18, FO 371/9818.

he would be unable to ask the Assembly for military reorganisation and reduction of the period of conscription.

MacDonald said that the next United States President was certain to call a disarmament conference, and if he were still in office he would do his utmost to have the fundamental question of general security discussed. The question must be put broadly, for a number of people in Britain regarded French military preparations as a possible threat to British security. On the other hand it had already been agreed that he and Herriot and perhaps other Prime Ministers would go to Geneva in September. This would make it clear that they were taking a wider view than that of exclusively national security. If he were a French minister he would explain that the two Governments wished to create a general system and that in contributing to it each country would benefit itself. Herriot said that he shared these general ideas; such a programme could be stated as: "The security of each nation is a particular instance of the general security of the world." But before they arrived at that ideal state there would be an intermediate period when France would be unprotected. Peretti asked whether they could be assured that the period of security on the left bank of the Rhine would last until a guarantee had been found equivalent to that which had been promised in 1919.

MacDonald replied that a guarantee had been tried and failed twice: they must find other means. Perhaps the League of Nations would supply a way out, once Germany

joined it, by way not only of demilitarised zones but a pact, registered with the League and including Germany. "Through the channel of the League of Nations on the one hand, through that of disarmament on the other, the solution of the problem would be attained; but if they confined themselves within the actual limits and went on talking about a Franco-British Pact of Guarantee, they would only meet with a check." Crewe pointed out that the French had not put aside the idea of a general pact, but they wanted something like a military alliance first. He feared, however, that this would make the conclusion of a general pact more difficult.

Herriot said that the Covenant itself envisaged partial pacts. In any case France was not wedded to any particular formula; she simply wanted security. There were a great many technical problems that could usefully be studied by experts, and it would be a satisfaction to French opinion to know that the Governments were tackling the question. MacDonald rejected this idea. He would prefer, he said, to go on talking in that "moral collaboration" of which he had spoken at Chequers, with frequent meetings which might not always be confined to their two Governments. In the mean time the French might send him a note, and Herriot could tell the Chamber that the two Governments were agreed that they would not neglect the security problem and it would be taken up again at an early meeting. (125)

125. Record of conversation, 8 Jul. 1924, C 11468/10794/18, FO 371/9849.

Despite Herriot's anxiety to have something more concrete to tell the Chamber, and the fear he expressed that once reparations were settled security would be forgotten, that was as far as MacDonald would go. Even if he had not done so at Chequers, he made it reasonably plain in these conversations in Paris that he had no other idea of security than a general pacification coupled with disarmament. He showed no sign of willingness to consider a special arrangement for French security, nor much sign of having thought out the problem of general security. The Franco-British memorandum published at the end of the Paris meeting, embodying an agreed approach to the London Conference, ended with a declaration that the two Governments agreed "to co-operate in devising, through the League of Nations or otherwise, as opportunity presents itself," means of securing the complete pacification demanded by public opinion, and "to continue the consideration of the question until the problem of general security can be finally solved." (126)

All questions other than that of putting the Dawes Plan into operation were excluded from the agenda of the London Conference of July-August 1924, and even if security was a factor in the Franco-German negotiations on the evacuation of the Ruhr the British Government were

126. Cmd 2191 of 1924, Franco-British Memorandum of July 9, 1924, concerning the application of the Dawes Scheme.

not involved since, not having taken part in the occupation, they kept out of the negotiations for its termination. The records of the conference meetings are not nearly so full as those of other international conferences of the early 1920's, and no record was made of meetings of the heads of the Allied delegations or of private conversations of British ministers. (127) It emerges fairly clearly from the conversations of German officials with their British counterparts that they hoped for British pressure on the French for early evaucation of the Ruhr. It also appears that MacDonald had the idea of arbitrating in favour of early evacuation but found himself unable to do so because the United States Ambassador, Kellogg, committed himself to the view that a period of one year was reasonable. (128) As for talks on security, there is no direct evidence in the

127. The procès-verbaux of the plenary meetings and the texts of the important documents were published in Cmd 2270 of 1924, Proceedings of the London Reparation Conference, July and August 1924. As a good conference secretary Hankey regretted the lack of records. He did his best, however, to record, and inform the Foreign Office of, anything that he witnessed: Hankey to Troutbeck, 26 Sep. 1924, C 14650/11495/18, FO 371/9859. Published accounts of the conference include: Soulié, Vie politique d'Edouard Herriot, pp.170-2; Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, pp.152-67; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp.469-98; Paul Otto Schmidt, Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, Bonn 1949, pp.49-63.

128. File C 11495/18, FO 371/9855-8; German Foreign Ministry archives, 3398/D739833-740585; 4492/E099507-100401, passim.

British archives and very little in the German records. In Berlin German officials were dropping hints that the French should be content with security on their own frontier and stop worrying about Poland. (129) On 11 August Schubert told Lampson that it should not be difficult to conclude a security pact provided that the French motives were simply fear of Germany, since Germany had every reason to seek security against French action. But if France had other aims in view, a pact was not likely to come off. (130)

On returning from his visit to Paris to consult his colleagues and Marshal Foch about the evacuation of the Ruhr, but before the final negotiations, Herriot sent to

129. Tel. to Stresemann, London, 12 Aug. 1924, 3398/D740365-67; D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. III, pp.87-8; Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, p.313.

130. Memorandum by Schubert, 11 Aug. 1924, 4492/E100325-29. According to Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles, Stanford 1953, p.81, there is evidence that in London Stresemann offered to revive the Cuno proposal; but Bretton does not quote any of it and I have found none in the Reichsminister's or the State Secretary's files on the conference. On 7 June D'Abernon had suggested to Maltzan that Nationalist support for the legislation necessary to implement the Dawes Plan might be secured if an agreement were offered combining a neutralised strip on both sides of the German western frontier with the evacuation of all Allied troops from Germany and the withdrawal of the Control Commission. Maltzan did not think that the right-wing parties would approve such an offer, and I have found no evidence that it was pursued: it would certainly have been rejected in this form. 4492/E098727-30.

MacDonald the note on French security which had been suggested in Paris in July. It set out the French position, as based firstly on the guarantees against German aggression provided in the Treaty of Versailles, both permanent and temporary. The French Government asked for: "The strict, complete and effective execution of the guarantees assured to them by the Peace Treaty," by the completion of the disarmament of Germany, by the "organisation of the right of investigation applied to demilitarisation in the Rhineland" (under Article 213 of the Treaty), and by the maintenance of the occupation of the Rhineland under the conditions provided in the Treaty (i.e. as long as the guarantees resulting from the Treaty were not organised). Then there was the question of supplementary guarantees to replace the Anglo-American treaties of 1919. Here the French asked for: "(a) Conclusion between France and England of a defensive pact destined to replace that concluded in 1919; this pact, an essential factor in the maintenance of peace in Europe, would be completed by similar defensive pacts concluded between the Allies neighbouring on Germany; (b) conclusion between the signatories of the above-mentioned pacts and Germany of a reciprocal undertaking of non-aggression, this undertaking and these pacts being placed under the safeguard of the League of Nations; (c) Reinforcement of the effective authority of the League of Nations by the efficacious organisation of mutual assistance against

States guilty of aggression." The French Government, the note concluded, were ready to examine any proposals made to them, but if French opinion were to be pacified the guarantees offered must be effective. The negotiators of the Treaty of Versailles had understood that when they provided in Article 429 that if at the moment fixed for the end of the occupation of the Rhineland the guarantees against German aggression were not considered sufficient, the evacuation might be delayed. The French Government hoped that it would not be necessary one day to apply that clause; but it was all the more imperative for them to seek really effective guarantees in agreement with their Allies. (131)

The anxieties expressed by the French about German disarmament during the summer of 1924 derived from the long drawn out argument with the German Government over the carrying out of a general inspection to find out whether the position was the same as that at the end of 1922, after which, if the position were found to be satisfactory, the Allies proposed to limit control to five aspects of disarmament - reorganisation of the police, adaptation of factories, surrender of unauthorised war material, provision of figures of war material existing at the time of the armistice and of production before and since, and promulgation of legislation on trade in war

131. Herriot to MacDonald, 11 Aug. 1924, C 12870/2048/18, FO 371/9819; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71.

material and on recruiting and army organisation. After their meeting at Chequers MacDonald and Herriot appealed to the German Chancellor, Marx, not to reject the latest note from the Ambassadors' Conference and warned him that a fresh failure over disarmament would seriously affect the international situation just at the moment when there was a hope of a definite settlement of the reparation problem which, it was hoped, would pave the way to a general and genuine pacification. The German Government agreed to the inspection, which was fixed to begin in September. At the London Conference the French delegation, especially General Nollet, who had been head of the Military Control Commission and was now Minister of War, tried to get MacDonald to agree to a declaration to the Germans about the general inspection. MacDonald, having already written to Marx on the importance of allowing it to be carried out without obstruction, refused; but he agreed that the matter should be taken up by the Ambassadors' Conference if later information showed that obstruction was taking place. (132)

132. Conversation between MacDonald and Marx, 12 Aug. 1924, 4492/E099932-40, 3398/D740363-64; MacDonald to Marx, Herriot, Theunis, De Stefani and Hayashi, 13 Aug.; Herriot to MacDonald, 14 Aug.; Marx to MacDonald, 16 Aug.; Lampson to Hankey, 19 Aug.; desp. 1544 to Berlin, 25 Aug., C 12830, 13070, 13247, 13346/9/18, FO 371/9727; Schubert to Lampson, 25 Aug., C 13724/9/18, FO 371/9728. For a summary of the negotiations of

The French were also preparing the ground for the eventual supervision of German disarmament by the League of Nations after the Allied control commission was withdrawn. In June the Permanent Advisory Committee had been instructed by the Council to prepare supervision schemes for Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria under the relevant clauses of the Treaties of St-Germain, Trianon, and Neuilly. On arriving at Geneva at the end of August the British delegation found that the French wanted to include Germany as well. The Foreign Office had been opposed to this, because they expected that the French would want a more complicated scheme for Germany and feared that they would try to strain the Treaty of Versailles; and they did not want the introduction of the German question, which was not urgent since control had not been completed, to delay the establishment of supervision for the other three countries. But they withdrew their objection on being assured by the delegation that the Permanent Advisory Committee's scheme was sound. (133) The Council accepted the scheme on 27

132. (Cont)
1924 see Survey of International Affairs, 1925, Vol. II, pp.172-9; for a full account from the German side, Michael Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle in Deutschland 1919-1927, Munich 1966, pp.240-64.

133. Geneva tel. unnum., 29 Aug. 1924; Geneva tel. 44, 5 Sep.; Geneva tel. 45, 5 Sep.; tel. 54 to Geneva, 6 Sep., C 13825, 14093, 14099/2616/18, FO 371/9823.

September, but details of its application remained to be worked out.

Meanwhile Herriot's note of 11 August had been sent to the Committee of Imperial Defence and the comments of the Service Departments invited. The Air Staff's first comments were much coloured by their anxiety over the supposed French threat to Britain. They pointed out that the range of the R.A.F.'s aircraft was too short to allow them to attack Germany from home bases; and they could not be sent to operate from France without advance preparation of installations there. And the value of France as a buffer between Britain and Germany was to them discounted by France's ability to attack Britain. In a later paper the Air Staff said that German air revival had not yet taken place, but the position would be very different in twenty to twenty-five years. Then, if there were a pact with France, the air menace from Germany would be negligible compared with that in a war between Britain and France. They saw some advantage, in good will and the possibility of planning, in giving an undertaking now; but Belgium would have to be included too. (134)

The Admiralty concluded that from the naval point of view there was no advantage in simply guaranteeing France against Germany; but there would be advantage in

134. C.I.D. Papers 518-B, 1 Oct. 1924, CAB 4/11; C.I.D. Paper 560-B, 17 Dec., CAB 4/12.

a more general alliance that would secure French naval collaboration in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. (135)

The first, and the longest, comment came from the General Staff. In considering whether a pact with France were essential to the security of Britain or would add so materially to it as to be worth the commitments involved, they started from the premise that the peace of Europe affected Britain closely and that "under conditions as they are now and are likely to be for many years to come renewed German aggression is the greatest danger that faces us, and French security is our security." They had concluded earlier in the year (136) that there were only two directions in which to look for security, a strong and effective League of Nations or a defensive alliance with France. The first was still too remote for present French needs; the second had twice fallen through but had now come up again as a definite proposal. Provided that a pact were kept within limits, the General Staff believed that it would have definite advantages for Britain. If the opportunity arose renewed German aggression was at least possible in the present generation; such aggression would certainly involved France; and considerations of British security, quite apart from any obligations, would inevitably involve Britain on the side of France. A pact would thus be no

135. C.I.D. Paper 345-B, 8 Dec. 1924, CAB 4/12.

136. See pp. 251, 260, n. 124.

more than a formal recognition of an existing commitment.

But this recognition would be of great value to the French, since it would enable them to reckon on Britain being with them at the earliest and most critical moment. It would open the way for closer staff contacts and freer exchange of military information. For Britain, with her low standard of military preparedness, it would give the immense advantage of having definitely enlisted the most powerful army and air force in Europe as a screen between herself and Germany.

It was generally agreed, the General Staff said, that there was little chance of German aggression in the immediate future: at present Germany could not defend herself against the armed strength of the Allies. Her future capacity to engage in war depended on manpower and armaments. German fit manpower (137) greatly exceeded that of France and Belgium combined (by about 3 million in 1924 according to French calculation) and would do so

137. I.e. men between the ages of 20 and 36 physically fit for battle service. In view of doubts about the accuracy of the figures in this paper, expressed by some members of the C.I.D., the estimates of French and German manpower were later recalculated by the Government Actuary and the Registrar-General. The revised figures showed that the General Staff had not made sufficient allowance for the effects of the war and had overestimated both French and German fit manpower for the next five years; but also that the German fit male population aged between 20 and 35 would exceed the French by 1.6 million in 1924, 2.5 million in 1929, 3.3 million in 1934, 2.8 million in 1939, and 2.6 million in 1944: C.I.D. Paper 654-B, Dec. 1925, CAB 4/14.

even more in the 1930's. Germany had ample industrial capacity to rearm if she were allowed to do so. It was therefore of the utmost importance to the Allies that Germany should not be allowed to rearm in peacetime; "in no circumstances must the Allies be so supine as to sacrifice the initiative in a future war." This implied a policy based on a firm hold on Lorraine and, for the time being, on the Saar, and on the firm maintenance of the conditions of Articles 42-44 and 429 of the Treaty of Versailles. To implement this purely defensive policy France and Belgium needed the moral and material support of Great Britain.

On the terms of the alliance thus advocated, the General Staff made the following recommendations. Britain could not state even approximately the number of land forces that she could contribute in the case of German attack, but she must contribute to and not trade upon the strength of the combination. In particular she must not weaken her home defences, and in case of war she must contribute with all three Services. She must not undertake obligations except in respect of the defence of France and Belgium, but Belgium must be included. If, as Herriot proposed, other pacts were concluded by the Allies neighbouring on Germany, they should not extend Britain's commitment. The General Staff would welcome the conclusion of reciprocal undertakings of non-aggression with Germany, and considered that in due course they might supersede the alliance with France.

They would also welcome the strengthening of the League, but realised that it was likely to be many years before local pacts would be unnecessary. (138)

These papers were not discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence. By the time that even the first was submitted, the question of French security had been temporarily superseded by that of the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes drawn up at the League Assembly in September. On his return from Geneva before the Protocol was oncluded, MacDonald wrote: "On French views of security we must be rigid. We cannot accept them. By turning down the Draft Treaty of Mutual Assistance we have saved the country from a serious danger, but the battle has still to be fought." (139) At a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence on 2 October MacDonald said that the French question was a political as well as a military problem, and giving France security might have undesirable political consequences. He asked the Service Departments to keep "political security" in mind when considering the French question. Haldane, after MacDonald had left the meeting, advised waiting for the text of the Geneva Protocol before discussing anything, and the question was adjourned. (140)

138. C.I.D. Paper 516-B, 29 Sep. 1924, CAB 4/11.
139. Minute, 10 Sep. 1924, C 13819/1288/18, FO 371/9813.
140. C.I.D. 188th meeting, CAB 2/4.

Herriot's note of 11 August was sent after the British Government had rejected the Treaty of Mutual Assistance and before his "moral collaboration" with MacDonald produced at Geneva the fruit of the Protocol. This instrument, if accepted, would meet the third of his requests for supplementary guarantees - reinforcement of the authority of the League by the efficacious organisation of mutual assistance. It remained to be seen whether Herriot would press the other two requests, and how they would affect the strict execution of the guarantees assured by the Treaty of Versailles.

Chapter 4

The Geneva Protocol and the Origins of Locarno

The Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes of October 1924 brought the British Government to one of the most difficult decisions on foreign policy of the post-war years. In this chapter it will be shown how the decision was reached after lengthy weeks of argument, and reasons suggested why at last in March 1925 the Government took a positive, albeit limited step to promote western European security. The Protocol arose out of the moral collaboration of MacDonald and Herriot, and out of the determination of the League of Nations Assembly of 1924 to pursue the cause of disarmament and security despite the rejection of the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. In less than a month from the adoption of a resolution inviting two of its committees to consider security, disarmament, the obligations of the Covenant, and the settlement of disputes, the Assembly received the complete Protocol and unanimously recommended it to the member governments.

The main features of the Protocol were first, an undertaking by the signatories that they would in no case go to war except with the sanction or at the behest of the Council of the League. This undertaking was supposed to stop the "gap" in Article 15 of the Covenant, under which members recovered their freedom of action in the event of the Council failing to reach a recommendation. To ensure that there could be no such failure the second feature was elaborated provision for the compulsory settlement of all

international disputes. Signatories were to accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice for the four categories of legal dispute enumerated in the optional clause of its statute: the interpretation of a treaty; any question of international law; the existence of any fact which, if established, would constitute a breach of an international obligation; and the nature or extent of the reparation to be made for such a breach. For non-juridical disputes further stages were added to the procedures laid down in Article 15 of the Covenant: the establishment by the Council of a special body of arbitrators; report by the Council if the parties to the dispute did not consent to arbitration; submission by the Council of the dispute to arbitration if it could not make a unanimous report. In each case the signatories undertook to accept the award made. While a dispute was pending the parties would not increase their armaments or effectives. Thirdly the Protocol provided a more automatic definition of an aggressor than any found hitherto, namely that a state which resorted to war in defiance of the obligations of the Covenant or the Protocol, that is which refused to submit a dispute to the procedure laid down, which refused to comply with an award, or which violated measures enjoined by the Council for the period while proceedings were in progress, was presumed to be an aggressor unless the Council unanimously declared otherwise. Fourth, if aggression took place the Council would call upon signatories to apply the sanctions

provided for in Article 16 of the Covenant. Their obligation to do so became operative at once, and each was bound to co-operate loyally and effectively so far as its geographical position and its military situation allowed. General plans of economic action were to be drawn up. Signatories might make promises to the Council as to contributing forces; existing military agreements were to stand provided that they were open to accession by other countries and would not come into operation until the Council called upon signatories to apply military sanctions. Finally a disarmament conference was to meet in June 1925, and the Protocol was not to come into effect until a plan of reduction of armaments was accepted and carried out.(1)

None of this had been prepared or studied in London before the Assembly meeting. MacDonald had sought some advice from Geneva in advance, but does not appear to have consulted his colleagues.(2) The British delegates, Parmoor and Henderson, acted very much on their own in helping to draft the Protocol. The Service representatives at Geneva were not consulted, and it was the First Lord of

1. The text of the Protocol and the Assembly resolution are in Cmd 2273 of 1924, League of Nations. Fifth Assembly. Arbitration, Security and Reduction of Armaments. Protocol and Resolutions adopted by the Assembly and Report by the First and Third Committees of the Assembly. A full contemporary commentary is P.J. Noel Baker, The Geneva Protocol, London 1925.

2. Salter to Selby, 11Aug. 1924; Drummond to Selby, 22 Aug., W 7259/134/98, FO 371/10569; Sir Frederick Maurice, Haldane, Vol. II, London 1939, p. 167.

the Admiralty, Lord Chalmsford, who asked for a Cabinet meeting before the resolution recommending the Protocol was voted at Geneva.(3) The Dominion delegates were uneasy about the terms and complained of being rushed: at the Colonial Office's suggestion MacDonald sent the Dominion Prime Ministers telegrams reassuring them that they had not been committed.(4) On 22 September MacDonald reassured a meeting of Ministers that the obligations of the Protocol did not exceed those of the Covenant, but still a week later the Cabinet expressed alarm that their position might be prejudiced by the Protocol being signed before they had had a chance to examine it. Additional instructions were sent to Parmoor to emphasise that governments and parliaments would have to examine the Protocol.(5) The differences of approach, not only between the British and French delegations at Geneva but also within the Labour Government, are so well known as not to need discussion here. MacDonald's attitude immediately after his return from Geneva is shown by the hope that he expressed to Herriot, that the work would not be spoiled

3. Admiralty to Foreign Office, 26 Sep. 1924, W 8271/134/98, FO 371/10570; C.P. 456(24), CAB 24/168.

4. Summary of B.E.D. meetings, 31 Aug.-30 Sep. 1924; Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 23 Sep., W 8073, 8226/134/98, FO 371/10570. Hugh Dalton was certainly mistaken in suggesting (Towards the Peace of Nations, London 1928, p. 132) that the declarations of the Dominion representatives showed that the Dominions would have accepted the Protocol had the United Kingdom done so.

5. C. 51(24), CAB 23/48. The telegram to Parmoor has been weeded from the file.

by an attempt to regard it as "unalterable gospel" since whatever emerged would have to be the subject of new negotiations.(6)

Consideration of the Protocol by Government departments had barely begun before the dissolution of Parliament on 9 October. There had been an idea of completing the process in time for discussions to be held with the Dominion delegates to the Assembly before they went home, so that they could inform their Governments about the British position. This plan broke down because Ministers became absorbed in the election campaign and Departments did not wish to commit themselves. The Service Departments also wanted a preliminary discussion in the Committee of Imperial Defence. Just before polling day Chelmsford circulated to the Cabinet another memorandum expressing concern about the Protocol, especially over the position of the Dominions and of the United States.(7)

Despite the lack of thorough examination and discussion,

6. Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, pp. 174-5, 177-8: Herriot for his part indicated that France would want more than the Protocol before she could disarm. See also MacDonald, "Protocol or Pact," in International Conciliation, No. 212, September 1925; Lord Parmoor, A Retrospect, London 1936, pp. 234-41; Mary Agnes Hamilton, Arthur Henderson, London 1938, pp. 247-50; J. Paul-Boncour, Entre deux guerres, Vol. II, Paris 1945, p. 151; A.J.P. Taylor, The Trouble-makers, London 1957, pp. 173-4.

7. Minutes, 11-15 Oct. 1924, on W 9046/134/98, FO 371/10571; C.P. 478(24), 27 Oct., CAB 24/168. The Chiefs of Staff also sent to the C.I.D. a joint memorandum expressing grave anxiety about the Protocol and complaining of lack of consultation: C.I.D. Paper 527-B, CAB 4/11.

the evidence of Departmental and Dominion objections to the Protocol and of division within their own ranks is strong enough to make it appear extremely unlikely that the Labour Government, had they remained in office, would have been able to sign the Protocol without amendments so far-reaching as to ensure its eventual failure. It is most unlikely that they would have found a way out of the impasse about automatic sanctions any more than the next Government, even though they would probably have been more prepared to accept compulsory arbitration.

Examination of the Protocol, November 124-January 1925

Even after the formation of the new Conservative Government it was some weeks before detailed discussion of the Protocol began. Other more urgent matters took up much of the Cabinet's time, among them the murder of the Governor-General of the Sudan. The new Foreign Secretary, Austen Chamberlain, was at pains to express no opinion on the Protocol before the Government examined it, and not to allow the impression to get abroad that it was already dead.(8) In the last week of November, however, he was urging Baldwin to get the discussion organised, and passing

8. For example desp. 3586 to Paris, 14 Nov. 1924, C 17359/32/18, FO 371/9731; Chamberlain to Lord Burnham, 21 Nov., Chamberlain Papers, AC 51/33, FO 800/256; Chamberlain to Grahame, 1 Dec., AC 51/136; desp. 711 to Warsaw, 1 Dec., W 10465/134/98, FO 371/10572. Much of Chamberlain's correspondence as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is to be found both in the Chamberlain Papers and in the

on as his own a suggestion from Cecil that the Protocol should be examined not by the Committee of Imperial Defence but by a sub-committee of the Cabinet with Liberal and Labour personalities included.(9)

Cecil, who was not altogether a supporter of the Protocol, was also a member of the new Government and was once more concerned with League of Nations affairs. But Chamberlain, although willing to discuss the Protocol frankly with him, was determined to assert his own responsibility for foreign policy as a whole.(10) He was particularly anxious to restore close relations with France, and from the start was preoccupied with French reactions and the question of how far the Protocol, if accepted, would meet the French desire for security. As will be seen below this was one of Chamberlain's chief concerns on his visits to Paris and Rome at the beginning of December. Crewe had expressed some doubt on the point at first; but in a despatch to the new Foreign Secretary

8. (Cont)
Public Record Office. Letters which were "entered" in the political files of the Foreign Offices are hereafter identified by these registry numbers only, even if copies also exist in the Chamberlain Papers. But a number of the copies in the Private Secretary's files were made later, and in these cases references are given first to the Chamberlain Papers and secondly, for convenience, to the FO 800 series.

9. Chamberlain to Baldwin, 25 Nov. 1925, AC 51/21, FO 800/256, Baldwin Papers, F.2 (Vol. 114), printed in Sir Charles Petrie, Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain, hereafter cited as Life and Letters, Vol. II, London 1940, pp. 253-4.

10. Cecil to Chamberlain, 17 Nov. 1924; Chamberlain to Cecil, 19 Nov.; Cecil to Chamberlain, 21 Nov., Chamberlain Papers, AC 51/41, 42, 45, FO 800/256. For their

he wrote that he thought that the Protocol would substantially meet French wishes if it were coupled with a scheme of League of Nations supervision of the armaments of the ex-enemy countries and of the demilitarisation of the Rhineland, and with the entry of Germany into the League. Crewe stressed that the French Government believed that in the summer the prospect had been held out to them that an accomodating attitude on the Dawes Plan would help to make others more accomodating on security and debts. A British rejection of the Protocol would be a severe blow and would probably make the French stiffer on German disarmament.(11)

By the end of November critical papers on the Protocol were reaching the Committee of Imperial Defence. The first produced in the Foreign Office was a memorandum by Crewe of 17 November.(12)

10. (Cont)
relations see Douglas Johnson, "Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Agreements," in University of Birmingham Historical Journal, VII (1961), pp. 67-8. But Cecil was not asking, as Johnson states, to see all Foreign Office papers. Not even the Secretary of State or the Permanent Under-Secretary necessarily saw them all: apart from any other consideration they were too numerous - in 1924 61,238 papers were "entered" by the registries for the political departments (i.e. not including Consular, Library and Treaty papers). Cecil was asking for all the confidential print, the more important correspondence printed and circulated in the Foreign Office and to missions abroad. But even this was more than any other Minister received, and Crowe feared that granting the request would set an undesirable precedent and cause trouble in the Cabinet: memorandum by Crowe, 20 Nov. 1924; Chamberlain to Cecil, 21 Nov.; Cecil to Chamberlain, 22 Nov., Chamberlain Papers, AC 51/83, 43, 46, FO 800/256, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 41078.

11. Paris desp. 2186, 6 Oct. 1924, C15567/2048/18, FO 371/9820; Paris desp. 2453, 11 Nov., W9781/134/98, FO 371/10571.

12. There had been a departmental memorandum of 10 November,

Crowe's criticisms were expressed in fairly general terms and were confined to the major questions of compulsory arbitration and sanctions. On arbitration, he pointed out that the Coalition Government had decided in 1920 not to accept what became the Optional Clause of the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice, and that the Lord Chancellor in the late Government had recently advised ~~earlier~~ against signature of the clause.(13) Now the Protocol extended the provisions for imposed arbitration. Contrary to what he supposed that its authors believed, Crowe thought that these prescriptions for erecting an absolute bar to any possible appeal to arms might create fresh causes of distrust. For any country there were questions of vital interest to which arbitration was inapplicable. One might undertake the obligation in the hope that the case would never arise. But it might do

12. (Cont) 287-8
but it will be discussed in a revised version, below, pp. 5-6.

13. C. 59 (20), Appendix V, CAB 23/23. The main reason for the refusal in 1920 was fear of the effect on the exercise of blockade measures. The matter was considered again in the summer of 1924 since the Labour Party favoured accession to the Optional Clause. Crowe advised against acceptance, pointing out among other considerations that a parliamentary government could not guarantee passage of the legislation necessary to carry out an adverse award in cases where vital interests were involved. Haldane advised against acceptance, pointing out that since the constitution of the British Empire was non-unitary it was undesirable to give unqualified undertakings which it might prove impossible to fulfil. The question never came before the Labour Cabinet. Papers were sent to the Dominions at the beginning of September and the matter was

so, and then there would arise a feeling that the national interest might call for "a repudiation of the most solemn engagement entered into with the League, if this offers the only means of resistance to a political arrangement which a free country will not accept at foreign dictation".

With regard to the system of sanctions, Crowe then discussed the question whether they did or did not add to the obligations of the Covenant. He thought that they were clearly meant to be more firm, precise, and automatic, and pointed out that the trend had been towards a restricted interpretation of Articles 10 and 16. Now the Protocol committed the signatories to impose in certain circumstances the whole complicated machinery of a blockade. The technical and physical difficulties of doing this were enormous. The interference with the life of the nation and the Empire which blockade involved, and the financial cost, raised questions of national interest quite apart from the risk of conflict with the United States. The reality of the latter danger was shown by the experience of the war: it was no exaggeration to say that if Britain signed the Protocol she might find herself having to choose between breaking its obligations or having to pay blackmail to or actually going to war with the United States. The problem would be less likely to arise if the United States were a member

13. (Cont)
then overtaken by the Geneva Protocol; but on 13 November the New Zealand Government expressed their strong objection to the proposal that Britain should adhere to the Optional Clause. File W 338/98, FO 371/10573.

of the League; but the Protocol would certainly make her less likely to join.

The supporters of the Protocol claimed, Crowe wrote, that it was a major step towards the absolute prevention of war and therefore conferred the highest degree of security upon all members of the League. He doubted whether in fact it went much farther than the provisions of the Covenant, which were already strong provided that the obligations were taken seriously. But this proviso applied equally to the Protocol, and in his view only a certainty that war would indeed be prevented would justify the acceptance of changes open to so many different objections, "considered formidable by our competent home authorities, calculated to cause grave embarrassments in our relations with other countries, more especially America, and very likely not welcomed by our Dominions".(14)

Crowe's criticism is a good exposition of the fundamental difference between what MacDonald in another context had called "idealism" and "practicalism".(15) Subsequent papers largely rehearsed the same arguments, and will only be treated at length when they introduce new points. In all the contemporary discussion of the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, the Protocol, and collective security in general, it is noteworthy that these basic differences

14. Memorandum by Crowe, 17 Nov. 1924, W 9974/134/98, FO 371/10571; C.I.D. Paper 538-B, CAB 4/12.

15. Minute, 23 Jul. 1924, C 10067/2048/18, FO 371/9818.

were hardly ever discussed frankly. One may suppose that both sides would have regarded it as improper as well as inexpedient to mention the risk of conflict with the United States. The more experienced among the "idealists" - whatever may be true of the rank and file - were certainly not blind to the danger that despite the paper guarantees nations would still resort to force and could not necessarily be relied upon to fulfil their obligations. But between their belief that the prevention of all war overrode all other interests, that collective security provided the only means, that strengthening the system made breaches less likely, and that if sanctions were provided they would hardly ever be needed, and on the other hand the fear of the "practicalists" that the case would arise and that putting their hand to something that would not be universally observed was dangerous and dishonest, the gulf was hard to bridge.

A memorandum by R.H. Campbell of the Western Department of 20 November gave a more detailed analysis of the Protocol, criticising some more points and quoting objections already made by the Admiralty and comments on economic sanctions made by the Treasury in 1923. Campbell concluded that the Protocol did introduce new obligations, and a form of commitment which British Governments and opinion particularly disliked - the obligation to use force in circumstances which could not be foreseen and under conditions which could not be gauged. Against these objections the supporters of the Protocol maintained that it (a) provided

the only basis for the further reduction of armaments, (b) strengthened the League, and (c) gave France striking new guarantees of security. On (a) Campbell conceded that the attitude of Britain would influence the chances of other major powers accepting the Protocol and thus enabling the disarmament conference to be called, but he was not sanguine as to its outcome. On (b) he considered that far from strengthening the League the system of the Protocol would jeopardise its existence as soon as a shot was fired. On (c) he concluded that the Protocol abundantly met French requirements. Summing up the balance of advantages and disadvantages, Campbell drew attention to two additional factors. The position of the Dominions was as yet unknown but might well be hostile. If the British Government decided that acceptance was necessary for the sake of Europe but failed to persuade the Dominions, "no consideration of any kind should be allowed to outweigh the consequences of dividing the Empire on so vital a question". The other point was the effect on France of British defection from a scheme of Anglo-French origin. If the Government decided against the Protocol, it would be essential to resume the discussion of French security and to take up again the question of a guarantee.(16)

16. Memorandum by Campbell, 20 Nov. 1924, W 10151/134/98, FO 371/10572. The file copy is incomplete: the full text is in C.I.D. Paper 540-B, CAB 4/12.
At the time of the Corfu crisis in 1923 the Treasury had expressed anxiety about the complicated machinery that would be required if economic sanctions were to to applied effectively : Treasury to Foreign Office, 4 Sep. 1923, C15356/15065/62, FO 371/8615.

Immediately the new Government took office the Foreign Office had drawn their attention to the fact that Herriot's note of 11 August had never been answered. The Protocol had cut across events; but if it fell through or were found not to be an adequate safeguard of French security, the whole question would be reopened. Then unless Britain showed herself willing to consider French security with every desire to reach a satisfactory solution there would be renewed accusations of bad faith and relations would deteriorate again.(17)

At the same time D'Abernon was writing about the problem again. At the beginning of September, when the League Council adopted the scheme of supervision of the disarmament of the ex-enemy countries, he had reported that the Germans would probably accept a scheme that was combined with security for Germany against aggression or a renewed occupation of the Ruhr.(18) About the beginning of November he composed some "Notes on a Guarantee of French Security and the methods to be employed to this end". D'Abernon set out to prove that the European balance was threatened by France. Her deficiency in population was compensated for by her eastern allies, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Roumania and Yugoslavia,(19) whereas Germany could count at best on

17. Foreign Office memorandum, 4 Nov. 1924, C 16913/2048/18, FO 371/9820; C.P. 481 (24), CAB 24/168.

18. Berlin tel. 399, 7 Sep. 1924, C14175/9/18, FO 371/9728.

19. D'Abernon appears to have assumed that because France

Hungary and Austria. D'Abernon did not include Russia in his calculations because the Soviet Government were unreliable and because "any military combination between the aristocratic imperialist leaders in Germany, and the communist forces in Soviet Russia is unthinkable". Germany, he believed, could not again become the strongest military power in Europe except as the result of another war. Britain's traditional policy on the European balance had been to throw her weight against the strongest power, and if she were now to make an agreement to defend France it must besupplemented by measures to defend Germany. D'Abernon had now lost faith in the demilitarisation of the Rhineland as a safeguard, and was driven back on to some form of security established under the League.(20)

D'Abernon sent copies of this paper to Headlam-Morley and to Grahame, who had been reporting discussion in Belgium about a return to guaranteed neutrality. Despite

19. (Cont)
had an alliance with Czechoslovakia the other two members of the Little Entente were also her allies. She did not sign treaties with them until January 1926 and November 1927 respectively, and then they were treaties of friendship rather than of alliance.

20. D'Abernon to Headlam-Morley, 13 Nov. 1924; D'Abernon to Grahame, 10 Dec., D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MSS. 48927, 48928. D'Abernon sent a revised version of the first part of his paper to the Foreign Office officially early in January. Chamberlain questioned his assumption that Russo-German collaboration was unthinkable, and the point was also taken up by the Assistant Military Attaché in Paris, who pointed to what was known about current military collaboration between the two countries. He also stressed that D'Abernon was describing the German military position as it was supposed to be, not as it was actually known to be: Berlin desp. 17, 7 Jan. 1925, C 459/459/18, FO 371/10726; Sargent to Lampson, 18 Feb., C 2464/459/18, FO 371/10727.

the fact that the Belgian Government were saying once more that they wanted a pact with Britain, Grahame thought that Belgian neutrality would have advantages all round. For Britain it would mean that "all Europe might be in flames, but we need not interfere so long as no army crossed the Belgian frontier". For France it would mean a British guarantee of her northern frontier, and for Germany security that she would not be attacked through Belgium.(21) Grahame did not, however, think that D'Abernon's idea of an "iron curtain" or fringe of territory which neither side could cross without becoming the aggressor was the answer to the problem, partly because France would not accept it and partly because other countries would ask for one too and then the whole peace settlement would be frozen.(22) It was perhaps as a result of this objection that D'Abernon came back to the idea of reviving the Cuno offer.

In addition to the memoranda by Crowe and Campbell, the Committee of Imperial Defence received papers on the Geneva Protocol from the Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of State for Air, the Treasury, the Board of Trade, and Hankey. The Chiefs of Staff discussed technical problems and concluded that Britain ought not to accept the Protocol unless all the

21. D.D.B., Vol. I, No. 241; Brussels desp. 876, 14 Nov. 1924; Grahame to Chamberlain, 12 Dec., W 9992, 11201/9992/4, FO 371/10531; desp. 1630 to Brussels, 3 Dec., W 10544/134/98, FO371/10572; Grahame to D'Abernon, 18 Dec., BM Add. MS 48928.

22. D'Abernon to Grahame, 10 Dec. 1924; Grahame to D'Abernon, 18 Dec.; D'Abernon to Grahame, 9 Jan. 1925, BM Add. MS 48928.

other Great Powers did likewise. The Naval Staff considered the consequences for Britain if she signed whilst other major naval powers did not, and found them dangerous.(23) Hoare was opposed to the Protocol, like the Treaty of Mutual Assistance, on the ground that new commitments would necessitate increased forces; but he realised that rejection would not solve the question of European security. He was reluctant to refuse the French demand for security yet again, but doubted whether public opinion would accept the alternative of a defensive pact. He therefore suggested trying to amend the Protocol in such a way as to reduce it to a moral guarantee, which would still have some weight. He also thought that there was no need for haste, since France was safe for ten years and by that time the problem of security might have become less. The wisest course seemed to be to gain time rather than to raise the issue at once by rejecting the Protocol outright.(24)

The Treasury and the Board of Trade concentrated on financial and economic sanctions. Both emphasised that unless sanctions were applied by all countries they could not be effective, so that the attitude of the United States was crucial. Both pointed out that complicated machinery would be needed, some of which could only be introduced in Britain if a state of war were declared. Going into greater detail the Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade, Sir H.

23. C.I.D. Paper 527-B, 29 Oct. 1924, CAB 4/11.

24. C.I.D. Paper 542-B, 1 Dec. 1924, CAB 4/12.

Llewellyn Smith, concluded that even the suspension of direct trading relations with the aggressor would damage the interests of, and cause friction with neutrals, and still more so the pressures possible under a state of war. It was not certain that states would be willing to declare war on the recommendation of the League Council in cases where most of them had only a slight interest, nor was it possible to rely on the stringent application of blockade measures in face of strong neutral protests. If the United States were neutral a British Government could not be so sure of success as to be able to give traders the guarantees necessary to induce them to submit to suspension of business. The President of the Board of Trade doubted whether the United States could guarantee a benevolent attitude towards measures taken by the League; and as a minister he regarded the political difficulty of passing the legislation necessary for imposing sanctions as almost insuperable in view of the heavy loss to British trade that would follow immediately.(25)

The first meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence held to discuss the Geneva Protocol took place on 4 December. After Curzon, the Chairman, had set out the position and suggested the questions that the Committe should consider, there was only a general discussion. Cecil urged that the cause of disarmament should be kept in mind. Amery

25. C.I.D. Papers 536-B, 537-B, 24 and 26 Nov. 1924, CAB 4/12. Hankey's paper, 539-B, 21 Nov., was critical but made no fresh points.

suggested that the Covenant should be amended in such a way as to get rid of embarrassing obligations. Churchill said that he believed in series of understandings between groups of powers, eventually covering the whole world, rather than in unlimited and indefinable obligations.(26) At the next meeting, on 11 December, little progress was made and doubts were expressed whether it would be possible to complete the examination of the Protocol in time for the March meeting of the Council.(27)

Meanwhile Chamberlain had been attending the December Council meeting in Rome and had there asked for postponement of the discussion of the Protocol because the new British Government needed time to examine it. Passing through Paris on his way to Rome Chamberlain saw Herriot and tried to find out whether the Protocol would satisfy the French desire for security. Herriot did not give a definite answer but left Chamberlain with the impression that France would still want a pact as well. He did say, however, that what France would value in a pact was an assurance that the British Empire would stand by France, not precise conditions of participation.(28) In Rome

26. C.I.D. 190th meeting, CAB 2/4.

27. C.I.D. 191st meeting, CAB 2/4.

28. Record of conversation, 5 Dec. 1924, C 18401/1288/18, FO 371/9813; Chamberlain to Crowe, 6 Dec., W 11388/631/17, FO 371/10540; Chamberlain's statement to C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4. According to Herriot's record of the conversation, he did tell Chamberlain that he wanted a pact as well as the Protocol; and a draft of

Chamberlain saw Briand, to whom he explained the difficulties that he saw in compulsory arbitration. He told Briand that he had always favoured an Anglo-French alliance but that a proposal for one now would meet with greater opposition than in 1922, especially from the Dominions upon whom the value of Britain's support largely depended. Chamberlain came home in no doubt that Briand did not feel that the Protocol by itself gave France all the security that she needed.(29)

Mussolini revealed to Chamberlain, as he had already done to the British Ambassador Sir Ronald Graham, a dislike of the Protocol but said that he did not want to be the first to reject it. He was particularly opposed to compulsory arbitration in cases affecting a country's vital interests.(30) On 10 December Chamberlain saw Hymans,

28. (Cont)
of a pact, dated 3 December, is preserved in the French Archives: A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71. According to Louis Fischer, The Soviets in World Affairs, London 1930, pp. 578-9, Chamberlain at this meeting tried to harness France for a combined anti-Soviet policy and offered in return an Anglo-Franco-Belgian agreement. As has been shown, the latter part of the story is not true: there is no evidence for the former other than one French newspaper report. The latest writer to accept Fischer's story without examination is Jurgen Spenz, Die diplomatische Vorgeschichte des Beitritts Deutschlands zum Völkerbund 1924-1926, pp. 52-3. Spenz is not well informed about British policy.

29. Record of conversation, 9 Dec. 1924, W 10867/134/98, FO 371/10572; Chamberlain's statement to C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4.

30. Rome desp. 1038, 5 Dec. 1924; record of conversation, 7 Dec., W 10620, 10747/134/98, FO 371/10572; Chamberlain's statement to C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4.

who made it clear that he was not enamoured of the Protocol and that the only thing that he really wanted was some form of British guarantee. Chamberlain was sure that even if Britain signed the Protocol Belgium would ask for a pact as well.(31) The last of Chamberlain's important conversations in Rome was one with Beneš, who described the difficulty that he had had as rapporteur of the Third Committee in reconciling French and British views in drafting the Protocol. Beneš regarded it as a European instrument, thoroughly satisfactory from the Czechoslovak point of view. He had no desire to make it more difficult for the United States to join the League, and said that he appreciated the peculiarity of the British position; but he had no suggestions for meeting it. Chamberlain said that it was becoming obvious that many powers would make reservations when signing the Protocol, the cumulative effect of which might be to make its machinery unworkable; and he suggested that it might be better to reduce it to a document on which all could agree so that at least there would be a clear code. Beneš replied that what chiefly mattered to Czechoslovakia was that Germany should not go to war, and she would not do so if France and Britain were united in an alliance.(32)

31. Record of conversation, 10 Dec. 1924, W 10865/9992/4, FO 371/10531; Chamberlain's statement to C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 1.

32. Record of conversation, 11 Dec. 1924, W 10866/134/98, FO 371/10572; Chamberlain's statement to C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4.

Chamberlain reported these conversations and his impressions to the Committe of Imperial Defence on 16 December. He said that he had been left with a profound sense of the importance of the decision that they had to take and a great anxiety that a solution should be found. The dominant feeling in Europe was fear. Unless they could make British policy - the policy of the Empire - such as to give Europe a sense of security, there would sooner or later be another war. It would be easy to turn down the Protocol, but to do nothing more would be an absolute disaster. He had one suggestion to make but would like to hear other opinions.

Baldwin said that there had already been a general feeling that they could not turn down the Protocol without trying to put something in its place.(33) Cecil, agreeing with Chamberlain's picture of the state of Europe, suggested that they should try to revise the Protocol rather than substitute something quite different. Curzon was much impressed by Chamberlain's evidence that the Protocol alone would not be enough to satisfy France and Belgium, and not surprised by Mussolini's attitude. Turning to

33. On 10 December Baldwin had told the retiring French Ambassador that Britain would not be able to accept the Protocol but that he would seek some other policy on security to establish guarantees more positive although more limited: St-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate, pp. 762-3; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71.

procedure and timing, Curzon suggested that papers should be sent to the Dominions and that they should be asked to send preliminary opinions by the time that Parliament reassembled in February. Meanwhile a sub-committee should examine the Protocol and the Departmental criticisms, and report how far the Protocol could be amended or what principles should be adopted if it were decided to substitute something else. He also asked about the attitude of the United States. Chamberlain said that the evidence that he had received about this was conflicting, and he would try to elucidate it. He hinted that his preferred solution was a pact with France, and also urged that they should get sufficiently far with their discussions for him to be able to have preliminary conversations with France and Italy by March.

Amery thought it unlikely that the Dominions could be consulted by correspondence alone, but that it might be possible to get representatives sent to London by the beginning of March. Cecil thought that Chamberlain could have conversations with other powers as soon as he liked; but he believed that great difficulties would arise if a pact with France and Belgium were chosen instead of the Protocol, because permanent peace in Europe could not be assured without taking account of Germany. Chamberlain replied that a pact with France and Belgium might be followed by one with Germany; but the French would not have such an arrangement in the original document. The Committee agreed to ask the Dominions to send their Prime

Ministers, if possible, to London in March and to set up a sub-committee to report on the Protocol, on how far it could be amended, and on the principles to be adopted if it were decided to substitute some other proposals.(34)

The telegrams to the Dominions went off on 19 December. The first replies made it clear that it would be impossible to organise a conference and that most of the Dominion Governments were not interested in an alternative policy.(35) Their views on the Protocol were mostly received in January. The New Zealand, Australian, and South African Governments all said that they could not accept it, for various reasons including the extension of compulsory arbitration (particularly about belligerent rights at sea and immigration) and fear of the effect on the United States. The Canadian Government did not reply until March. They were ready to go a stage farther on arbitration but

34. C.I.D. 192nd meeting, CAB 2/4. The sub-committee consisted of Hankey (chairman), Crowe, Sir Arthur Hirtzel (Under-Secretary of State for India) and Sir Henry Lambert (Acting Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies). Hurst attended several of the meetings, and representatives of the Treasury, the Board of Trade, and the Chiefs of Staff were called in to advise.

35. C.O. 59996/24, CO 532/283. Most of the correspondence with the Dominions was published in Cmd 2458 of 1925, Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes. Correspondence relating to the position of the Dominions, and some in Cmd 2301 of 1925, Consultation on matters of foreign policy and general Imperial interest. Correspondence with the Governments of the self-governing Dominions. On more than one occasion the Foreign Office had to ask for amendments to Colonial Office drafts of messages suggesting that discussion of the Protocol could be postponed until the next Imperial Conference: C.O.4895/24, CO 532/283; C.O. 2897/25, CO 532/316.

were not willing to undertake any obligation to apply sanctions, and they were particularly concerned about the United States. None of the Governments had any amendments or positive suggestions to make.(36)

The Ambassador in Washington, Sir Esmé Howard, approached Hughes about the Protocol at Chamberlain's request. Hughes said that he had hoped that the Protocol would die a natural death, for if it went through he saw it as a source of trouble: indeed the United States would hardly be able to avoid regarding the League as a "potential enemy". Trouble would arise, for instance, if one of the Central American republics appealed to the League on account of United States action in the Panama Canal Zone, or out of the exercise of neutral rights in case of a blockade. Hughes thought that in fact sanctions would be impossible to enforce: he could hardly believe that the business interests of any country would agree to allow their relations to be suddenly cut off at the behest of the League; and Congress would never pass the legislation needed to put such measures into effect. Howard asked whether it would help to disarm American hostility if the Governments of the Empire made a reservation stating that they would not be bound to apply any sanctions before they had reached agreement with the United States. Hughes

36. W 335, 425, 927, 993/9/98, FO 371/11064; W 1860/9/98, FO 371/11065; C.O. 5457/25, CO 532/311; C.I.D. Paper 576-B, CAB 4/12; Cmd 2458 of 1925.

replied that it might, but they would have to do it on their own initiative.(37)

Chamberlain replied to Howard's report of this conversation that he did not think that such a reservation would be a solution, for it would make the United States a super-power with a veto over the decisions of the League. He also told the United States Ambassador that his Government ought to state their views publicly: it was not fair to let European Governments sign in ignorance a document which the United States regarded as unfriendly.(38) Howard wrote later that what the United States most feared was that the League would ultimately withdraw South America from her sphere of influence. This fear had to be removed if there were to be any hope of getting her to collaborate with the League and apply sanctions against an aggressor - and without her collaboration sanctions would be worse than useless. As for his suggested reservation, it only recognised that the United States was in fact a super-power.(39)

37. Chamberlain to Howard, 22 Dec. 1924, W 11199/134/98, FO 371/10572; Howard to Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1925, W 1174/9/98, FO 371/11064; see also F.R.U.S., 1925, Vol. I, pp. 16-18. A report of Hughes's views was circulated to the Cabinet and the C.I.D.: C.P. 48(25), CAB 24/171; C.I.D. Paper 573-B, CAB 4/12.

38. Chamberlain to Howard, 28 Jan. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/479, FO 800/257; memorandum by Chamberlain, 10 Feb., W 1151/9/98, FO 371/11064.

39. Howard to Chamberlain, 13 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/482, FO 800/257.

Examination of the Protocol and an alternative policy, January-February 1925

Hankey's sub-committee began work on 18 December. By Christmas they had agreed that it was virtually impossible to amend the Geneva Protocol since compulsory arbitration was the keystone without which the whole would fall to the ground, and they had been encouraged by Chamberlain to assume that the Government would rule out both compulsory arbitration and the automatic application of sanctions. They were also agreed that Britain could not adhere to the Protocol if it were not also accepted by the Dominions.(40) The sub-committee then turned their attention to principles. In a paper on sanctions Hurst gave it as his opinion that under the Covenant, although the Council could only advise on measures to be adopted, members were bound to co-operate in support of the League - if necessary in the last resort by force of arms.(41) Hankey, who was unalterably sceptical about sanctions ever being applied against a Great Power, wrote a paper demonstrating that certain features of the Protocol had been considered and rejected, mostly on British initiative, when the Covenant was drafted. He sent a copy to Cecil, asking him to check its accuracy. Cecil replied that the continental countries had always favoured compulsory arbitration more than the British and Americans, and the Covenant represented a compromise.

40. Sub-committee, 1st-4th meetings, CAB 16/56.

41. Note by Hurst, Jan. 1925; Hankey to Hurst, 22 Jan., CAB 21/289.

The security provisions had been made as mild as possible for the sake of British and American opinion, and therefore the provisions on disarmament were weak. If now it were desired to do more about disarmament, the security provisions should naturally be strengthened.(42)

At the sub-committee's meeting on 30 December Hankey raised the question of France's desire for a pact in addition to the Protocol. Crowe said that the question of a pact was one of high policy which only the Government could decide, but he thought that they could point out the possibility. A declaration of policy might be more acceptable to the Dominions than a treaty.(43)

Examination of the Protocol was weakening Hankey's

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42. C.I.D. Paper 558-B, 8 Jan. 1925, CAB 4/12; Hankey to Cecil, 13 Jan.; Cecil to Hankey, 14 Jan., Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51088. It is not at all clear from his own writings what Cecil thought the automatic obligations should be to be effective. In a letter to Churchill asking for support on the Protocol Cecil urged that a general plan ought to be tried, and maintained that it need not involve burdensome obligations. Would, he asked, an obligation to "break off relations" [the kind unspecified] and then consult as to what to do next, be burdensome? He thought not. Cecil to Churchill, 16 Jan., Churchill Papers, C 18/8 (I am indebted for this reference to Mr. Martin Gilbert, Churchill's biographer). In view of his experience as Minister of Blockade during the war Cecil ought to have been aware of the complexity as well as of the ultimate power of economic measures. This aspect of his thought needs clarification. David Carlton, "Disarmament with guarantees: Lord Cecil 1922-1927", in Disarmament and Arms Control, an International Journal, 1965, pp. 143-64, does not provide it.

43. Sub-committee, 6th meeting, CAB 16/56.

opposition to a pact with France. He wrote on 23 January that he had never doubted that if France were again menaced by Germany Britain would go to her assistance, but he had believed that a formal guarantee would bring more difficulties than advantages. He had now changed his mind for three reasons: first, the realisation that Britain would be in a difficult position if she were at loggerheads with France; second, the realisation that there was a real danger of being at loggerheads if the Protocol were rejected and nothing put in its place; third, Crowe's new proposal which removed some of the dangers that he had seen in a pact. In any case a pact, which would be geographically limited, precise, and within British control, was preferable to the Protocol which was vague, unlimited, and applicable either automatically or by a majority vote of the Council.(44)

The new proposal by Crowe was embodied in the report of the sub-committee, dated 27 January. It began with a recapitulation of the origins of the Protocol and a reminder of the British pledge of 1924 to co-operate in devising means of providing for French security. The Protocol tended to emphasise and extend provisions of the Covenant which were originally accepted with hesitation and had been viewed with misgiving by British Government Departments ever since the United States decided not to

44. Memorandum by Hankey, 23 Jan. 1925, C.I.D. Paper 571-B, CAB 4/12. Roskill's account of Hankey's views at this point (Hankey, Vol. II, pp. 393-6) is somewhat misleading.

become a member of the League - all those provisions which emphasised the use of force rather than the moral influence of the League in preventing war. It therefore represented a parting of the ways for the future development of the League. The British Government, the sub-committee assumed, would prefer that the League should continue to develop on the lines of achieving pacification by forming the habit among nations of bringing their differences to the Council for settlement, with moral force as the principal weapon and material force in the background as the last resort. As a general observation, the sub-committee said that they thought it undesirable that the Protocol should be a separate instrument from the Covenant: they recommended therefore a procedure of amendments to the Covenant, and suggested a revised draft protocol of articles to be added to the Covenant.

The report then examined the Protocol in detail, making and reinforcing all the previous criticisms and adding some more. The sub-committee thought that the question of disarmament should be separated from that of the Protocol. The third part of the report dealt with French and Belgian security. Their recommendations, the sub-committee wrote, made such fundamental changes in the character of the Protocol that it was no longer likely to be regarded as of any use from this point of view. They felt bound to draw attention to the only alternative to the Protocol that was likely to offer any satisfaction to France, namely some kind of pact of guarantee; and they considered that of the

two alternatives a pact was the less objectionable from the British point of view. They submitted the draft of a declaration, which they thought France and Belgium might accept as a sufficient British guarantee of their security. In it the three Governments would declare that the maintenance of the independence and integrity of their territories bordering on the North Sea and the English Channel constituted a vital interest of their respective countries. Recognising that any infringement of the territorial status quo in their respective countries could not but greatly affect their national safety, they undertook to notify the Council of the League that they would regard any unprovoked aggression threatening the said independence and integrity as one of the contingencies in which they were determined to make their maximum military effort to oppose and defeat the aggressor. This notification would be made under an article of the draft revised protocol which stated that in view of the military sanctions provided for by Article 16 of the Covenant, members of the League might inform the Council of the specific contingencies in which they would be prepared to make their maximum effort.

This draft, the sub-committee said, rested on the assumption that Britain was in fact prepared to fight if there were any danger of the French and Belgian North Sea ports passing under the control of another power. They thought that it went as far as Britain could ask the Dominions to go in meeting the French and Belgian desire

for security. They had considered whether a pact of this kind could be so framed as to embrace Germany. However, in French eyes the problem of security was not confined to the Franco-German frontier but extended to the whole territorial settlement of the Treaty of Versailles. The French Government had therefore always sought to provide against the danger of German aggression against Poland and Czechoslovakia as well as to secure a purely Anglo-French pact. The British Government had equally steadily regarded this as not primarily a British concern. To include Germany in a pact on the basis of a reciprocal guarantee of the territories of the signatory states would necessarily involve Britain in an undertaking to defend the territorial status quo on Germany's eastern frontier. For this reason the proposed declaration was limited to France and Belgium; but the form could be adapted to other declarations by other states, so that Germany could be brought into a more comprehensive system.(45)

45. Crowe also drafted a Franco-Belgian-German declaration, which was not included in the report. In it the three Governments would declare that they jointly and severally guaranteed the present frontier between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other, and would maintain the sanctity of the demilitarised zone. They notified the League that they would make their maximum effort in defending the frontier against unprovoked aggression from any quarter. A reference to Article 10 of the Covenant implied that Germany would be a member of the League; but the declaration said nothing about France's obligations to her eastern allies. C 6582/459/18, FO 371/10731.

In conclusion the sub-committee recommended that when an understanding had been reached with the Dominions and India, the Government should try to come to terms with France and Belgium and other members of the Council before replying officially to the League on the Protocol. Since there would not be time for all this before the March Council meeting, they suggested a brief interim reply before then intimating that Britain found it impossible to accept the Protocol as it stood but was consulting the Dominions and India on the terms of a further communication.(46)

While the sub-committee were examining the Protocol Chamberlain was initiating in the Foreign Office a discussion of an alternative. To begin with he asked for a clear statement of the problem. The first two parts of such a paper were obvious: a statement of the present position and an historical background by Headlam-Morley. "But then there remains Chapter III which should be The Solution, and here I am frankly at a loss. Can we propose an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact of guarantee to be followed by a Quadruple Pact embracing Germany? Or ought we to propose a unilateral declaration of British interests and of what we should regard as a casus belli? Or again is there some third course? And how in any case are we going to defend our vital interests in the West whilst safe-guarding ourselves against being dragged into a quarrel

46. C.I.D. Paper 559-B, CAB 4/12.

over Lithuania or Latvia or Poland or Bessarabia? And what is or ought to be our policy in relation to these countries?"[47]

A statement of the present situation came in a memorandum by Harold Nicolson, a member of the Central Department, which also went some way towards discussing the "Solution". Nicolson started by recognising that the people of the Empire would not accept the task of guaranteeing the complete security desired by the European nations. The most that could be hoped for was to achieve "an atmosphere of greater certainty and more sincere co-operation in which a new generation, possessed of stronger nerves, can attain to what we must all hope will be a calmer maturity". Nicolson then analysed the present situation, leaving Russia out of account not because she was not important - she was indeed "the most menacing of all our uncertainties" - but because she was at present an Asian rather than a European problem and her future was so uncertain that a policy of security must be framed "in spite of Russia, perhaps even because of Russia". For the rest, briefly, "all our late enemies desire to recover what they lost; and all our late allies are fearful of losing what they won". Austria was only a problem in so far as she desired fusion with Germany; but in terms of French security this was sufficiently disturbing, for it would be hazardous to suppose that in fifteen years'

47. Minute, 4 Jan. 1925, W 362/9/98, FO 371/11064.

time the Allies would be able to prevent "so logical and so inevitable a union". Hungary was a serious nucleus of insecurity in Central Europ: Bulgaria equally was biding her time in the south-east. But the situation of the smaller ex-enemy countries threw into relief the essential cause of insecurity, namely that whereas the lesser peace treaties were secured by a preponderance of manpower on the side of the victors, in the case of the Treaty of Versailles the preponderance of manpower told against the status quo.

It might be taken as axiomatic that the vast majority of the German people did not accept the Treaty of Versailles as permanent. Germany hoped one day to be in a position to reverse the verdict: she would doubtless prefer to do so by agreement but failing agreement she would use force. She would attempt not to be faced again by an alliance between France, Britain and Russia: France on her own could be defeated; Russia could be secured as a friend; British hostility must not be reawakened. For this reason, and because the principal German grievance related to Poland, the German attack, when it came in fifteen to twenty years, would not be aimed at Britain nor even directly at France, but at Poland. France's attitude was one of fear, based on the recent experience of invasion and her declining population. Some fear of Germany was inevitable, but some of it was due to causes for which Britain was partly responsible and which she might therefore help to remove. One result of French alarm was likely to have a lasting

injurious effect on European stability, namely the network of alliances to the east of Germany. This policy compromised rather than increased French security, for it drained French resources, increased French commitments, and increased German resentment without being strong enough to contain it. If France could not be solaced and controlled she would provoke the German menace of which she stood in terror. While the League of Nations might one day be able to deal with deep-seated rivalries, at present in any vital matter security could not come from Geneva.

In such an uncertain situation the only line for Britain to follow was that of British interests. Isolation was no longer possible. The primary British interests were the defence of the Empire (which was outside the scope of this paper) and the defence of Great Britain. The latter required that a hostile power should not be in a position to dominate the North Sea and Channel coasts. A secondary British interests was the stability of Europe. To a certain extent this could be fostered by consistent support of the League, but in the short term something must be done to diminish Franco-German hostility without over-burdening imperial resources. The primary and the secondary interests indicated the formation of a new entente with France, and a supplementary policy was needed to keep Germany and Russia apart. Germany might at present accept a series of non-aggression pacts, which would have some value although they would not carry permanent conviction until "the dangerous injustices of the Silesian settlement,

and the Polish Corridor have been, by mutual agreement, revised". In the present mood of Europe it would be fatal even to mention revision of any of the peace treaties: gradually, however, the concert of Europe would be recreated provided France were quietened; but France would only be quietened if Britain could speak to her as an ally. The first hope of European stability therefore lay in a new entente with France.

One of the results of this remarkable paper (remarkable even though it did not entirely convince its author, who still hankered after an uncommitted policy because he did not believe that Germany was bound to be the enemy) was to start a discussion on the position of the Dominions. R.H. Campbell suggested that although it was desirable that they should add their signatures to any pledgegiven by the British Government, it was not absolutely essential. The Dominions should not be ignored, but the Government should not allow themselves to be "hypnotised into impotence". They should certainly try to persuade the Dominions of the rightness of whatever British policy in Europe were decided upon; but they should not try to persuade them into a formal association with it, since a refusal would be serious. Whatever the form was, if Britain were again involved in a European war it was surely inconceivable that the Dominions would not again come to her assistance.

Lampson, on the other hand, argued that because constitutionally the whole Empire would be at war if

Britain went to war, she must not put her hand to any agreement with France and Belgium which the Dominions did not endorse. But he was confident that since the policy now proposed was one of protecting Britain it could unite the whole Empire if properly presented. There was general agreement that isolation for Britain was impossible.(48)

The second paper which Chamberlain had suggested, the historical one, came on 12 February from Headlam-Morley, who pointed out that one of the difficulties about the Geneva Protocol, and about the League of Nations in general, was that they universalised problems that might be better dealt with by something more like the Concert of Europe. He then demonstrated that Britain had always been part of Europe and that the Concert had worked best when Britain took an active part. She was particularly interested in northern France and the Low Countries, and it was generally agreed that she could not in any circumstances allow this area to fall under German control or influence. It was much better to say this clearly, and the obligation to defend Belgium and northern France necessarily implied an obligation to prevent a German violation of the demilitarisation of the Rhineland.

48. Memorandum by Nicolson, 23 Jan. 1925, and minutes, W 2035/9/98, FO 371/11065. Writing to Hankey on 27 January Crowe remarked: "It all boils down to this, then, that you must find some sort of formula which shows the man in the street in London and the Dominions that all we are committing ourselves to is self-protection if and when the need arises": C 1218/459/18, FO 371/10727.

Beyond this, Headlam-Morley saw a much more direct British interest in central and eastern Europe than other writers had done. It was a real British interest, he wrote, to prevent Germany breaking through in the east and acquiring new territory and new strength which would inevitably be brought to bear in the west. Some details of the present frontiers could be improved without vital injury to the states affected, but: "Has anyone attempted to realise what would happen if there were to be a new partition of Poland, or if the Czechoslovak State were to be so curtailed and dismembered that in fact it disappeared from the map of Europe? The whole of Europe would at once be in chaos. There would no longer be any principle, meaning or sense in the territorial arrangements of the continent. Imagine, for instance, that under some improbable condition Austria rejoined Germany, that Germany, using the discontented minority in Bohemia, demanded a new frontier far over the mountains ... and at the same time, in alliance with Germany, the Hungarians recovered the southern slope of the Carpathians. This would be catastrophic, and even if we neglected to interfere to prevent it happening, we should be driven to interfere, probably too late".

What the smaller states of Europe really wanted was confidence that in a serious crisis they could count on effective support. It was not enough for Britain to say in general terms that she would carry out her obligations under the Covenant. She should in some way state clearly that she was interested in the maintenance of the new

system in Europe and could not regard with equanimity the forcible overthrow of any of the new states. This should not take the form of alliances, but rather of an official statement of British policy linked with a protocol for dealing with European matters, an agreement that must include Germany. Most of the foreseeable European conflicts would probably be minor: only if Germany or Russia were involved would a general war break out. Germany could at present be dealt with; but Russia must not be ignored for she could become a great danger and as long as she remained in her present state there could be no firm security for her neighbours. Headlam-Morley thought it both possible and desirable for Britain to have a European policy separate from the Dominions. He was not worried about the constitutional technicality, since so long as British command of the seas were secure the Dominions would not be in danger.(49)

The Committee of Imperial Defence began discussion of the report on the Geneva Protocol on 13 February and concluded it six days later. No one favoured accepting the Protocol but there agreement ended. The issues, left for the Cabinet to resolve, were: (1) Should the Government send a simple rejection to the League, or a provisional reply indicating that they were considering another policy

49. Memorandum by Headlam-Morley, 12 Feb. 1925, W 1252/9/98, FO 371/11064, published in Headlam-Morley's Studies in Diplomatic History, London 1930, pp. 173 ff.

in consultation with the Dominions, or a reasoned reply indicating an alternative policy for western Europe? (2) If the last, should Britain take part in a regional arrangement in any way? (3) Could the Dominions be brought to agree to a positive British policy at all, and at best would the question have to wait for a conference with them? (4) Should amendments to the Covenant be proposed? The very full records of the meetings reveal clearly that a majority of the members would have preferred to do nothing, but for different reasons. Eleven Ministers[50] took part in at least three of the four meetings in December and February at which the Protocol was discussed at length. The views that they expressed may be summarised as follows.

Curzon as chairman did not express an opinion on some of the points at issue. He was against the Protocol, in favour of proceeding cautiously, but in the end sufficiently impressed by Chamberlain's plea of urgency to hope that something might be done with the Dominions without waiting a year for a conference. He favoured a reasoned reply to the League and was against trying to amend the Covenant. He was opposed to an Anglo-French pact but in favour of Britain joining one that included Germany.

Balfour was against the Protocol, in favour of a reasoned reply, against trying to amend the Covenant, in

50. Balfour attended rather in the role of elder statesman, and held no office at that moment. In addition Baldwin presided over the first two meetings but expressed no opinion. The inclusion of leading figures from the Liberal and Labour parties was not pursued.

favour of regional arrangements but against British participation beyond a promise to France to consult at a later date if danger arose. Churchill was against the Protocol, in favour of a reasoned reply, but against any British policy other than that of blessing a "real" Franco-German peace giving Germany "the immediate evacuation of territories which are being held" and a "substantial rectification of her eastern frontiers". Amery was not only against the Protocol: he wished to take this opportunity of depriving the Covenant of all its coercive features. In so far as he was spokesman for the Dominions he thought that they neither would nor should agree to any positive policy and for himself wished to go no further than a unilateral declaration of British interest in the independence of Belgium.(51)

Birkenhead, who admitted that he knew very little about Europe, contributed practically nothing to the discussion but favoured a reasoned reply to the League.

51. Amery's recollection seems to have been at fault when he wrote in him memoirs that "some of us" urged "a third course ... meeting the objections both to the Protocol and to Austen's proposed treaty of guarantee. That was to limit the general obligation to intervene against aggression to the particular danger zone of the French frontier, but to do so impartially as between France and Germany.... Our argument received an unexpected reinforcement when in February 1925 the German Foreign Minister, Stresemann, himself suggested a pact of mutual security with France" (My Political Life, Vol II, London 1953, pp. 301-02). This account not only misrepresents Amery's own position - if he included himself in "some of us" - but also suggests that some Ministers were thinking of a mutual guarantee arrangement before the arrival of the German proposals. With the possible exception of Churchill, it is evident

Whether he had any views on an alternative policy does not emerge from these meetings. Cunliffe-Lister, the President of the Board of Trade, only expressed his Department's dislike of economic sanctions in both the Protocol and the Covenant. The Service Ministers also reflected the views of their staffs. Worthington-Evans and the General Staff were particularly in favour of an Anglo-French pact as an expression of a British vital interest, but hoped that Germany might adhere to it later. Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, generally agreed and the Naval Staff saw a further advantage in the prospect that a pact would safeguard the British position in the western Mediterranean. Hoare and the Air Staff were more doubtful. They agreed that Britain would in fact go to the help of France if she were again attacked by Germany; but they feared that a guarantee would increase German hostility and were still worried about Britain's security against France. At the same time they thought that France, although now unassailable, was going steadily downhill so that in fifteen or twenty years' time it would be dangerous for Britain

51. (Cont)
from the records that they were not. Chamberlain mentioned the German proposals at the C.I.D. meeting of 13 February as the possible basis of a policy of regional arrangements, but they were not discussed.

to be tied to her. Hoare was against a reasoned reply to the League and would personally have preferred to do nothing.

Cecil approached the problem from his own individual angle. He wanted above all things disarmament, to which none of the others paid more than lip service except in so far as it was a matter of financial saving. To that end, although he did not care much for the Protocol, Cecil did want some European security arrangement. A western European agreement could form part of this, but he did not favour a western pact outside a general framework. He supported Chamberlain on some points, but the impression emerges that such support was something of an embarrassment.

Chamberlain was against the Protocol and all general arrangements but in favour of a pact with France now and the inclusion of Germany later. He had become convinced that the declaration of a positive British policy was urgently necessary. All the European countries were waiting to know British intentions; it was essential to encourage France if she were to be induced to be reasonable about the evacuation of the first zone of the Rhineland; the present situation in Germany was favourable for an encouragement of a pacific spirit which alone could prevent a new attack when Germany was again in a position to launch one in 1960 or 1970.(52)

52. C.I.D. 195th meeting, 13 Feb. 1925; 196th meeting,

Immediately after the meeting of 19 February Chamberlain circulated to the Cabinet a revised version of Nicolson's January memorandum. In his covering note Chamberlain wrote: "No Minister can conduct foreign affairs successfully without a policy. It is my duty to suggest one, and it is urgently necessary to know whether what I propose is approved by the competent authorities". The memorandum was a shortened version of the original, leading to the conclusion that the essential interests of imperial defence were closely related to policy of European security, and that the first hope of European stability lay in a new entente between the British Empire and France.(53)

52.(Cont)
19 Feb., CAB 2/4. Hoare had also stated his views in a memorandum of 5 February, the Admiralty and the Board of Trade had contributed further papers on economic sanctions, and Balfour had drafted a reply to the League: C.I.D. Papers 575-B, 577-B,581-B, 586-B, 587-B, CAB 4/12. After the meetings Cecil, Churchill, Worthington-Evans and Hoare sent to the Cabinet memoranda recording and amplifying their views: C.P. 112(25), 116(25),118(25), 121(25), CAB 24/172.

53. C.P. 106(25), CAB 24/172. In a further paper of 26 February Chamberlain wrote that if this policy were rejected he did not know what could be put in its place: C.P. 122(25), loc. cit. Nicolson's original memorandum was not circulated outside the Foreign Office: the version of 19 February received a wider distribution as a Cabinet Paper and in the Foreign Office confidential print; but it was not communicated to any foreign government. It appeared in some American newspapers in May: see also Chapter 5, p.44. All this time Chamberlain had been in no position to say much more to the French than he had said to Herriot on 5 December. On 20 January he did tell the French Ambassador that he was not unhopeful that Britain

German disarmament and the evacuation of the Cologne zone

In the Committee of Imperial Defence on 13 February Chamberlain referred to the difficulties that he expected with the French over the evacuation of the first zone of the Allied-occupied territory in the absence of agreement on security. The question would have been awkward in any event: arising precisely at this moment it was both an embarrassing complication and a spur to a decision on policy.

According to the Treaty of Versailles the occupation of the Rhineland was a guarantee for the execution of the treaty as a whole. After the signature of the London Agreement the question of the evacuation of the first zone at the earliest possible date, 10 January 1925, hinged in fact entirely on German fulfilment of the military clauses of the Treaty, although the possibility remained that other matters could be introduced. By the end of November 1924 it was apparent that the general inspection by the Military Control Commission would not be completed by the end of the year, and also that the German position was not satisfactory.(54) With the approval of the Cabinet Curzon stated in the House of Lords on 18 December that

53. (Cont)
might be able to provide a solution to the security problem that would satisfy France: desp. 270 to Paris, C 1001/459/18, FO 371/10726. On 13 February, however, when the reluctance of the Committee of Imperial Defence had been fully revealed, Chamberlain told Fleuriau that he could make no promises at all: desp. 569 to Paris, C 2199/2/18, FO 371/10703.

54. War Office to Foreign Office, 12 Nov 1924. C 17183/9/18, FO 371/9728; War Office to Foreign Office, 1 Dec., C 18122/9/18, FO 371/9729; War Office to Foreign Office, 4 Dec., C 18280/4736/18, FO 371/9833; C.P. 527(24), CAB 24/169.

evacuation could not be considered until the Control Commission's report was received.(55) And after an interim report had come in, on 5 January the Allied Ambassadors in Berlin delivered a note informing the German Government that in view of the German failure to carry out the military clauses of the Treaty, the reduction of the occupation that would have been possible on 10 January if Germany were loyally observing her engagements could not take place.

Although the Germans had been warned semi-officially that evacuation depended on the advice of the military authorities, there was a public outcry over the decision. Charges of sinister motives were particularly resented in London;(56) and an apparent German attempt to widen the grounds for the Allied refusal and to cast doubt on other obligations caused both annoyance and concern.(57)

55. C. 67(24), 17 Dec. 1924, CAB 23/49; H.L. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 60, cols. 170-2.

56. Minutes by Lampson, 24 Nov. and 6 Dec. 1924, C 17812, 18451/4736/18, FO 371/9833; desp. 2276 to Berlin, 29 Dec.; tel. 248 to Berlin, 31 Dec.; desp.2275 to Berlin, 31 Dec., C 19472, 19562, 19563/4736/18, FO 371/9834. The German reaction is described by Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 282-7.

57. The German press were saying that the decision would have a disastrous effect on the execution of the Dawes plan; and the Auswärtiges Amt, while denying any intention of casting doubt on the reparation obligation, said much the same: Stresemann to Hoesch and Sthamer, 28 Dec. 1924, 9518/H282644-48; Berlin tel. 494, 29 Dec.; tel. 248 to Berlin, 31 Dec.; tel. 2 to Berlin, 1 Jan 1925, C 19472, 19483/4736/18, FO 371/9834; Berlin tel. 5, 4 Jan.; Berlin desp. 12, 6 Jan.; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 12 Jan., C 134, 369/2/18, FO 371/10702.

But although the official line was to stand firmly by the terms of the Treaty, it is evident that by the end of 1924 there was a fairly general feeling in the Central Department of the Foreign Office that political questions ought to take precedence over the remnants of treaty enforcement. Thus the view was repeated that Germany was effectively disarmed and could not go to war with an advanced country on a modern scale; and it was held that since effective control of German disarmament was impossible, control should be abandoned as soon as was possibly consistent with the Treaty.(58) Only by political means, it was held, could Germany be prevented from making war in the future. Hence it is possible to discern a note of irritation at the revelations of the Control Commission's report and with the attitude of the General Staff. At the beginning of January the latter produced a paper on the present and future military situation in Germany. On the present situation the General Staff more or less repeated their evaluation of the report of the Control Commission, which Lampson had found of no great help in judging the importance of the German defaults although he had a firm impression that they would not convince the public.(59)

58. War Office to Foreign Office, 1 Dec. 1924 and minutes, C 18122/9/18, FO 371/9729; minute by Lampson, 2 Jan. 1925., C 18874/2048/18, FO 371/9820.

59. Minutes on C 21/21/18, FO 371/10707; C 248/30/18, FO 371/10711; War Office to Foreign Office, 2 Jan. 1925, C 112/21/18, FO 371/10707.

For the future, the General Staff expected Germany to recover and become increasingly nationalist; but to judge by the present state of her armaments and the fairly limited known plans for production, it appeared that she would have to be "strong enough or have on her side a body of foreign public opinion sufficient to enable her to disregard the limitations imposed upon her armaments by the Treaty of Versailles and to carry out a large part of her industrial mobilisation before the commencement of a war". It was therefore essential that developments in Germany should be watched and that the Allies should be perfectly clear about the course they intended to take to prevent Germany regaining by force what she had lost by the Treaty of Versailles. The Department's comments on this aspect of the paper were superficial: no attempt was made to discuss even the political consequences of condoning breaches of the Treaty of Versailles.(60)

The other side of the coin about German disarmament was the suspicion, widespread in Britain and shared by Chamberlain as well as by officials, that the French would seek reasons for maintaining the occupation at least until Britain had made an acceptable offer on security

60. War Office to Foreign Office, 6 Jan. 1925, C248/30/18, FO 371/10711. The General Staff estimated the output of German plants in the Soviet Union as 36 aircraft per month plus spares.

and possibly indefinitely.[61] On past French ~~politicians~~ form, and considering the utterances of certain French politicians and newspapers, the suspicion was not far-fetched. Since there were respects, such as the trial of war criminals, in which the Treaty of Versailles was now incapable of fulfilment, the British insistence on confining the discussion to disarmament and to major defaults at that, was directed as much towards preventing the French from extending the area of disagreement as towards keeping the Germans to the points at issue. The coincidence in time of the discussions of security and of the evacuation of the Cologne zone complicated the problem. From the end of December Chamberlain envisaged as the only solution negotiations with the French and Belgian Governments to reduce the list of German defaults to a

61. The Germans held this suspicion even more strongly. Hoesch had been reporting to this effect since November, and D'Abernon frequently stressed the point. There was also a good deal of talk of trying to link the evacuation of the Cologne zone with that of the Ruhr, in a compromise by which both would be evacuated in May. D'Abernon favoured this course, the Foreign Office did not, and Hoesch regarded it as dangerous. Hoesch desp. 6 Nov. 1924, 4504/E122204-15; Hoesch to Schubert, 3 Dec., 4504/E122070-75; Berlin tel. 489, 24 Dec.; desp. 2276 to Berlin, 29 Dec., C 19301, 19562/4736/18, FO 371/9834; Berlin tel. 22, 10 Jan. 1925, C492/2/18, FO 371/10702; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 31 Jan., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/255.

minimum, followed by a conference with the Germans about the defaults. He foresaw divergence between the Allies as to their significance, and French objections to negotiating with the Germans about a matter falling wholly within the terms of the treaty. He also feared that the French wanted to keep the question of evacuation open until they knew the British decision on security.(62) Fears about the French and Belgian attitude were reinforced by reports from Berlin that the French members of the Control Commission were trying to put a graver construction on the German defaults than the facts warranted, by suggestions from Brussels that the Belgian Government were trying to use the evacuation to put pressure on Britain over security, and by Herriot's declaration in the Chamber on 28 January that the question of Cologne was dominated by security.(63) The Germans did not help matters by

62. Paris desp. 2817, 24 Dec. 1924; Paris desp. 2820, 28 Dec., with minutes, C 19288, 19364/4736/18, FO 371/9834; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 9 Jan. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/252, FO 800/257; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 12 Jan., C 369/2/18, FO 371/10702; Chamberlain to Crewe, 23 Jan.; desp. 425 to Paris, 30 Jan., C 677, 1635/21/18, FO 371/10707.

63. Brussels desp. 53, 18 Jan. 1925, W 528/21/4, FO 371/11041; Grahame to Chamberlain, 19 and 20 Jan.; Chamberlain to Grahame, 22 Jan., Chamberlain Papers, AC52/416, 417, 418, FO 800/257; Gen. Wauchope to War Office, 1 Feb., C 1655/21/18, FO 371/10707; Journal Officiel, Chambre des députés, 28 Jan.

demanding discussions and the full reasons for non-evacuation, but Chamberlain felt it necessary to warn Herriot that the disarmament question must be dealt with strictly in accordance with the peace treaty and that any attempt to use it to force Britain's hand over security would produce the opposite effect to the one desired.(64)

But although the questions of evacuation and of security were distinct technically there was, as Herriot said to Crewe, a connexion of fact.(65) Herriot told Crewe that while he was determined not to mix up the two questions he saw great difficulty in Chamberlain's conference settling the details of evacuation without talking about security. Hymans, too, pointed out to the British Chargé d'Affaires that many people in France and Belgium genuinely believed that it would be unwise to give up the existing guarantee on the Rhine unless something equally weighty were forthcoming instead.(66) There

64. Berlin desp. 36, 17 Jan. 1925; tel.14 to Berlin, 23 Jan., C 875, 972/2/18, FO 371/10702; Berlin tel. 44, 27 Jan.; minute by Lampson, 29 Jan., C 1276, 1428/2/18, FO 371/10703; tel. 50 to Paris, 5 Feb., C 1682/21/18, FO 371/10707; desp. 488 to Paris, 6 Feb., C1849/2/18, FO 371/10703; Chamberlain to Crewe, 6 Feb., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/186, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/257.

65. In the British view the last paragraph of Art. 429 of the Treaty of Versailles, which said that if the guarantees against German aggression were not considered sufficient the evacuation might be delayed, referred only to the final evacuation: Paris tel. 50, 4 Feb.1925; tel. 50 to Paris, 5 Feb., C 1682/21/18, FO 371/10707; Paris tel. 61, 12 Feb., C2085/459/18, FO 371/10727.

66. Paris tel. 50, 4 Feb. 1925, C 1682/21/18, FO371/10707; Crewe to Chamberlain, 5 Feb., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/184, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/257; Brussels desp. 107, 7 Feb., C1963/21/18, FO 371/10708; desp. 191 to Brussels, 12 Feb., C 2113/2/18, FO 371/10703; D.D.B., Vol. II, Nos. 14, 16, 17.

were also the consideration that if Herriot could not satisfy French popular feeling his Government might fall.(67) To make matters more complicated the Permanent Advisory Committee, in accordance with instructions given at the December Council meeting, produced on 5 February a scheme for applying the Council resolution of 27 September 1924 to the demilitarised zone, which included the establishment there of a permanent resident organ. In the British view Article 213 of the Treaty of Versailles did not cover bodies of this kind, so that German consent to its establishment would be necessary. It proved, however, possible to have the question adjourned at the March Council meeting.(68)

The French were indeed averse to discussion on disarmament with the Germans, because they feared being led into concessions on the substance. It was also doubtful whether Herriot would be able to leave Paris before Easter. Chamberlain, who was anxious for the conversations to be held in London and was now fighting hard over security in the Committee of Imperial Defence, became agitated at the prospect of delay and told Crewe that he feared a divergence

67. Hoesch tel., 3 Dec. 1924; Hoesch tel., 3 Jan. 1925, 4504/E121921-26, E121869-72; Paris tel. 61, 12 Feb., C 2085/459/18, FO 371/10727.

68. Aide-mémoire from Herriot, 5 Dec. 1924; memorandum by Troutbeck, 17 Dec., C 18874, 18924/2048/18, FO 371/9820; Law Officers to Foreign Office, 18 Jan. 1925; minutes, 3, 19 and 20 Feb; desp. 737 to Paris, 28 Feb., C 741, 1636, 2337, 2932/741/18, FO 371/10749.

between the two countries that would undo all the work of the past year.[69] However, he eventually agreed that the question of a conference with the Germans could be left for consideration when the Allied Ministers met, and that meanwhile the Control Commission's report could be discussed through diplomatic channels.[70] The report had been received in the middle of February. It stated that apart from some reductions in factories the position was very much as it had been in 1922. All the infractions noted then were still unrectified and there had been some increases in effectives, in recruitment and training, in armaments, and in fortifications. The General Staff regarded twenty of the infractions as being of major importance, and twenty-nine as possible subjects of concession.[71] On 24 February Crowe set down his ideas on future procedure. Before Chamberlain went to Paris and Geneva at the beginning of March the War Office should produce a statement of what disarmament demands were essential and a note to the German Government should be drafted. Chamberlain should secure Herriot's agreement

69. Desp. 503 to Paris, 9 Feb. 1925; desp. 569 to Paris, 13 Feb., C 1969, 2199/2/18, FO 371/10703; Crewe to Chamberlain, 17 Feb.; Chamberlain to Crewe, 20 Feb., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/190, 191, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/257; desp. 657 to Paris, 21 Feb.; Paris tel. 75, 22 Feb., C 2578, 2557/21/18, FO 371/10708; Crewe to Chamberlain, 22 Feb., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/192, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/257.

70. Desp. 680 to Paris, 24 Feb. 1925, C 2746/21/18, FO 371/10708.

71. Final report, 15 Feb. 1925; General Staff comments, 25 Feb., C 2355, 2745, 3052/21/18, FO 371/10708; C.I.D. Papers 603-B, 604-B, CAB 4/13.

when he was in Paris. Then when the note had been sent and the Germans expressed a desire to present observations, a ministerial conference would be held in London (preferably) or Brussels. The conference would be primarily concerned with disarmament and evacuation, but opportunities would be sought at it "for an exchange of views first between France and England, then between them and the other Allies, and finally between France (with or without her allies) and Germany, concerning the general problem of a Four Power pact, not necessarily in one document but preferably in one or more separate documents".(72)

When Crowe suggested this timetable the fate of Chamberlain's pact policy had not been settled in the Cabinet. In fact the procedure was not followed: on the contrary discussion of German disarmament was delayed until after that of the German security proposals had begun.

The German security proposals

The German proposals to which Chamberlain referred in the Committee of Imperial Defence on 13 February initially cut across the policy which he was trying to get his colleagues to accept, but in the end provided a way out of the impasse. It is tempting to suppose that D'Abernon

72. Minute by Crowe, 24 Feb. 1925, C 264/21/18, FO 371/10708.

promoted them for this purpose; but more careful examination shows not only that D'Abernon was proceeding quite independently of London, but also that the timing of the German move had nothing to do with the state of the discussion in London. D'Abernon spent the latter part of November and the first half of December 1924 in England; and it was common knowledge that the new Government were examining the Geneva Protocol, that they and the Dominions were unlikely to accept it as it stood, and that French security was in the air again. The Embassy in Berlin would have received copies of such documents as Crowe's memorandum on the Protocol of 17 November, Campbell's paper of 20 November, the memorandum on French security of 4 November, and the records of Chamberlain's conversations in Paris and Rome in early December. But they would not have received Committee of Imperial Defence minutes or memoranda, or Cabinet papers emanating from Departments other than the Foreign Office, and there is no evidence that D'Abernon was told details orally. In any case the full extent of the division within the Government was not revealed in the Committee of Imperial Defence until the middle of February, after the German proposals had been made.

D'Abernon's object was no doubt at least partly to forestall an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact, to which he was strongly opposed. On the German side the factors making for the initiative, or the decision to take up D'Abernon's initiative, were fear of an Anglo-French alliance, the

need to find some way forward from the setback over disarmament and the non-evacuation of the Cologne zone, and the fear of League of Nations supervision over German disarmament.(73) The timing of the German approach owed a good deal to D'Abernon's initiative in raising the security question with Schubert on 29 December.(74) The method owed a good deal to D'Abernon's advice, which the Germans followed with misgivings that were fully justified by the initial reception of the proposals. Their content, however, owed much more to the Auswärtiges Amt than to the Ambassador (who continued to hanker after the Cuno offer and an "iron curtain"), and was largely derived from Gaus's and Schubert's suggestion of April 1923.(75)

73. The British generally supposed that the only point of difficulty was the question of permanent organs in the demilitarised zone; but the Germans also objected to the investigation scheme of September 1924 for the country as a whole: Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 268-70.

74. Memorandum by Schubert, 29 Dec. 1924, 4509/E124822-23. This memorandum is the first document in the State Secretary's file on the security question. In addition references in correspondence during January show that the Germans regarded D'Abernon's initiative (which they thought had probably been taken on instructions from London) as the real starting-point of their proposals.

75. See Gaus to Bülow 12 Jan. 1925; Dufour to Schubert, 13 Jan.; memorandum by Schubert, 14 Jan., 4509/E124815-19, E124791-93, E124805-09.

The German proposals were handed to D'Abernon on the morning of 20 January. The memorandum stated that the German Government were ready to discuss a treaty arrangement to secure peace with France, and suggested various possible bases for it. These were the Cuno proposal for a pact renouncing war between the powers interested in the Rhine, a comprehensive arbitration treaty (which Germany was prepared to conclude with all states) or a pact guaranteeing the present territorial status on the Rhine and the fulfilment of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. These suggestions could be combined in different ways, and were sufficient to show that if all the states concerned desired guarantees for peaceful evolution it would not be difficult to work out a treaty.(76) D'Abernon followed up the memorandum with a despatch urging the merits of the Cuno offer and expressing the view that the new German Government's attitude was of "vast importance". He also wrote to Chamberlain urging that whether or not these precise proposals were immediately

76. Berlin tel. 34; Berlin desp. 49, 20 Jan. 1925, C 946, 980/459/18, FO 371/10726; memoranda by Schubert, 20 Jan., 4509/E124770-79. The memorandum is printed in Locarno-Konferenz 1925, [East] Berlin 1962, No. 2, and a translation in D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. III, pp. 276-9. The memorandum communicated to the French Government on 9 February and printed in Cmd 2435 of 1925, Papers respecting the Proposals for a Pact of Security made by the German Government on February 9, 1925, was identical save that the first paragraph of the text of 19 January was omitted and a final sentence added referring to the possibility of a general security convention.

practical, it was important to have them on record and to base discussions on them.(77) The immediate reaction in the Foreign Office was that the proposal was premature, and could not be discussed until the disarmament question had been disposed of and the Allies had agreed among themselves on security. Crowe wrote that the German idea ought not to be discouraged: he had spoken briefly about it with Sthamer, who had only received a summary of the memorandum and was disposed to agree that it need not be regarded as urgent.(78)

On 23 January D'Abernon reported further information about the proposals given to him by Schubert, information which was to be of considerable importance for the future of the negotiations. Schubert explained that in the German view the model for the arbitration treaties should be the German-Swiss and German-Swedish arbitration treaties of 1921 and 1924.(79) Under these treaties all disputes which were not settled within a reasonable time by diplomatic means were to be submitted to tribunals of arbitration or conciliation - juridical disputes to an arbitration tribunal whose awards would be binding on the two governments, and political disputes to a conciliation tribunal whose recommendations would not be binding. Schubert added that Switzerland had recently signed an arbitration treaty with Italy under which all disputes were to be submitted to

77. Berlin desp. 53, 21 Jan. 1925, C1133/459/18, FO 371/10726; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 21 Jan, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928. A new government under Dr. Hans Luther had been formed on 15 January. It included, for the first time since 1918, members of the German Nationalist Party (D.N.V.P.). Stresemann remained Minister for Foreign Affairs.

78. Minutes, 22 Jan. 1925, on C 980/459/18, FO 371/10726. Sthamer had in fact been sent the text of the memorandum.

79. B.F.S.P., Vol. CXIV, pp 820-7; Vol. CXXV, pp. 741-50.

compulsory arbitration: the German Government did not propose to "eliminate conciliation" in political disputes, but this was a "detail" which could be discussed. He confirmed that Germany's willingness to conclude arbitration treaties extended to all countries, including those on her eastern frontier. Schubert also said that the expression "gegenwärtigen Besitzstand am Rhein" in the German memorandum meant the territorail status under the peace treaty, i.e. Germany would accept a pact expressly guaranteeing the present position.(80)

The Foreign Office still thought the German proposal premature. Lampson suggested that it was bound to be affected by Germany's entry into the League: the arbitration provisions of the Covenant would make anything on the lines of the German-Swiss treaty practically superfluous. He suggested that Chamberlain should express sympathy to Sthamer but say that such questions of high policy could not be hurried. If Germany would apply to join the League other arrangemets would be more likely to succeed. Crowe noted that he had told Baldwin that they ought to get clear about the Anglo-French pact first and then see how to bring Germany in. Chamberlain, who had been unwell for the past few days, wrote that he would see Sthamer in the following week.(81)

80. Berlin tel. 39, 23 Jan. 1925, C 1143/459/18, FO 371/10727; Schubert to D'Abernon, 22 Jan.; memorandum by Schubert, 23 Jan., 4509/E124759-61, E124746-52. The Italo-Swiss treaty of 1924 in fact provided for a conciliation commission for all disputes, in the first instance, and for arbitration only in limited cases thereafter: B.F.S.P., Vol. CXX, pp 708-11.

81. Minutes, 27 and 28 Jan. 1925, on C 1143/459/18, FO 371/10727. The argument that the Covenant and the arbitration treaties were not both necessary was used by the Germans in the summer: see Chapter 5. At the Assembly in September 1924 MacDonald had

There was also some confusion about the German intention in making the proposal to the British Government alone and under the seal of secrecy. The reasons for this confusion lay in Berlin; partly in uncertainty whether D'Abernon had acted on his own initiative and in doubt about his discretion, partly in a wish to prepare the ground without premature publicity, partly in uncertainty of touch and vague instructions. When Sthamer was sent a copy of the German memorandum on 19 January he was told not to mention D'Abernon's conversations but merely to sound the British Government's views. The tactical problems, real and imagined, were explained. D'Abernon had advised approaching London alone, but the real negotiating partner was France. Britain's interests were not identical with those of either France or Germany, and D'Abernon's advice simply to repeat the Cuno offer, if it did come from London, might have been meant to steer Germany away from making an offer to France such as could involve a British commitment. But his advice could not be ignored, and it was

81. (Cont)
tried to promote German entry into the League. The German Government sent, on 29 September, notes to the members of the Council about conditions for entry, specifying a permanent seat on the Council, release from any obligations arising from Article 16, no reaffirmation of war guilt, and participation in mandates. After the various governments had replied that the matter was one for the League itself, the German Government addressed on 12 December a letter to the Secretary-General repeating the objections to Article 16. See Survey of International Affairs, 1925, Vol. II, pp. 12-15 and, for detail, Spenz, Die diplomatische Vorgeschichte des Beitritts Deutschlands zum Völkerbund, pp. 23-57.

not at all certain how a serious offer would be received in France. The only answer seemed to be to explore the ground in London and approach Paris rather later.(82) A couple of days later Hoesch was instructed to start preparing the ground in Paris, but was told that it had not yet been decided whether to make the content of the eventual offer depend on British approval.(83) In reporting the proposal and Schubert's comments D'Abernon stated that the German Government were anxious to obtain the views of the British Government on it and advice on the best way of bringing the German attitude on security to the attention of the other Allies.(84) But to Crowe Sthamer said that he had no instructions to discuss security but would be ready to talk about it with Chamberlain if the latter wished.(85) And when Sthamer saw Chamberlain on 30 January he did not convey that British views were desired on the best way of approaching the French Government. On the contrary he allowed Chamberlain to conclude that there was no immediate intention of communicating with the French, and consequently to suspect the German motives.(86)

By the time that Sthamer saw Chamberlain, not only had he been instructed to "develop a certain activity behind the scenes" in

82. Desp. to Sthamer, 19 Jan. 1925, 4509/E124780-86; Locarno - Konferenz, No. 1.

83. Desp. to Hoesch, 21 Jan. 1925, 4509/E124765-69.

84. Berlin tel. 34; Berlin desp. 49, 20 Jan. 1925, C946, 980/459/18, FO 371/10726; Berlin tel. 39, 23 Jan., C 1143/459/18, FO 371/10727.

85. Sthamer tel., 26 Jan. 1925, 4509/E124725.

86. Desp. 175 to Berlin, 30 Jan. 1925, C 1454/459/18, FO 371/10727; Sthamer tel., 30 Jan., 3123/D642141-43. See also Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Sep. 1930 and Selby to Chamberlain, 29 Sep. 1930, Chamberlain Papers, AC 39/118.

London, but Hoesch had begun to prepare the ground in Paris and Schubert had spoken in general terms to the French and United States Ambassadors. Not surprisingly in view of all this activity the French and German press began talking of a security proposal.(87) Stresemann, however, appeared to be having second thoughts. On 29 January, after Herriot's speech in the Chamber, he told D'Abernon that he had gathered that an initiative on security might be regarded in Paris as a device to evade discussion on disarmament. It was most undesirable that an important proposal for the peace of Europe should be seen in a wrong context, and it was essential for Germany's dignity that she should not make fundamental proposals such as these except at a moment when they would be properly appreciated. He was therefore inclined to postpone or even abandon the idea. D'Abernon commented that these reasons might be genuine or might arise from resistance in the German Cabinet: as he reported the conversation it also sounded as though Stresemann was preparing to lay the blame on the French. D'Abernon, naturally in view of his share in the proceedings, urged the Foreign Office that it would be a "vast pity" to let the Germans recede from their proposals or to let the opportunity pass. But in the Foreign Office it was thought impossible to urge the Germans not to withdraw the proposal, because there were doubts about the possible reception in Paris.(88)

87. Memorandum by Schubert, 23 Jan. 1925; tel. to Sthamer, 24 Jan.; Hoesch tel., 24 Jan; Schubert to Sthamer, 26 Jan.; tel to Hoesch, 28 Jan.; memorandum by Schubert, 28 Jan., 4509/E124701-05, E124730-33, E124726-29, E124716-19, E134710-12, E124693-97. There was an article on Security in the Germania, the organ of the Centre Party, on 25 January.

88. Berlin tels. 49, 50, 29 Jan. 1925, C1372, 1416/459/18, FO 371/10727; memorandum by Stresemann, 29 Jan., 4509/E124683-87; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 31 Jan., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/255, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928, FO 800/257. Cf. D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. III, pp. 132-4.

Chamberlain's attitude, therefore, in his conversation with Sthamer on 30 January, was extremely cautious. He said that although he welcomed the evidence that the German Government were considering what they could do to allay French fears, he did not think it possible to discuss their proposal until the British attitude to the Geneva Protocol and French security had been defined. Pressed by Sthamer to give an opinion on the principle of the German proposal, Chamberlain said that he certainly "did not exclude the idea at the proper time of an agreement between Germany and France or Germany and the Allies, giving a mutual guarantee to the situation established by the peace treaties on their common frontiers, and ... the British Government would at all times be glad if it could help to promote a better state of feeling between Germany and France". And he asked why Germany did not at once join the League.(89)

Chamberlain wrote to D'Abernon that his account of Stresemann's words on 29 January confirmed the impression that the German proposal was premature. He was sure that the most effective step that Germany could take for the present was to join the League. As to the proposal, France might later be willing to consider something of the kind, but not until the British attitude to French security was more clearly defined, and not at all if the proposal were intended to depend on the evacuation of the whole of the Rhineland.(90) To this

89. Immediately afterwards Chamberlain told Fleuriau of his conversation with Sthamer and of the German proposal, but without saying that it had been made in writing: desp. 175 to Berlin; desp. 385 to Paris, 30 Jan. 1925, C 1454, 1455/459/18, FO 371/10727; Sthamer tel., 30 Jan., 3123/D642141-43.

90. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 3 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/256, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928.

last point D'Abernon replied: "I have ascertained that the evacuation of the whole of the occupied territory was not contemplated as part of the German proposal".(91)

Chamberlain's statement to Sthamer on 30 January that he would not negotiate behind France's back (which implied that he was going to inform the French) and the press rumours (which increased after a speech by Luther to the foreign press on the same day) decided the Germans that the approach in Paris must be made soon even though the French press sounded unfavourable. Instructions to Hoesch to speak to Herriot were therefore sent on 5 February, in a despatch clearly setting out the German motives. The French, Stresemann wrote, would certainly insist on the strict fulfilment of German disarmament but there could be no doubt that they would use the disarmament question primarily for the pursuit of far-reaching political aims. The arrival of the treaty date for the evacuation of the Cologne zone confronted them with the choice between pursuing in some form the permanent position on the Rhine demanded at the Peace Conference and finally accepting the solution contained in the Treaty. Herriot had perhaps not yet made up his mind, but in all probability the second alternative could only be carried through if he could show to French opinion a security settlement equal in value to the guarantee treaties of 1919. The Geneva Protocol could hardly be considered an adequate substitute; but together with the failure of

91. D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 7 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/257, D'Abernon Papers, loc. cit., FO 800/257. Chamberlain passed this assurance on to Crewe in a letter of 16 February, C 2450/459/18, FO 371/10727, printed in Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 258-60.

the guarantee treaties it gave France a means of putting pressure on Britain to provide one. Stresemann believed that the British Government intended to treat the evacuation of the Cologne zone solely as a matter of disarmament, but he was doubtful whether they could make their view prevail with the French. The whole history of the security question so far gave grounds for a fear that in connexion with the evacuation Britain would in the end give France assurances on security that would be intolerable for Germany, either (and more probably) the so-called physical guarantees in the Rhineland or a pact. Hence Germany must take the initiative. They must work against the establishment of dangerous guarantees and try to prevent those already mentioned in the League's investigation scheme from being put into effect. If they waited for projects to come from the other side their own proposals would seem to be mere defensive measures. The proposals were serious, but if they failed they would at least have strengthened the German position in combatting dangerous designs from the other side.(92)

Hoesch was laid up after a motor accident, and the memorandum was finally given to Herriot by the Counsellor of the German Embassy on 9 February, still under the seal of secrecy. D'Abernon had not been told beforehand but Schubert informed him next day (without telling the French); Herriot informed Geneva (without telling the Germans): not surprisingly the Foreign Office found this

92. Schubert to Hoesch, 5 Feb. 1925, 4509/E124610-13; desp. to Hoesch and memorandum to the French Government, 3123/D642172-85, printed in Locarno-Konferenz, Nos. 4-5.

mystification incomprehensible.(93) The existence, and even the nature, of the German proposals were now, however, becoming common knowledge in the press; and once the memorandum had been communicated to the Belgian and Italian Governments on 21 February there was no further pretence of secrecy.(94) The initial reception of the German proposal in Paris was cautious but not discouraging. The reply given to Hoesch on 20 February said that the French Government were determined not to neglect anything that could contribute to peace, but must consult their allies. In conversation with Crewe Herriot showed himself to be still worried about the connexion with the evacuation of Cologne, and French officials showed anxiety about the wider implications for the League of Nations and France's eastern allies.(95)

But the crucial point for the French, clearly, was what decision on security would be reached by the British Government, and this was still uncertain. Chamberlain expressed his view of the German proposal

93. Berlin tel. 60, 10 Feb. 1925; Paris tel. 61, 12 Feb.; Chamberlain to Crewe, 16 Feb., C 2021, 2085, 2450/459/18, FO 371/10727. D'Abernon wrote later that he thought the German action had on the whole been straightforward, and he regarded the secrecy about the communication to the French as no more than a joke: D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 21 Feb., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/262, FO 800/257.

94. The Belgian Government were informed of the proposal by the French a couple of days before the German Charge d'Affaires delivered the memorandum: D.D.B., Vol. II, Nos. 22-4.

95. French reply in A.A.E., Grade Bretagne, Vol. 72; Cmd. 2435 of 1925; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 8. Paris tel. 61, 12 Feb. 1925, C 2085/459/18, FO 371/10727; Paris tel. 75, 22 Feb.; desp. 686 to Paris, 24 Feb., C 2557, 2746/21/18, FO 371/10708; Hoesch tels., 17 and 20 Feb., 4509/E124982-87, E 124947-51.

at length in a letter to Crewe on 16 February. He wrote that he was now disposed to think that a British guarantee of the eastern frontier of France and Belgium would be a more practical proposition if Germany were associated with it. He regarded a general guarantee as unconvincing and useless, and he admitted that public opinion, the Labour and Liberal parties, and the League of Nations Union would be hostile to partial arrangements. He knew, Chamberlain wrote, what he wanted to do but he could not forecast the Cabinet's decision. And he warned Crewe and D'Abernon (to whom he sent a copy of this letter) not to go farther for the present than to let the French and German Governments know, if the matter came up, that he attached great importance to the German approach and considered that it would be a great mistake for the Germans to withdraw it or the French not to take it seriously.(96) As the argument within the Government tended increasingly against an Anglo-French pact, Chamberlain's references to the German proposal became warmer. On 26 February he told the Belgian Ambassador that he regarded the approach as "an incident of the utmost importance which might be of vital consequence to the Allies and have a determining influence on the whole question of our future security". On 3 March he told the Italian Ambassador that he attached much greater importance to the German memorandum than when it was first communicated: on the same day he was more encouraging than hitherto to Sthamer.(97) But the outcome in London was still not decided.

96. Chamberlain to Crewe, 16 Feb. 1925, C 2450/459/18, FO 371/10727, printed in Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol II, pp. 258-60.

97. Desp. 260 to Brussels, 26 Feb. 1925, C 2854/459/18, FO 371/10727; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 28; desp. 290 to Rome, 3 Mar., C 3099/459/18, FO 371/10728; desp. 413 to Berlin, 3 Mar., C 3146/2/18, FO 371/10703; Sthamer tel., 3 Mar., 3123/D642481-85.

Chamberlain and the Cabinet

The March meeting of the Council of the League of Nations was now imminent and Chamberlain, according to his later account, was determined to get the Cabinet to agree on a policy before he went abroad. There was also to be a debate in the House of Commons on 5 March, and he hoped to be able to outline a policy then.(98) When the Cabinet met on 2 March Baldwin, instead of asking Curzon to expound the proceedings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, gave Chamberlain the first word. Although as late as 26 February Chamberlain had put forward the case for an agreement with France prior to any inclusion of Germany, he had now apparently recognised that an Anglo-French pact would not be accepted and so argued for a four-power pact including Germany from the start.(99) At this meeting the Cabinet agreed that it was their policy to allay the state of insecurity in Europe, so that although the Geneva Protocol could not be accepted something else must be done. They agreed to consider an alternative policy two days later. During the meeting a formula was drafted, representing the general trend of the Cabinet's view, which Chamberlain could use with Herriot. This read: "His Majesty's

98. In a letter to D'Abernon of 11 Sep. 1930, à propos of the publication of An Ambassador of Peace, Chamberlain Papers, AC 39/118. Some discrepancies between this account, written from memory, and the record are noted below. Chamberlain to Crewe, 2 Mar. 1925, AC 52/193, Crewe Papers, C/8.

99. Chamberlain wrote to D'Abernon in 1930 (see n. 98) that he had hoped to win French confidence first and conclude a defensive alliance, and only later turn it into a reciprocal arrangement with Germany. He was sure that if he had not continued to press the idea of an alliance on the C.I.D. he would not have got consent to the reciprocal pact. But in this letter he was not precise about the date of such change as there was in his own approach. Grahame, who was in England at the end of February and was still

Majesty's Government do not feel able to enter into a dual pact with France with or without Belgium. The question of a quadrilateral agreement between France, Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, and if possible, with the accord of Italy, for mutual security [and for guaranteeing each other's frontiers in the West of Europe],(100) stands on a different footing and might become a great assurance to the peace of Europe and lead to a rapid reduction of armaments. His Majesty's Government have, of course, in these matters to carry with them the assent, or at least the goodwill, of the various self-governing Dominions of the British Empire. If the French Government share the views of His Majesty's Government and will regulate their action towards Germany accordingly, His Majesty's Government will, for their part, begin the necessary discussions with the Dominions, and in all their policy will endeavour to further the common cause".(101)

Chamberlain later wrote: "I carried the Cabinet that day for the mutual pact". Although it is clear from the mention in the minutes of a further meeting to be held on 4 March that the alternative policy was not fully settled, Chamberlain's letter to Crewe of 2

99. (Cont'd)
opposed to any British commitment, returned to Brussels convinced that many people in the Foreign Office were still bent on a guarantee to France and Belgium: Brussels desps. 141, 144, 19 Feb. 1925, W 1443, 1459/21/4, FO 371/11041; memorandum by Grahame, 25 Feb., C 3171/459/18, FO 371/10728; Grahame to D'Abernon, 4 Mar., D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928.

100. Square brackets in pencil in the original, presumably inserted on 4 March: see p. 347.

101. C. 12 (25), CAB 23/49.

March does show some confidence about the way things were going.(102) That evening, however, according to his later account, Curzon came to see him, bringing Balfour, and saying that he thought that the Cabinet's decision had been too hasty. Balfour contributed little to the ensuing argument except the observation that a mutual guarantee involved larger commitments than an alliance with France. Chamberlain wrote that he ended the conversation by saying that they must have another Cabinet so that he might be sure where he stood.(103)

The Cabinet met in the morning and the afternoon of 4 March. Baldwin was absent and Chamberlain himself took the chair. At the outset it became clear that the formula drafted two days earlier did not commend itself: in particular it was feared that to talk of guaranteeing frontiers - not only France and Belgium against Germany but Germany against France - was much more than the public at home and in the Dominions would accept. Chamberlain was authorised to reject the Protocol, and the draft reply to the League was approved with some amendments. Chamberlain's summing up of the discussion was approved as the line he was to take with Herriot. This was that the Government attached the highest importance to the German proposal, which seemed to offer the best chance of security for France and peace for the world. To reject it would be to thrust Germany into

102. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Sep. 1930, Chamberlain Papers, AC 39/118; Chamberlain to Crewe, 2 Mar. 1925, AC 52/193, Crewe Papers, C/8.

103. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Sep. 1930, Chamberlain Papers, AC 39/118; also Chamberlain to Nicolson, 28 May 1934, AC 40/123. Writing from memory, Chamberlain was uncertain about some of the dates, and he put the two Cabinet meetings on successive days instead of two days apart. Hankey's diary shows that he was active in lobbying Baldwin, Curzon, and Balfour against the mutual pact: Roskill, Hankey, Vol. II, pp. 396-7.

the hands of Russia. The Government would consult the Dominions. ~~Chamberlain would consult the Dominions.~~ Chamberlain would explain the difficulty about public opinion but would say that he hoped that it could be overcome if Germany were included in the proposed arrangement: it could not be overcome if Germany were not included. If British participation in an arrangement were desired, Chamberlain could not agree to any formula nor pledge the Dominions, but his colleagues had authorised him to say that they would do their best to see that such a project should not fail for want of British concurrence.(104)

This was an exiguous policy for Chamberlain to take abroad with him. It is not surprising that his statement in the foreign affairs debate was vague and struck at least one listener as barren, nor that just before leaving for Paris he wrote to his wife: "My task is indeed a difficult one".(105) But he had secured an undertaking that the British Government would do their best to co-operate and to convince the Dominions, and he proceeded to act on this undertaking.

Chamberlain arrived in Paris on 6 March and had two long conversations with Herriot that evening and the following day.

104. C 13 and 14 (25), CAB 23/49. The reply on the Protocol was the statement that Chamberlain made to the Council of the League on 12 March: Cmd 2368 of 1925, Statement by the Right Hon. Austen Chamberlain, M.P., on behalf of His Majesty's Government, to the Council of the League of Nations, respecting the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, Geneva, March 12, 1925.

105. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 181, cols. 700-16; Harry, Graf Kessler, Tagebücher 1918-1937, Frankfurt 1961, pp. 420-3; Chamberlain to Mrs. Chamberlain, 6 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 6/1/600.

In the first conversation he told Herriot of the Government's decision not to sign the Geneva Protocol, nor to attempt to amend it, and then said that, to his own regret, the state of public opinion would not allow the Government to enter into an Anglo-French or an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact. But the German proposals seemed to offer the hope of a solution in which Britain could co-operate, and he begged Herriot to consider them from the point of view of formulating the conditions that would make them acceptable to France and a real guarantee for French security.

Herriot was not surprised at the British decision on the Protocol, but the decision not to pursue an Anglo-French pact was a severe and apparently unexpected blow. He was clearly doubtful about the German proposals, and mentioned four problems in particular. First, did the Germans mean to make it a condition that the period of occupation of the Rhineland should be shortened? Second, the distinction drawn between the eastern and western frontiers: the Poles might sometimes be impetuous but France must be concerned for the safety of Poland. Third, the lack of mention of the southern frontier (which was of immense importance to Italy) and of Belgium. Fourth, although Herriot recognised that the proposals were better than anything offered before and were especially important as coming from Luther's Government, he wondered whether they were not a manoeuvre of domestic politics. He then spoke of Germany's recovery and preaching of revenge while France was still struggling with financial difficulties, and said: "From my heart I tell you I look forward with terror to her making war on us again in ten years".

Chamberlain was able to reassure Herriot on the first point, as a result of the enquiry that he had made through D'Abernon.

On the second and third points he said that the Germans had undertaken not to go to war in pursuance of their aims on the eastern frontier, and if Germany were not going to war in the east or the west, he could not believe that she intended to provoke trouble "for the sake of restoring the Tyrol to Austria". He agreed that it was odd that Belgium was not mentioned, but said that he assumed that the guarantee of the French frontier would extend to the Belgian frontier as well. Herriot asked what became of the League and the Covenant. Chamberlain replied that Britain's obligations under the Covenant remained exactly the same, but Herriot had himself admitted that neither the Covenant nor the Protocol gave France the necessary security. It was for this reason that he had sought the separate pact which Chamberlain had to tell him no British Government could give, and it was for this reason that he asked Herriot to consider the German proposals.(106)

In the conversation on 7 March Herriot asked whether Britain, France, and Belgium could agree among themselves on the terms which they might propose to Germany. Chamberlain got the impression that Herriot was harking back to the idea of two pacts, one between the three Allies and a second between them and Germany. He therefore scotched this idea while saying that of course the Allies could

106. Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 Mar. 1925. C 3367/459/18, FO 371/10728. Chamberlain seems to have convinced himself that the offer to conclude arbitration treaties with Germany's eastern neighbours was an offer of an undertaking not to go to war. Each time that he mentioned this point his language on it became more categorical, but he would not have been so definite if he had read the text of the German-Swiss arbitration treaty. See also pp. 368-9.

confer and agree among themselves. Herriot then reverted to the subject of Poland. The more the Germans renounced their hopes in the west, he said, the more certain they were to nourish them in the east; and France could not purchase her own security at the expense of her ally. Chamberlain replied that the German undertaking to avoid recourse to war even in the east was a new security for Poland and - an argument that he was to use often in the course of the summer - the general appeasement that would follow an agreement in the west would tend to make the situation more secure everywhere.

The final topic was the evacuation of the Cologne zone, and Chamberlain stressed the great importance that the British attached to concluding the question quickly and on its own. From what Herriot said, Chamberlain's earlier fear that the French might insist on staying was reinforced, and he therefore warned Herriot that such an insistence would have a disastrous effect on British opinion. He recalled the guarantees already in existence and said that he could not share French apprehensions for the immediate future. Germany could not be held down for ever and the object ought to be to bring about such a change in the situation that by the time that Germany could be dangerous again she would no longer wish to gamble on recovering what she had lost.(107)

107. Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 Mar. 1925, C 3368/459/18, FO 371/10728. The two letters of 7 March were circulated to the Cabinet as C.P. 144 and 145(25), CAB 24/172. Fleuriau had advocated the idea of two pacts (which Herriot had proposed in his note of 11 August 1924) to Crowe on 4 March. On 9 March Herriot was still hoping for two-stage negotiations: desp. 776 to Paris, C 3170/459/18, FO 371/10728; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 32.

From Geneva Chamberlain wrote to Crowe that he did not know how far Herriot would be able to bring his Government to a fair consideration of the British offer by the time that he himself passed through Paris again on his way home. Meanwhile he was very much afraid of the effect that his statement might have on the consideration of German disarmament and the evacuation of Cologne. "I am really oppressed", he wrote, "by the danger that the French will insist on remaining in Cologne, for reasons which are within the terms of the Treaty, but which will be held as insufficient to justify a prolongation of the occupation by all those sections of British opinion which are opposed to a pact". On the other hand a unilateral British withdrawal would mean the end of any real understanding between the Allies: the question thus raised the gravest issues. "Am I justified in pressing upon M. Herriot the possibility of our having to take this course, or would the consequences of it be so grave in other respects that in the last resort, the Cabinet would decide to retain our troops just as we maintained them through all the difficulties brought about by the occupation of the Ruhr?" Chamberlain asked Crowe to get, through the Prime Minister, an indication of the Cabinet's views on the matter, and an indication of how they generally viewed his conversations with Herriot.(108)

108. Chamberlain to Crowe, 8 Mar. 1925, C3569/459/18, FO 371/10728: underlining in the original. Johnson's wording in summarising this letter (University of Birmingham Historical Journal, VII(1961), p. 74): "he felt justified in wondering whether the Cabinet would not authorise him to go further in his approach to Herriot", might suggest that Chamberlain hoped to be authorised to make a more favourable offer. The text of the letter hardly supports such an interpretation. Crowe certainly used it as a request for greater latitude, but did so on his own initiative: see below.

On 9 March Chamberlain found Briand much more favourable to the proposed British policy. Briand seemed to have accepted that Britain would not take part in any other form of arrangement and to be anxious to make the best of the situation. Chamberlain hoped that, although not in office, Briand would exercise influence on the French Government and public opinion.(109)

The evidence on what followed in London is largely derived from Crowe's letters to Chamberlain at Geneva. On receiving Chamberlain's letter of 8 March on the morning of 11th, Crowe sent Baldwin a copy but asked to be present at any Cabinet discussion. He saw Baldwin after the Cabinet meeting, to which he was not summoned and at which security was not discussed, and said that Chamberlain felt that he was in a very difficult position with Herriot and feared a breach with France. Crowe said that he did not favour threatening Herriot with a British withdrawal from the Rhineland but did recommend that Chamberlain be authorised to tell Herriot that the British Government would be ready to contemplate a "bundle" of pacts, so long as Germany were included and they all came into force simultaneously. He himself had always held that there were advantages in such a procedure from the British point of view as well as from the French.

Baldwin, who said that he thought that the instructions given to Chamberlain on 4 March had been too rigid, nonetheless felt

109. Record of conversation, 9 Mar. 1925, W 2096/9/98, FO 371/11065. Chamberlain also saw Hymans: Chamberlain to Crowe, 12 Mar., C 3726/459/18, FO 371/10728; D.D.B., Vol. II, Nos. 34-6.

unable to authorise a statement of this kind without Cabinet approval. He thought that he could hardly call another Cabinet for two or three days, but Crowe considered this delay too long. He therefore asked whether Baldwin could himself authorise Chamberlain to tell Herriot that he was personally impressed with the idea of separate pacts and would recommend it to the Cabinet. Baldwin said that he would think this over, but later in the afternoon he summoned Crowe to an informal meeting of Ministers at the House of Commons. Those present, besides Baldwin himself, were Churchill, Birkenhead, Hoare, Worthington-Evans, Bridgeman, Amery, Salisbury, and Cecil.(110)

Crowe's account of the meeting was written next day. He told Chamberlain that, invited by Baldwin to explain the situation, he had pointed out that the immediate question on which Chamberlain asked for guidance was whether Herriot should be threatened with a British withdrawal from the Rhineland. But while this was apparently the only immediate question, it was clear to him that the issue was much wider and graver, and he hoped that Ministers would review the whole situation again. There followed an hour and a half's discussion, which Crowe described as "vague and inconclusive" and was on much the same lines as those in the Committee of Imperial Defence. Churchill developed his theory that there was no need to do anything, that France would become increasingly amenable, and

110. Crowe to Chamberlain, 11 Mar. 1925, C 3569/459/18, FO 371/10728; Crowe to Chamberlain, 12 Mar., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/240.

that there was no risk of a breach.[111] Amery once more said that it was impossible to do anything because the Dominions would never agree. He admitted that he had agreed to the Cabinet resolution on 4 March but had not really meant it and must now withdraw his consent. Birkenhead said that he remained opposed to a pact of any kind and denied that the Cabinet had ever agreed to one. He agreed that everyone knew that Britain and the Empire would not allow France and Belgium to be invaded, but held that it was impossible to say so formally. Salisbury and Hoare said that the most that they supported was a unilateral declaration by Britain. Only Cecil expressed himself in favour of a genuine pact including Germany, and said that he had no doubt that the Empire was ready to fight not only for the Channel ports but for the integrity of the French eastern frontier. Birkenhead wound up by saying that there was no difficulty in replying to Chamberlain's request for instructions and guidance. All that need be said was that Ministers entirely approved his statement to Herriot. The result was eminently satisfactory: "It had been made quite clear to France that the British Government desired no pact, they would in no case commit themselves to anything, either as towards France alone, or to any number of powers, including Germany. All that was intended was that if France could come to some agreement with Germany, under which pledges were given against aggression, then, in the event of aggression nevertheless taking place, Great Britain might possibly consider the question whether they [sic]

111. Crewe, in a despatch written especially for Cabinet consumption, advised on 9 March that it would be fatal to think that a British policy of isolation would make France amenable through weakness: Paris desp. 604, C 3380/459/18, FO 371/10728.

would give an undertaking to take part in any consultation as to what might then be done". All the other Ministers except Cecil agreed.(112) Baldwin had said nothing throughout.

Crowe was appalled. He felt that Chamberlain was being let down, and even suspected that Birkenhead and Churchill were undermining his position deliberately. When at last Baldwin allowed him to speak he therefore, as he wrote, expressed himself strongly. He denied formally in the name of the Foreign Office the view that there was no danger of a breach with France. But what was much more immediately serious, if the Cabinet's intention was that now stated by Birkenhead and apparently approved by the other Ministers, Chamberlain's statement to Herriot had been not clear but seriously misleading and laid the Government open to a charge of bad faith. For Chamberlain had clearly conveyed to Herriot that although the British Government could not enter into a pact with France and Belgium alone, they would endeavour to get the country and the Dominions to approve entry into

112. Crowe did not report any contribution to the discussion by Worthington-Evans or Bridgeman. Considering that the former, in particular, had in the earlier discussions been in favour of a pact with France, this is somewhat odd. Bridgeman recorded in his political diary his regret at his colleagues' decision, but in terms that perhaps reflect the confusion of the meeting. Roskill, Naval Policy, p. 437, quotes and summarises Bridgeman's note as follows: "to his great regret the Cabinet decided 'to continue the policy of refusing any pact with France to join her against a unilateral attack, unless a quadrilateral arrangement could also be made to include Germany'. He was entirely in favour of including Germany, but could not understand why Britain should 'refuse what we shall be bound to concede if Germany attacked France' - namely 'to assist France in order to keep open the Channel ports'." Roskill's own account in Hankey, Vol. II, pp. 394-7, is distinctly confused.

a pact of which Germany formed part.[113]

At this point Baldwin asked Crowe to leave the Ministers to continue their discussion alone, and when Crowe wrote to Chamberlain next day he did not know the outcome. He hoped that perhaps Baldwin had supported Chamberlain after he had left.[114] Baldwin did in fact write a short letter on 12 March, saying that the meeting had felt that Chamberlain had represented the Cabinet's decision firmly and clearly. Baldwin expressed his own appreciation and sympathy. He said that the question of Cologne would have to be considered very carefully, and that it was impossible to say more now on the pact question.[115] But in view of Crowe's report Chamberlain felt that this letter gave him no guidance or support. He had already made at Geneva the statement approved by the Cabinet, rejecting the Protocol but holding out the prospect of special arrangements to meet special needs,[116] and he telegraphed back to Crowe informing him that he would resign if the Cabinet went back on their decision and destroyed the whole effect of the conversations that he had had

113. In addition Chamberlain had authorised Herriot to inform the Allied Ambassadors in Paris of the nature of his communication, and Crowe had done the same in London: Geneva tel. 52, 8 Mar. 1925; Crowe to Chamberlain, 11 Mar., C 3327, 3569/459/18, FO 371/10728.

114. Crowe to Chamberlain, 12 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/240.

115. Baldwin to Chamberlain, 12 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/80.

116. Cmd 2368 of 1925. W.N. Medlicott, British Policy since Versailles, 2nd edn., London 1968, p. 59, is mistaken in saying that it was this statement that was too much for some members of the Cabinet.

since leaving London.[117]

Later, when the trouble was over, Chamberlain thought that Crowe might have misunderstood the Ministers on 11 March.[118] But Crowe had long years of experience in recording conversations; his account was highly circumstantial; and the opinions that he reported were exactly in line with those that the Ministers in question had earlier expressed in the Committee of Imperial Defence. It is unfortunate that, apart from Bridgeman's note, Crowe's is apparently the only record of the meeting; but there seems to be no good reason to doubt its accuracy.[119] It seems more likely that those Ministers who were opposed to any British contribution to security had not changed their minds, and took the opportunity of an informal meeting to say so. Crowe may indeed have contributed

117. Chamberlain tel. to Crowe, 14 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/241, printed in Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, p. 264. Chamberlain also wrote bitterly to his wife: AC 6/1/603.

118. Chamberlain to Mrs. Chamberlain, 25 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 6/1/608.

119. No secretary was present and the meeting was not recorded as a Meeting of Ministers. I have not been able to trace any account of the meeting in the Churchill Papers; enquiry of the present Earl of Birkenhead has revealed no evidence in his possession; I have not been able to obtain access to the Amery Papers but it seems unlikely that they contain any evidence since Middlemas and Barnes, who used these papers for their biography of Baldwin, add nothing to the above account.

to this result by inviting them to re-examine the whole problem.[120] How far Ministers really meant to go in repudiating the decision of 4 March is still an open question. At least when Crowe, after receiving Chamberlain's telegram, went to see Baldwin at Chequers on 15 March, he was reassured. Baldwin told him that there was no question of Chamberlain not having his full confidence and that what individuals had said at the informal meeting did not in any sense constitute a Cabinet decision. Baldwin said that he knew that there were different views about the form of an eventual pact including Germany, and that was why he had warned Chamberlain not to say any more in Paris on his way back. But when he returned the Cabinet would again discuss Britain's contribution, and Baldwin by no means despaired of bringing Birkenhead, Churchill, and Amery round. He assented to Crowe's statement that a promise to consult in case of aggression would not constitute a pact and would not be enough to satisfy France.[121]

120. Cecil wrote to Baldwin on 12 March what Crowe described as a "very helpful letter in favour of a proper pact". But Cecil also said that if the Foreign Office would only get it into their heads that an Anglo-French pact was out of the question and concentrate on getting the other policy, progress might be made: Cecil to Baldwin, 12 Mar. 1925, Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51080, Baldwin Papers, F.2 (Vol. 115).

121. Crowe to Chamberlain, 15 Mar. 1925. Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/244. In informing Baldwin on 14 March that he had received an important telegram from Chamberlain which he wished to deliver as soon as possible, Crowe recorded on paper his disquiet at the position in which he thought the outcome of the meeting of 11 March had put Chamberlain: Crowe to Baldwin, 14 Mar., Baldwin Papers, F. 2 (Vol. 115). Further indications of Amery's attitude are two instances of his apparently amending telegrams to the Dominions in such a way as to make it appear that the suggestion to Herriot that the German proposals be taken up was Chamberlain's alone, not that of the Government: Crowe to Chamberlain, 12 and 13 Mar., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/239, 242, 243, FO 800/257; C.O. 12836/25, CO 532/316.

How the objectors were brought round is not known. There are suggestions that Baldwin was personally interested in the question, and that he could not afford to lose Chamberlain from his Government. It is also suggested that Crowe convinced them at the meeting of 11 March.[122] However, it was done, Chamberlain had what he described as "quite a satisfactory talk" with Baldwin and obtained a promise of support when he returned to London on 17 March.[123] And on 20 March the Cabinet, after another full discussion, congratulated Chamberlain on his handling of the situation and agreed on the lines of the statement that he was to make in Parliament four days later.[124]

Thus the German proposals, launched in difficult circumstances and in a manner that did little to ensure a favourable reception, turned out to be fruitful. If their fate is compared with that of the two earlier proposals, both equally designed to ward off a danger to Germany from the west, the difference in outcome is seen to lie partly in the nature of the proposals, but largely in circumstances in France and Britain. The Cuno offer was ill conceived and badly presented; but it is hard to suppose that any other last-minute

122. Sybil Eyre Crowe, "Sir Eyre Crowe and the Locarno Pact", in English Historical Review, LXXVII (1972), pp. 49-74.

123. Chamberlain to Mrs. Chamberlain, 19 Mar. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 6/1/605.

124. C. 17 (25), CAB 23/49: the discussion was not recorded. In his speech in the House of Commons on 24 March Chamberlain still did not say that Britain would take part in a multilateral pact arising out of the German proposals; but Baldwin, winding up the debate, stated that while it was too early to say what form the pact would take or which countries would be included, Britain would be a contracting party: H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 182, cols. 307-22, 402-08.

security offer could have prevented the occupation of the Ruhr. The attempt early in 1924 to secure French concessions in the Ruhr by raising the security question was also fruitless, because reparations were now under examination by the Dawes Committee, because Poincaré was not interested, and because MacDonald was both determined to deal with reparations first and opposed to partial security arrangements. The proposals of 1925, certainly better conceived, hardly better presented at first, but then pursued with far greater skill and determination by Stresemann, ultimately acheived their aim partly because the French Governments concerned were more receptive but mainly because the British Government were at last inclined to do something about western European security and unable to agree on any other plan. That they did eventually agree on this one must be attributed to Chamberlain's refusal to take no for an answer. It is quite evident from the discussions among Ministers that the majority would have preferred to do nothing and to close their eyes to the problem; and also that, unlike Curzon, Chamberlain refused to allow them to do so.(125)

But Chamberlain's success was limited. He had no more trouble with his colleagues, but throughout the negotiations of the next seven months he was perpetually conscious of the bounds beyond which he could not go. There is in fact no evidence that he personally,

125. Chamberlain's achievement is discussed by F.G. Stambrook, "The Foreign Secretary and foreign policy: the experiences of Austen Chamberlain in 1925 and 1927", in International Review of History and Political Science, VI (1969), No. 3, pp. 109-27.

or his chief advisers, wished to involve Britain farther in Europe than the eastern frontier of France and Belgium. The fact that the Government were at last prepared to be involved as far as that enabled the Rhine pact of Locarno to be negotiated; but this alone was not enough to bring security to Europe. It may reasonably be maintained that there was in the Foreign Office as well as in less well informed quarters a marked reluctance to think through the problem of a revivified Germany's place in Europe and that, while refusal to plan far ahead has sometimes been a virtue in the conduct of British foreign policy, in this case it was to contribute to later uncertainties and failures.

Chapter 5

The Negotiation of the Western Security Pact

By the end of March 1925 the British Government had decided to take part in a multilateral pact including France and Germany and relating to the Franco-German and Belgian-German frontiers. This was the vital decision of principle; but the form of the pact and its wider ramifications took several months to negotiate. The negotiations may conveniently be divided into four stages: from March to the middle of May, preliminary exploration of the ground; from the middle of May to the middle of June, Anglo-French negotiations about the form of the pact; from June to the end of August, exchange of views with the German Government and drafting of a treaty; and from September to October detailed negotiations leading to the conference at Locarno. The principal problems, which emerged at an early point and remained unsettled until the conference, were Germany's membership of the League of Nations, the nature of the guarantees and of the arbitration treaties, and the relationship between the treaties in the west and in the east. Behind these problems stood, for the German Government at least, the Soviet Union; and a separate section will be devoted to this factor.

Preliminary discussions

The attitude of the French Government to the German proposals remained uncertain for some weeks after Chamberlain's visit to Paris at the beginning of March. When Chamberlain returned there

from Geneva on 16 March Herriot had come to terms with the British refusal to sign a separate Anglo-French or Anglo-Franco-Belgian treaty. He said that he had told his colleagues, and was prepared to maintain before the Chamber, that the German proposals must be examined seriously.(1) There were a number of questions on which more information about the German position was desirable, but some of them were only indirectly related to the proposed security pact and the French had some difficulty in framing their questions about them.

While they were doing so and exploring the German position,(2) the British too were trying, not wholly successfully, to form a clear picture of the German views and to encourage the Germans to advance. The lack of success was partly due to D'Abernon. Even when he was not pursuing his own ideas, such as suggesting the 1839 treaty on Belgian neutrality as a suitable model and renewing the idea of a neutralised strip,(3) the Ambassador was frequently in a hurry, over optimistic, and inclined to blur what Stresemann and Schubert said. One curious feature of the negotiations as seen from the German

1. Record of conversation, 16 Mar. 1925, C 3921/459/18, FO 371/10729; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 74; Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, pp 187-9.

2. Hoesch tel., 11 Mar. 1925, 4509/E125456-57; memorandum by Stresemann, 16 Mar., 3123/D642708-11, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 83-5; memorandum by Schubert, 16 Mar., 4509/E125366-73; Hoesch tel. 19 Mar., 3123/D642765-67; tel. to Hoesch, 21 Mar., 4509/E125730-32; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 74, passim.

3. D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 15 Mar. 1925, C 4171/459/18, FO 371/10729; memorandum by Schubert, 31 Mar., 4509/E125802-09.

archives is the relationship between D'Abernon and Schubert. The Ambassador placed complete confidence in the State Secretary, often giving him his own instructions from London to read and showing him drafts of his own reports. Schubert in turn corrected D'Abernon's drafts and harangued him on Germany's requirements.(4) It is evident that he held no high opinion of D'Abernon's ability. The Ambassador reported very little of this to London, but he sometimes carried Schubert's injunctions to discretion so far as to disguise him, in reports to the Foreign Office, as "a most reliable source". On the other hand since Sthamer was not regarded in London as very able, Chamberlain relied on D'Abernon's "influence and discretion" for "keeping things straight at the German end".(5) Whereas in the early months of 1925 Chamberlain's letters to Crewe in Paris were much longer and franker than those to D'Abernon, as time went on the latter became more and more confiding. Chamberlain often disagreed with D'Abernon about Germany, but he also wrote to him things which, had he known that D'Abernon was passing them on to Schubert, he would perhaps not have written. It is difficult to be certain about D'Abernon's standing with the permanent officials of the Foreign Office: he was never criticised directly, but it is possible to get the impression that throughout his period in Berlin they did not think very highly of his political understanding of Germany.

4. According to his own accounts. Among many instances may be cited Schubert's memoranda of conversations with D'Abernon on 1 May, 26 May, 28 July, 31 July and 10 August, 4509/E126115-18, E126397-401, E127442-47, E127458-62, E127588-91.

5. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 2 Apr. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/266, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928, FO 800/257, Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 271-4.

At the beginning of March D'Abernon was recommending the German offer as a "broad gesture of reconciliation and appeasement"; but his description of the Germans' present attitude - that they had done all that could be expected - worried Chamberlain, who had instructions sent to Berlin that Germany must make further contributions, especially by joining the League, doing something about Austria, and making a pledge on the eastern frontier as binding as that on the Rhine.(6) After making enquiries D'Abernon replied that the Germans were ready to give precision to their proposals. The main points requiring negotiation were entry into the League and the eastern frontier. On Austria he would like to know what the French had in mind. On the Rhineland Germany would not ask for the occupation to be modified but would not abandon her rights. The Belgian frontier would be assured in the same way as the French.(7)

The position of Poland was an important question from the earliest moment. From the German point of view the eastern frontier had nothing to do with the problems in the west which had led to the pact offer. But since they were well aware that for the French the problems were connected, the offer of arbitration treaties with all Germany's neighbours was made to show that Germany did not intend to use security in the west to fall upon Poland in the east. The Germans were not prepared to guarantee the Polish frontier in any way, and regarded a declaration that they did not wish to alter it by force

6. Berlin tel. 86, 2 Mar. 1925; Geneva tel. 54, 9 Mar.; tel. 54 to Berlin, 9 Mar., C 3097, 3376/459/18, FO 371/10728.

7. Berlin tel. 3 to Geneva, 12 Mar. 1925, C 3664/459/18, FO 371/10728. German assurances that Belgium was meant to be included in a pact were given in Brussels by the end of February: D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 26; 4509/E124923-26.

as an indirect guarantee. On the other hand they did not intend to raise the question of frontier revision now: they did not regard the question as ripe and knew that raising it would wreck the negotiations in the west.(8)

The nuances of this position were perhaps not easy to convey. The Poles automatically regarded the security offer to France as a device to enable Germany to attack them, and saw an arbitration treaty as a trap under which the fontier grievance could be raised in a new way. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Skrzynski, visited Paris as well as Geneva in March; and both Herriot and Chamberlain did their best to calm Polish fears, but without much success.(9) D'Abernon appears to have assumed that the Germans intended to raise the frontier question, and started talking about compensation.(10) On the other hand until the second week in March he seems to have believed that the German Government were ready to give an undertaking not to attempt to alter the eastern frontier by force.(11)

Chamberlain sent warnings to D'Abernon against moving too fast;(12)

8. Hoesch tel., 7 Mar. 1925; tel. to Hoesch, 10 Mar.; minute by Schubert, 10 Mar.; Schubert to Dufour, 23 Mar., 4509/E125173-74, E125495-96, E125752-53, E125706-12.

9. Chamberlain to Crowe, 14 Mar. 1925, C 3753/459/18, FO 371/10728; Rauscher desp., 27 Mar., K170/K025663-68; Note by Herriot, 18 Mar., A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 74; France and her Eastern Allies, pp. 332-4. (Wandycz)

10. Memorandum by Schubert, 10 Feb. 1925, 4509/E125048-54; Berlin desp. 122, 14 Feb., C 2390/459/18, FO 371/10727; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 20 Mar., C4491/459/18, FO 371/10729; memorandum by Schubert, 21 Mar., 4509/E125740-44; D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. III, p. 153.

11. Berlin tel. 81, 1 Mar. 1925, C 3009/459/18, FO 371/10727; Berlin tel. 4 to Geneva, 12 Mar., C 3655/459/18, FO 371/10728; memoranda by Luther and Schubert, 10, 11 and 12 Mar., 4509/E125484-87, E125472-83, E125459, E125431-39.

12. Geneva tel. 2 to Berlin, 15 Mar. 1925, C 3725/459/18, FO 371/10728; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 18 Mar., C 4171/459/18, FO 371/10729, printed in Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 267-8.

but as noted above he too appears to have believed that the Germans were ready to give an undertaking about the frontier. The incident arising out of his speech in the House of Commons on 24 March did not greatly advance understanding. After outlining the German proposals Chamberlain said: "If I understand them rightly, they amount to this: that Germany is prepared to guarantee voluntarily what hitherto she has accepted under the compulsion of the treaty, that is, the status quo in the West; that she is prepared to eliminate, not merely from the West but from the East, war as an engine by which any alteration in the Treaty position is to be obtained. Thus not only in the West but in the East, she is prepared absolutely to abandon any recourse to war for the purpose of changing the treaty boundaries of Europe, though she may be unwilling, or unable, to make the same renunciation of the hopes and aspirations that some day, by friendly arrangement or mutual agreement, a modification may be introduced into the East, as she is prepared to make in regard to any modification in the West". Sthamer, who with other foreign representatives was listening to the debate, urgently asked to see Chamberlain and told him that the reference to the eastern frontiers was not wholly accurate. He did not clearly explain why, but Chamberlain understood him to mean that the German Government had not renounced all possibility of resort to force. Chamberlain said that if this were so the bottom fell out of the whole scheme and he must go back and tell the House. Sthamer protested that the German memorandum was unchanged, and Chamberlain said no more; but he at once telegraphed to D'Abernon that the point was a test of German good faith and must be cleared up at once with Luther. (13)

13. Tel. 64 to Berlin, 25 Mar. 1925, C 4302/459/18, FO 371/10729; Sthamer tel., 25 Mar., 4509/E125616-18; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 182, cols. 317-18. Cf. Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 270-1.

The Germans feared that Chamberlain was trying to commit them to some additional obligation to Poland such as a non-aggression pact, but D'Abernon maintained that only a reply to the British Government was needed. The first draft of the reply said that Germany had "no intention to bring about by warlike means an alteration of the present German-Polish frontier," and that there was no cause for the British Government to change their policy. After much discussion D'Abernon got the wording strengthened to: "The German Government renounce any idea of bringing about by warlike means an alteration to the present German-Polish frontier", and there was no reason for the British Government to alter their views as expressed by Chamberlain and Baldwin.(14)

The incident was attributed to a misunderstanding on Sthamer's part. Chamberlain wrote that he did not think that he would ever be able to negotiate effectively through the Ambassador, whom he suspected of not being kept fully informed by Berlin and of not reporting accurately. It is clear from Sthamer's reports that although not very quick he did on the whole report accurately; but it does seem to be the case that he did not always succeed in conveying points clearly to the British. On this occasion he was trying to point out the fact that the German-Swiss arbitration treaty did not exclude the use of force in all cases of dispute: he succeeded only in being blamed for

14. Memoranda by Schubert and Stresemann, 26, 27 and 28 Mar. 1925. 4509/E125596-98, E125592-95, E125590-91, E125589, E125583-86, E125580-81, E125567-71, E125563-66, E125560-62. In the final German text the verb "verzichten" was specifically avoided: "zurückwiesen" was used instead.

Chamberlain's own confusion.(15)

The position of Czechoslovakia was less delicate than that of Poland since the Czechoslovak Government were not alarmed by the German proposals and there were no major causes of dispute with Germany. Beneš told Chamberlain at Geneva and Herriot in Paris that he was quite willing to consider treaties of arbitration and guarantee with neighbouring countries. As in earlier years he regarded secure peace in the west as the best assurance of peace in the east, although he would have liked a treaty of mutual assistance in the east as well. Beneš was also anxious that existing treaties should not be weakened in any way and that Germany should join the League. To the Germans Beneš said that he was willing to start talks on an arbitration treaty and saw no difficulty in one.(16)

D'Abernon was also exploring the German position on the League of Nations, having already sent to London two memoranda given to him by Schubert in February on Article 16 and on the supervision of German disarmament.(17) The Secretary-General of the League, Drummond, who

15. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 26 Mar. 1925; Berlin tel. 129, 28 Mar, C 4491, 4419/459/18, FO 371/10729; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 29 Mar., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/263, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48928, FO 800/257; Sthamer tel., 25 Mar.; tel. to Sthamer, 26 Mar.; memorandum by Schubert, 27 Mar.; desp. to Sthamer, 30 Mar.; Schubert to Dufour, 30 Mar., 4509/E125616-18, E125619, E125583-86, E125519-25, E125514-18; Dufour to Schubert, 31 Mar., 4567/E166085-99; Sthamer tel., 1 Apr., 4509/E125848-49.

16. Chamberlain to Crowe, 12 Mar. 1925, C3726/459/18, FO 371/10728; Beneš to Chamberlain, 16 Mar., C 3878/459/18, FO 371/10729; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 74; Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, pp. 189-90; Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, pp. 336-7; desp. to Koch (Prague), 10 Mar.; Koch tel., 24 Mar.; memorandum by Schubert, 31 Mar., 4509/E 125499-503, E125675-76, E125800-01; Hoffman (Bern) tel., 13 Mar., 3147/D654811-12; desp. to Koch, 31 Mar.; Koch desp., 3 Apr., 3123/ D642929-32, D643012-14.

17. Berlin desp. 156, 27 Feb. 1925, C 3053/109/18, FO 371/10717; memoranda by Schubert, 19 and 24 Feb.; Schubert to D'Abernon, 25 Feb., 4509/ D124954-59, E124903-09, E124913-22, E124883-89; desp. to Sthamer, 25 Feb., 3123/D642371-78.

visited Berlin at the beginning of March, got the impression that the German Government were raising new conditions for entry, but D'Abernon considered that if their fears of isolation could be overcome their attitude to Article 16 might change.(18) D'Abernon hoped for a quick decision on German entry during the March Council meeting, and suggested that the Roman Law maxim "Ultra posse nemo obligatur" should meet the case on Article 16. But Luther, Stresemann, and Schubert were in no hurry to suggest a formula, and laid equal emphasis on the removal of the possibility of supervision over Germany's disarmament.(19) On 14 March the Council replied to the German Government's letter of the previous December, stating that Germany could expect a seat on the Council and a voice in deciding the application of the principles of the Covenant, but could not refuse to take part in economic measures recommended. The matter was then dropped for the time being.(20)

No more than that of the Polish frontier did the German Government intend to raise the question of Austria at present; but it caused confusion for some weeks. Herriot's mention of it appears to have

18. Memoranda by Schubert, 2 Mar. 1925, 4584/E178270-74; Drummond to D'Abernon, 5 Mar.; D'Abernon to Drummond, 8 Mar., Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51110.

19. Memorandum by Stresemann, 9 Mar. 1925, 3123/D642576-78; memorandum by Luther, 10 Mar.; memoranda by Schubert, 9, 10 and 12 Mar., 4509/E125484-87, E125143-47, E125472-83, E125431-39.

20. Instructions to German missions, 17 Mar. 1925, 4584/E178190-92; memorandum by Schubert, 21 Mar., 4509/E125740-44; D'Abernon to Drummond, 1 Apr., Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51110.

arisen from the general fear lest new security arrangements in the west might weaken treaty provisions elsewhere, and he perhaps hoped that Germany might make some renunciation of the aspiration for an Anschluss. The Italian attitude to the western security pact was so far non-committal: they would have disliked an Anglo-Franco-Belgian treaty but do not at this stage seem to have considered joining a wider pact.(21) At the end of March the French Government informed the Italians that their reply to the German proposal would not mention frontiers not touched on in it; and on 1 April Chamberlain told the Ambassador in London that he had not thought it desirable to raise the Austrian question.(22) But in Berlin D'Abernon appears to have been talking about Austria and both to have derived the impression that Italy was not interested and to have given the impression that Britain would not oppose an Anschluss.(23) No sooner had this been cleared up (if it ever was: Mussolini continued to regard D'Abernon with suspicion) than the Italian Ambassador in Berlin interpreted some remarks by Stresemann about the strength of popular support for an Anschluss and the impossibility of delaying a solution to the Austrian problem to mean that the Germans intended to raise it now. There was instant uproar in Rome, not much soothed by Stresemann's

21. Rome tel. 69, 12 Mar. 1925, C 3624/459/18, FO 371/10728; D.D.I., Vol. III, Nos. 743, 761, 767, 781.

22. Desp. 446 to Rome, 1 Apr. 1925, C 4638/459/18, FO 371/10730; D.D.I., Vol. III, Nos. 777, 778, 786.

23. Op. cit., Nos. 772, 780, 783; memoranda by Schubert, 2 Apr. 1925; tel. to Neurath, 5 Apr., 4509/E125854-56, E125860-61, E125891-93.

hasty denial that the German Government had any such intention.(24) In a speech to the Senate on 20 May Mussolini asserted that the Brenner frontier must be guaranteed, and it was felt necessary to explore the British attitude again. The Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Senator Contarini, told Graham that the Germans seemed to think that no one would object to an Anschluss, and that Bosdari had reported that D'Abernon was not unfavourable and reflected the British Government's views. Minutes on Graham's despatch indicate that so far as the Central Department of the Foreign Office were concerned Bosdari was not far wrong; but Chamberlain remarked: "I am definitely opposed to Anschluss and shall say so anywhere and every time that the subject is raised... Our only chance of peace is to let everyone know that we are opposed to any revision of the Treaty settlement - for a generation". Chamberlain stated his view to Torretta and later repeated it at Geneva, and it was conveyed to D'Abernon.(25)

The French questions on the German proposals had not been formulated before Herriot's ministry fell on 10 April. In the new Government formed by Painlevé Briand was Minister for Foreign Affairs and Berthelot returned to the Quai d'Orsay as Secretary-General. The delay in the French reply was by now causing Stresemann difficulty

24. D.D.I., Vol. III, Nos. 846; Vol IV, No. 13; memorandum by Stresemann, 8 May 1925, 4509/E126171-73, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 96-7; Neurath tel., 14 May; tel. to Neurath, 15 May, 3086/D614036-37, D614038-39; memorandum by Schubert, 16 May, 4509/E126289-92; Prittwitz tel., 20 May; tel. to Neurath, 23 May; Neurath tel., 6 Jun., 3086/D614056, D614065-70, D614084.

25. Rome desp. 414, 15 May 1925; desp. 1008 to Berlin, 2 Jun.; Berlin desp. 338, 6 Jun., C 6680, 7824/249/3, FO 371/10660; desp. 923 to Rome, 23 Jun., C 8475/459/18, FO 371/10734; D.D.I., Vol. IV, Nos. 26, 28, 29.

with the Cabinet and the parties in Germany, and from the middle of April he and Schubert expressed increasing dissatisfaction.(26) Fleuriau told Chamberlain that Briand was getting on with the French reply but did not like the draft left by Herriot; and Chamberlain reassured Sthamer that the British and French Governments were anxious to press on.(27) But although he was severe that Germany must join the League "sans phrase" and told Sthamer that the election of Hindenburg as President had made a bad impression, Chamberlain too began to show anxiety about French intentions.(28)

An additional cause of German anxiety was the state of the disarmament question, a solution to which with the evacuation of the Cologne zone had been a major motive for the security offer. The Allied Military Committee at Versailles did not report on the Control Commission's report until the middle of April. To begin with

26. H.A. Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, Princeton 1963, pp. 188-91; desp. to Sthamer, 13 Apr. 1925; tels. to Hoesch, 15 and 16 Apr.; Hoesch tel., 18 Apr.; memorandum by Schubert, 1 May, 4509/E125955-63, E125964-65, E25971, E125987-90, E126515-18; Berlin tel. 179, 1 May, C 5906/35/18, FO 371/10713; Berlin tel. 185, 3 May, C 5969/459/18, FO 371/10731. Sthamer was unable to carry out his instructions to speak to Chamberlain or Crowe before Easter since the former was away and the latter was on sick leave. Crowe died on 28 April: he was succeeded as Permanent Under-Secretary of State by Tyrell.

27. Desp. 1502 to Paris, 30 Apr. 1925; desp. 797 to Berlin, 30 Apr., C 5804, 5852/459/18, FO 371/10730. Draft replies, dated 2, 6 and 10 April, are in A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 75.

28. Lampson to Addison, 27 Apr. 1925, C 6058/35/18, FO 371/10713; desp. 797 to Berlin, 30 Apr., C 5852/459/18, FO 371/10730; tel. 113 to Paris, 5 May; Crewe to Chamberlain, 5 May, C 5969, 6154/459/18, FO 371/10731; Chamberlain to Crewe, 12 May; Crewe to Chamberlain, 13 May, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/211, 212, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/257.

Chamberlain was still convinced that the note to the Germans about it must include an invitation to discussions on the method of carrying out the Allied requirements, but later he was prepared to agree that the details could be discussed by the Control Commission in Berlin provided that the note contained only the essential demands on which the Allies were prepared to insist.(29) All this time the Germans had been pressing for discussions and for early transmission of the Control Commission's report, and the British had been preaching patience. The relative priority and timing of the two topics of security and evacuation was a delicate point. On 16 March Sthamer told Crowe that if there were a prospect of success for the security pact he thought that evacuation would take second place; but three days later, on instructions from Berlin, he reversed the order and told Chamberlain that unless satisfaction were obtained on disarmament and evacuation, public opinion might force the German Government to withdraw the security offer. Hoesch on the other hand advised that negotiations on disarmament would not succeed until France was convinced that her security requirements would be met.(30) By the middle of April the Germans were thinking of sending a formal note to the Allies demanding information on the disarmament question.(31)

29. C.I.D. Paper 605-B, CAB 4/13; Paris desp. 880, 13 Apr. 1925; desp. 1299 to Paris, 17 Apr.; desp. 1561 to Paris, 5 May, C 5027, 4764, 5855/21/18, FO 371/10709.

30. Sthamer tel., 16 Mar. 1925; tel. to Sthamer, 18 Mar.; Sthamer tel., 19 Mar., 4509/E125325-26, E125322-23, E125767-69; desp. 514 to Berlin, 19 Mar., C 4008/459/18, FO 371/10729; Hoesch tel. 19 Mar., K1885/K474574-82.

31. Memorandum by Schubert, 5 Apr. 1925; desp. to Sthamer, 13 Apr., 4509/E125894-902, E125955-63.

They continued to express dissatisfaction with the delay, but at the beginning of May Schubert was equally aware that if the disarmament note arrived before the reply on security, public discussion on the former would make the latter question more difficult. The solution seemed to be to ask for simultaneous discussion on both, with a conference on the whole complex of questions.(32)

Anglo-French discussion of the reply to the German proposals

The French draft reply to the German security proposals finally reached the Foreign Office on 14 May. It stated that before negotiations could begin, clarification and agreement on certain points were needed. There were two general points and four relating to the proposals in the German memorandum, as follows:

I. The security agreement was only possible if Germany entered the League under the conditions set out in the Council's letter of 13 March.

II. Nothing in the agreements concluded must imply a revision of the peace treaties nor modify the conditions of application of certain clauses, and the Allies must have the right to oppose any failure to observe provisions of the treaties even if they were not directly affected.

III. Belgium should be included in the pact among the powers interested in the Rhine; the renunciation of war should be unlimited in duration; the occupation of the Rhineland should not be affected.

32. Hoesch tel., 18 Apr. 1925, 4509/E125987-90; Addison to Lampson, 20 Apr., C 6058/35/18, FO 371/10713; Hoesch tel., 27 Apr., 3123/D643116-19; desp. 797 to Berlin, 30 Apr., C 5852/459/18, FO 371/10730; Sthamer tel., 1 May; memorandum by Schubert, 1 May; desp. to Hoesch, 4 May, 4509/E126119-24, E126115-18, E126138-40.

IV. The arbitration treaties with the parties to the Rhine pact should cover all conflicts and should allow coercive action only in case of failure to observe the various agreements envisaged in the note. They should be guaranteed jointly and individually by the powers taking part in the territorial guarantee in the Rhine pact.

V. There must be arbitration treaties between Germany and those of her neighbours who, although not parties to the Rhine pact, were signatories of the Treaty of Versailles. The Allies had certain rights and obligations under the Covenant and the peace treaties, and could not renounce them. These arbitration treaties should have the same scope as those discussed in section IV, and should be backed by the same guarantees.

VI. All these agreements should form an indivisible whole, brought together in a general convention under the auspices of the League.(33)

In this note the French Government were envisaging a pact of territorial guarantee between the powers interested in the Rhine; arbitration treaties between Germany and each of these powers, guaranteed by them all; arbitration treaties between Germany and her other neighbours signatories of the Treaty of Versailles, guaranteed in the same way; German entry into the League; preservation of all the Allies' rights under the Treaty of Versailles and freedom to fulfil their obligations under the Covenant. Some of these suggestions raised difficulties for the British; but the first essential was to be clear about what the French meant. When Fleuriau delivered a copy of the note to Chamberlain on 14 May the latter put some questions to him, and more were put a few days later.

33. Paris desp. 1126, 13 May 1925, C6493/459/18, FO 371/10731; Briand to Fleuriau, 13 May, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 75; Cmd. 2435 of 1925.

On Germany's entry into the League, Chamberlain asked whether it was understood that it was an essential condition of agreement but should not be a precondition for negotiations. On section II he asked for clarification of the precise object and the clauses referred to. There were no questions about section III. On section IV, however, there were several questions - whether the term "arbitration" meant judicial arbitration in all cases or included conciliation by, for example, the League Council; whether the French envisaged coercive action without reference to some means for peaceful settlement such as was provided by the Covenant; whether conflicts over the execution of the peace treaties were to be excluded from arbitration; and what obligations were involved for the guarantors. On section V Chamberlain asked whether Austria was included and what Allied rights and obligations were referred to; and he questioned the wording about guarantees. Britain, he said, was not prepared to take on any new obligation on Germany's eastern frontier and if the same wording were used about the guarantees for the arbitration treaties in the west and in the east there was a risk either of raising the latter to the same level as the former, or of watering down the former to the level that public opinion would accept for the latter. Finally on section VI, Chamberlain asked whether placing the treaties under the auspices of the League would involve any obligations for members of the League who were not signatories of the agreements.(34)

34. Desp. 1709 to Paris, 14 May 1925, C 6558/459/18, FO 371/10731; memorandum to the French Ambassador, 19 May, C 7063/459/18, FO 371/10732; Cmd 2435 of 1925; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 75.

The French replies to these questions showed an appreciation of the difficulty of treating Britain exactly on all fours with the other signatories.(35) On section I the French agreed that German entry into the League was not a precondition for negotiations, but suggested that it might be stated that the pact would not come into force if Germany had not entered by the time it was signed. The object of section II was to make it clear that the new arrangements must not in any way impair the peace treaties or the Covenant. The reservation of the Allies' rights in respect of clauses not concerning them directly was to cover Austria and Slesvig, and had been worded in this way in response to the German requests that Austria, Poland, etc. should not be mentioned by name. On section IV, on the western arbitration treaties, the French answered that "arbitration" was used in the most general sense and was not meant to exclude recourse to the Council. It was, however, essential that the peaceful solution be obligatory. Failure to observe other treaties and agreements could only give rise to coercive action if such action were provided for in those treaties; failure to observe the arbitration treaties would justify coercive action appropriate to the nature of the violation. The guarantors must in principle act together, but each would be bound to act even if others did not. There was a distinction between a territorial guarantee and a guarantee of an arbitration treaty. The first necessarily involved resort to force in defence of the territory guaranteed. The second implied the use of means appropriate

35. On 18 May Chamberlain found the Belgian Ambassador, too, concerned that the obligations to be undertaken in regard to the arbitration treaties in the east and in the west were the same: desp. 563 to Brussels, C 6787/459/18, FO 371/10731; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 55.

to the nature of the violation and each guarantor would act in such measure as it could. If, for example, Germany violated the arbitration treaty with Poland Britain would not be involved farther than was appropriate or farther than she was committed by membership of the League; but France must not be deemed to violate the Rhine pact if she were called upon to help Poland. The reference in section V to the Allies' rights and obligations had a similar purpose: the Rhine pact must not make it impossible to give assistance to states in the east in conformity with the Covenant. On section VI, the object of putting the whole under the auspices of the League was to enable it to decide the legitimacy of action taken and its conformity with the Covenant. No additional obligations for other members of the League were intended.(36)

When Fleuriau handed over the French reply to the second set of questions Chamberlain said that he could understand France's position with regard to her eastern allies but he was sure that Briand equally would understand Britain's position, which was that no fresh duties could be undertaken in the east and that it was important to distinguish clearly between the guarantees that she might be willing to give in

36. Informal French memorandum, 18 May 1925, C 6708/459/18, FO 371/10731; memorandum from French Ambassador, 22 May, C 7063/459/18, FO 371/10732. A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vols 75-6; Cmd 2435 of 1925. On 21 May Phipps wrote that Laroche, the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay, had been stressing the importance of France retaining the right to go to the help of Poland or Czechoslovakia. France wanted Britain to guarantee the eastern arbitration treaties in order not that she should be bound to help but that she should be bound to protest if Germany attacked Poland. Such a protest would give France the moral right to go to Poland's help herself: Phipps to Lampson, 21 May, C 7296/459/18, FO 371/10732.

the west and any guarantees that others might undertake elsewhere.[37] Chamberlain was also doubtful whether Britain could take part in arbitration treaties of the kind proposed.[38]

The Cabinet on 20 May decided to set up a committee to help draft a reply to the French. Baldwin, Chamberlain, Churchill, Worthington-Evans, Hoare, Balfour, Amery, Birkenhead and Cecil, a fair cross-section of ministerial opinion on security, met on 26 and 28 May and approved without difficulty a reply in the form of a despatch to Crewe.[39] The despatch, with a suggested redraft of the note to be sent to the German Government, was sent on 28 May. Chamberlain told Fleuriau that it represented the limit to which the British Government could go, and he warned that France should not risk the whole policy by trying to involve Britain farther than public opinion would allow.[40] In the lengthy instructions to Crewe, Chamberlain stated that the basic principle guiding the Government was that "any new obligation which they undertake shall be specific and limited to the maintenance of the existing territorial arrangements on the western frontier of Germany. His Majesty's Government are not prepared to assume fresh obligations elsewhere in addition to those already devolving upon them as signatories of the Covenant of the League of Nations and of the Peace Treaties. At the same time, it may be well to repeat that, in seeking means to strengthen the position in the west, His Majesty's Government do not themselves question, or give any

37. Desp. 1841 to Paris, 25 May 1925, C 7064/459/18, FO 371/10732.

38. C.P. 245(25), CAB 24/173.

39. C. 26(25), CAB 23/50; Cabinet Committee on Security, CAB 27/275.

40. Desp. 1905 to Paris, 28 May 1925, C 7265/459/18, FO 371/10732.

encouragement to others to question, the other provisions of the treaties which form the basis of the existing public law of Europe". The French draft as it stood did not accurately convey the extent and character of the obligations that the British Government were ready to assume, and it was thought desirable to amend it in such a way as to make it a statement of policy common to both countries, rather than each sending separate notes which might lay undue emphasis on differences of view between them.

The first three sections of the French draft were not altered. Section IV, on the western arbitration treaties, now provided for such treaties between France and Germany and Belgium and Germany, but not between Britain and Germany. Chamberlain explained that the British Empire, as a power with world-wide responsibilities, was in a different position from the continental countries and also that for Britain an arbitration treaty would not, as it was for them, be the natural complement to the Rhine pact. The provision about the guarantee was revised to allow for immediate operation if the breach of the arbitration treaty were coupled with a resort to hostilities: in other cases the Council of the League should propose the steps to be taken. In section V the reference to guarantees of the eastern arbitration treaties was deleted. A new section was added stating that nothing in the proposed treaties would affect the rights and obligations attaching the membership of the League. In the French section VI the reference to putting all the agreements under the auspices of the League was removed, but it was stated that they should all come into force simultaneously.(41)

41. Desp. 1887 to Paris, 28 May 1925, C 7174/459/18, FO 371/10732; Cmd. 2435 of 1925. Copies of the despatch were sent on the same day to Rome and Brussels for communication to the Italian and

The British Government were therefore now envisaging a pact of territorial guarantee regarding the western frontier of Germany; arbitration treaties between France and Germany and Belgium and Germany, guaranteed by each of them and by Britain; arbitration treaties between Germany and her other neighbours who were signatories of the Treaty of Versailles but without guarantees; and, like the French, German entry into the League and preservation of all the Allies' rights and obligations. The French, however, although accepting the British refusal to undertake new obligations beyond the western frontier of Germany and welcoming an explanation, given informally, that the Covenant entitled France to go to the help of Poland or Czechoslovakia if either were attacked by Germany, nevertheless felt it necessary to state clearly in the reply to the German Government that she must retain freedom to give this assistance without being prevented by the Rhine pact.(42) Their reply of 4 June, therefore, reintroduced the idea of guarantees for the eastern arbitration treaties by any signatory of the Rhine pact who wished to give one, and added to the cases where coercive action would be

41. (Cont'd)
Belgian Governments. On 25 May the Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs told Grahame that his country wanted to take part in the western pact on an equal footing with an explicit guarantee of her frontier, but that he had misgivings about guaranteeing the arbitration treaties. A statement of the Belgian view was given to Chamberlain on 29 May: Brussels tel. 47, 25 May; memorandum from Belgian Ambassador, 29 May, C 7065, 7263/459/18, FO 371/10732; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 57.

42. On 29 May Tyrell wrote to Phipps that as regards France's obligations to Poland and Czechoslovakia, it was felt in London that the remedy already existed in the Covenant. If Germany attacked Poland Art. 16 would come into play and France would be entitled to treat the case as an act of war and proceed accordingly. Britain would be in the same position and would be bound to apply sanctions: Phipps read the letter to Laroche. Tyrell to Phipps, 29 May 1925; Phipps to Tyrell, 31 May, C 7296, 7512/459/18, FO 371/10732.

allowed under the Franco-German arbitration treaty failure to observe a treaty guaranteed by one or both of the parties. A few other amendments were made in the interests of clarity, and the new British section was amended and put back to section V.[43] After considering the French amendments Chamberlain told Baldwin that he thought that they could all be accepted apart from the change in the statement that nothing in the proposed treaties would affect the rights and obligations attaching to membership of the League. The Foreign Office wished to retain their version because it was wider than the French and would cover Germany as well when she joined the League. Baldwin agreed that Chamberlain might so inform Briand at Geneva, whither both were now going for the June Council meeting.[44]

At Geneva Chamberlain and Briand rapidly reached agreement, Chamberlain being struck by the width of Briand's views and his conviction that if the pact negotiations succeeded the whole situation would be changed so that other problems now causing difficulty could be more easily solved. Briand accepted the British wish to retain their new section in the draft note to the German Government. The speed of their agreement caused surprise and speculation in the press, which was apparently not aware that very little had remained to be settled and therefore assumed that one or other (probably Chamberlain)

43. Briand to Fleuriau, 4 Jun., 1925; desp. 1963 to Paris, 5 Jun., C 7565, 7577/459/18, FO 371/10732; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 76; Cmd 2435 of 1925.

44. Minutes by Chamberlain and Baldwin, 5 and 6 Jun. 1925, C 7806/459/18, FO 371/10733.

had sacrificed something important.(45) A Havas message reporting Chamberlain's and Briand's agreement caused trouble in Rome because it implied that they had decided on a virtual Anglo-Franco-Belgian alliance. Although Mussolini had recently been saying that Italy might not be interested in joining a pact unless there was a guarantee for the only frontier that directly interested her, he and the Italian press only calmed down on being assured by both Chamberlain and Briand that the Havas report was inaccurate and that they would be very glad if Italy did join.(46) Briand also suggested that there might be another agreement about Germany's southern frontier. Chamberlain impressed on Scialoja, the Italian delegate at Geneva, that Britain's decision to guarantee only the Rhine frontier did not affect her other obligations under the peace treaties and the Covenant; and he said that if Germany raised the question of union with Austria when she joined the League she would meet decided British opposition.(47)

While these Anglo-French discussions were taking place the Germans were still professing anxiety about the fate of the pact proposals. Among other things they were worried by a report that Beneš, when on a visit to Warsaw at the end of April to sign a trade

45. Chamberlain to Briand, 8 Jun. 1925, C 7743/459/18, FO 371/10732; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol 76; Chamberlain to Tyrell, 8 Jun. 1925; Chamberlain to Briand, 8 Jun.,; Berlin tel. 10 to Geneva, 9 Jun.; Geneva tel. 5 to Berlin, 9 Jun.; Paris desp. 1331, 11 Jun., C 7862, 7752, 7785, 7884/459/18, FO 371/10733; Chamberlain to Tyrell, 12 Jun., C 8199/459/18, FO 371/10734; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 64.

46. Brussels tel. 59, 9 Jun. 1925; Rome tels. 146, 147, 10 Jun. 1925; Chamberlain to Graham, 11 Jun.; Rome tel. 153, 13 Jun., C 7754, 7848, 7849, 8052, 7957/459/18, FO 371/10733; D.D.I., Vol. IV, Nos. 21, 23, 24, 27, 29, 32.

47. Chamberlain to Graham, 11 Jun. 1925, C 8052/459/18, FO 371/10733; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vols.77-80, passim; D.D.I., Vol. IV, No. 32. Mussolini remained doubtful about joining the pact; Contarini and Scialoja were in favour: D.D.I., Vol IV, No. 35; Rome desp. 526, 19 Jun., C 8345/459/18, FO 371/10734.

and an arbitration treaty, had made some agreement with the Polish Government about preventing frontier revision. Sthamer asked Chamberlain about the reports on 15 May, and said that a new encirclement had begun in the east which would make Germany's entry into the League even more difficult. Chamberlain replied that he did not know whether the reports were accurate, but if they were it was due to nationalist talk in Germany and the fact that the German Government had drawn a distinction between the western and eastern frontiers. He would certainly not encourage Germany to seek a change in the treaty settlement and it would be folly for her to join the League only to appeal to Article 19 of the Covenant. Germany must join the League unconditionally: if she could not do so it would be better to abandon the security negotiations before they went any farther.(48)

A month later Chamberlain sent to D'Abernon and Max Muller a considered statement of the Foreign Office position on Poland. The pact proposals, he wrote, had paradoxically focused attention on the east and had aroused one of the periodic outbursts of criticism in Britain of the Treaty of Versailles.(49) The solution reached at the Peace Conference was at least ethnographically correct and represented the most satisfactory of the courses open at the time.

48. Memorandum by Schubert, 11 May 1925; desp. to Sthamer, 11 May; desps. to Koch and Rauscher, 13 May; Sthamer tel., 15 May, 4509/E126187-92, E126195-97, E126215-24, E126279-83; desp. 902 to Berlin, 15 May, C 6652/459/18, FO 371/10731.

49. Notably a denunciation by Lloyd George in the Commons debate on 24 March: H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 182, cols. 328-38.

Two other solutions had recently been suggested.(50) The first was that Poland should give up the Corridor and get Memel in exchange for Danzig. The disadvantage of putting Poles back under German rule might be outweighed by the advantage of removing a cause of constant friction and a possible cause of war; but the solution was beyond the bounds of practical politics because of the Polish-Lithuanian quarrel and the status of Memel. The second proposal was that East Prussia should be neutralised, on the assumption that this would reduce the dissatisfaction due to its separation from the rest of Germany. This seemed impracticable because there was no reason to suppose that the East Prussions would agree to being separated from the Reich to an even greater degree. There was a danger, Chamberlain went on, of assuming that a change in the frontier was inevitable and that therefore Britain should promote it. It was too soon to say that a change was inevitable, and as little as possible ought to be changed until change was proved to be necessary. Not only would changes bring new problems: the idea that the Britiah Government favoured change would increase insecurity. Chamberlain was trying to diminish the difficulties, telling the Polish Minister that his country must not be irritating,(51) and telling the German Amabssador that his country must not expect a change in the treaty

50. By D'Abernon among others. Berthelot was also said to favour the first solution: minute by Gregory, 20 May 1925, N 3028/43/55, FO 371/10997.

51. He did so, for example, on 31 March: desp. 268 to Warsaw, N 1843/43/55, FO 371/10997; and on 19 May: desp. 394 to Warsaw, C 6850/459/18, FO 371/10731.

settlement. "If the Germans are wise they will let the question sleep for a generation. If the Poles are wise they will make it possible for them to do so".(52)

When D'Abernon saw the first French draft of the reply to the German security proposal, he thought it excellent and recommended that it should be sent before the Allied disarmament note. The Foreign Office replied that the security note would still take some time and they did not want the French to delay the disarmament one.(53) D'Abernon then went to the other extreme and told Schubert that he was alone in feeling optimistic about the prospects for negotiations: once again Schubert complained of the delay and said that he suspected the French of trying to sabotage the security pact.(54) Just before Chamberlain and Briand went to Geneva the London press, too, was pessimistic about the Anglo-French correspondence; and although Chamberlain and Tyrell did their best to reassure Sthamer, and Briand did his to reassure Hoesch, the Germans remained gloomy and believed that the central problem was that of the effect of a Rhine pact on France's obligations to Poland and Czechoslovakia.(55)

52. Desps. 1099 to Berlin, 470 to Warsaw, 16 Jun. 1925, C 8063/459/18, FO 371/10733.

53. Berlin tel. 195, 18 May 1925; Berlin tel. 199, 20 May; tel. 107 to Berlin, 22 May, C 6711, 6852/459/18, FO 371/10731.

54. Berlin tel. 204, 26 May 1925, C 7142/459/18, FO 371/10732; memorandum by Schubert, 26 May, 4509/E126397-401.

55. Sthamer tels., 26 and 28 May 1925; tel. to Hoesch, 2 Jun.; Hoesch tel., 4 Jun., 4509/E126407, E126437, E126478-84, E126507-10.

At this point, on 4 June, the Allied note on the state of German disarmament was delivered in Berlin. The German Government received it calmly, although it was evident that the subject could lead to a conflict of interests between the army and the Auswärtiges Amt.(56) In two conversations with D'Abernon Stresemann tried first to dispose of the Austrian question and then to suggest that in view of the strong Soviet objections to the security pact and German entry into the League, the Western powers would have to give Germany something more, such as the return of Eupen and Malmedy, the evacuation of the Rhineland, and a colonial mandate, to compensate for worsened relations with the Soviet Union.(57)

The Franco-German exchange of notes and drafting the Rhine pact

The reply to the German proposals for a security pact, in the name of the French Government, was delivered in Berlin on 16 June.(58) From the British point of view the next two months saw the development of two aspects of the pact policy, on the one hand encouragement of the Germans to pursue the negotiations and on the other the drafting

56. Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 305-07; Otto Gessler, Reichswehrpolitik in der Weimarer Zeit, Stuttgart 1958, pp. 316-17. A shortened version of the Control Commission's report was now published, omitting the appendixes in order to protect German sources of information. When Stresemann complained of not being given the full text, D'Abernon supplied him with a copy: Salewski, op. cit., p. 305, n. 23.

57. Memoranda by Stresemann, 4 and 10 Jun. 1925, 3123/D643404-08, D 643483-85, extracts in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 99-103; D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. II, pp. 167-70. For the Russian aspect see below, pp. 439-40.

58. Paris desp. 1331, 11 Jun. 1925, C 7884/459/18, FO 371/10733; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol 77; Cmd 2435 of 1925; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 14.

of the western security pact in a form satisfactory to Britain. The two aspects overlapped at certain points and eventually came together in the jurists' meeting in London at the beginning of September.

Encouraging the Germans to pursue the negotiations was not easy. The immediate reaction in Germany to the French note was unfavourable, and the tone of the press was so bad that on 21 June Addison was instructed to let the Auswärtiges Amt know that Chamberlain believed that the French note offered Germany a golden opportunity to regain a position of full equality in the comity of nations, and that if she now frustrated her own initiative the worst conclusions would be drawn. The German Government should reply promptly, accepting the broad principles, and save discussion of details for the drafting stage.(59) Addison replied that Schubert said that the press comment must not be taken as representing the views of the Government (although he described it as reasonable), and that he thought that their answer would not be such as to prevent further negotiation.(60) Two days later Schubert told the French Ambassador, de Margerie, that there would have to be a detailed reply to the French note. Internal difficulties had to be overcome, but he was personally anxious to make progress and he suggested a meeting between Briand and Stresemann.(61)

59. Tel. 132 to Berlin, 21 Jun. 1925, C 8305/459/18, FO 371/10734.

60. Berlin tel. 242, 22 Jun. 1925, C 8418/459/18, FO 371/10734; memorandum by Schubert, 22 Jun., 4509/E126766-69.

61. Memorandum by Schubert, 24 Jun. 1925, 4509/E126805-09.

The internal difficulties were divisions with the German Government, a number of whose members either saw no point in a security pact or wished to make the negotiations fail. Although the Cabinet approved Stresemann's policy on 26 June the arguments continued,(62) and no doubt at least partly for this reason Stresemann's and Schubert's tone in conversation remained harsh. When towards the end of June D'Abernon returned to Berlin from leave Chamberlain wrote to urge him to use all his influence to prevent the Germans from destroying their own work: at the same time Addison suggested that pressure should be put on Sthamer. Chamberlain thought that it was no good talking to Sthamer, whom he described as "a German feather bed", but nevertheless Lampson expressed concern to the Ambassador and exhorted him to urge his Government to send a speedy and uncontentious reply to the French note.(63) After talking to Stresemann and Schubert D'Abernon sent pessimistic reports. He believed that Stresemann was still wholeheartedly behind the pact negotiations, but the opposition, fanned by the Russians, was unexpectedly strong. D'Abernon thought that it was important to get to the conference stage as quickly as possible.(64) Chamberlain replied that these reports, contrasting

62. See Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, pp. 204-07; Max von Stockhausen, Sechs Jahre Reichskanzlei, Bonn 1954, pp. 165-7; Hans Meier-Welcker, Seeckt, Frankfurt 1967, pp. 470-7; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 109-10. On 27 June the Land Governments gave the Reich Government a free hand to take the next step, and after a meeting of the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee Stresemann secured Luther's support, which had been in doubt.

63. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 26 Jun. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/280, FO 800/257; Addison to Lampson, 26 Jun.; desp. 1208 to Berlin, 30 Jun., C 8804, 8805/459/18, FO 371/10735.

64. Berlin tel. 245, 28 Jun. 1925; Berlin tel. 244, 29 Jun., C 8699, 8770/459/18, FO 371/10735; memorandum by Schubert, 27 Jun., 4509/E126878-87; memorandum by Stresemann, 28 Jun., 3123/D643748-54.

with D'Abernon's earlier optimism about the probable reception of the French note, made him wonder whether he was "being used as a dupe in a negotiation in which the German proposals were only put forward to divide the Allies or get a better price from Russia.... If Germany refuses or delays acceptance the opportunity may pass for ever and the blame will be hers".(65)

The points in the French note that caused the greatest objections in Germany were the insistence on German entry into the League and the proposal for a guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties. Other points of difficulty were the unlimited nature of the arbitration treaties and the possibility that the Allies could still take action against Germany under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans asked for explanations on some of these points and were not satisfied with replies that details were best left for subsequent negotiations.(66) To discover precisely what the German objections were, D'Abernon and a member of the Embassy staff went through the French note with Schubert and Gaus, and compiled a list which he sent to London. In the first place the proposal for unlimited arbitration treaties "presented a problem of extraordinary

65. Tel. 135 to Berlin, 30 Jun. 1925, C 8770/459/18, FO 371/10735.

66. Memorandum by Stresemann, 18 Jun. 1925, 3123/D643555-59, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 103-06; memorandum by Stresemann, 20 Jun., 3123/D643576-79; tel. to Sthamer, 22 Jun.; Sthamer tel., 23 Jun., 4509/E126781-83, E126800-02; desp. 1175 to Berlin, 23 Jun., C 8548/459/18, FO 371/10734. A circular to German missions on the French note asserted that the arbitration treaties and the Covenant were not both needed and suggested that if France demanded both she was pursuing not her own security but the encirclement of Germany. Hoesch disagreed with this interpretation but Schubert supported it: circular tel., 20 Jun.; Hoesch tel., 21 Jun.; tel. to Hoesch, 23 Jun., 4509/E126745-49, E126756-57, E126786-88.

difficulty". The objection was worded as a technical one about the unsuitability of arbitral tribunals for dealing with non-juridical disputes, and it was suggested that under this proposal an arbitral tribunal would be called upon not only to adjudicate on the current German-Polish trade dispute but to fix German tariffs. Gaus and Schubert said that they preferred the dual system of arbitral tribunals and conciliation bodies provided in the German-Swiss arbitration treaty. Secondly the retention of the right to take action under exising treaties would, the Germans claimed, leave France free to enter the Ruhr again without opportunity for arbitration, or to invade Germany if she decided that Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles had been violated. Thirdly the guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties meant that France could act against Germany without waiting for the League in the event, say, of trouble caused by the German minority in Poland. Finally the renewed affirmation of the Treaty of Versailles was causing great difficulty with the political parties and public opinion.

D'Abernon pooh-poohed Schubert's assertion that the Germans were threatened with another dictated treaty, and wrote that he thought that most of the objections were theoretical rather than practical and arose from a misunderstanding of the spirit of the French note. He hoped that when the drafting stage was reached it would not be difficult to devise a text meeting most of the objections. But he admitted that Schubert and Gaus had said that the pact as proposed would leave Germany in a worse position than if she simply joined the League, and that the French had twisted the original

offer of a short and simple agreement out of all recognition.[67]

Although D'Abernon was more hopeful after the meeting of the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee on 1 July,[68] the Foreign Office decided to set out their impression of the German objections in a despatch which could be published if the negotiations failed. The despatch said that Chamberlain agreed that the German objections were juristic rather than practical and ought not in themselves to cause great difficult. He would not give detailed explanations now, for if the explanations were not concerted with the French they might subsequently prove not to represent French views, and if they were so concerted it would mean further delay and prolongation of the correspondence. But two points must be made. First, the statement that the proposal of unlimited arbitration treaties presented a problem of extraordinary difficulty was itself extraordinary, since it was the Germans who had first suggested comprehensive arbitration treaties providing for the peaceful settlement of juridical

67. Berlin desp. 388, 1 Jul. 1925, C 9066/459/18, FO 371/10735; memoranda by Schubert and correspondence with D'Abernon, 30 Jun. and 1 Jul., 4509/E126932-33, E126988-91, E126992-127006, E126592-99.

68. Berlin tels. 248, 2 Jul. 1925; 250, 3 Jul.; 251, 3 Jul., C 8895, 8938, 8939/459/18, FO 371/10735.

and political disputes.[69] Secondly the Germans were creating difficulties in the language of the French note. However short and simple an agreement the German Government might have contemplated, their proposals were both comprehensive and elastic and the French note was an honest attempt to carry farther tentative German suggestions which had been taken as having for their object "the preservation of peace, the removal of the prevailing sense of insecurity and the cultivation of more friendly relations between the nations recently at war.... If, at this stage, the German Government draw back, the world will quickly revise its estimate of

69. The despatch quoted Art. 1 of the German-Swiss arbitration treaty in support of this argument, a fact which suggests a degree of misunderstanding at least on the British side. The Germans were ostensibly objecting to a treaty under which disputes of all kinds would be submitted to arbitral tribunals which were not suitable for dealing with political disputes whereas, as Chamberlain had ascertained from Briand, the French were thinking of arbitration in the broad sense including conciliation procedures, only stipulating that the award must be binding. On the other hand the British seem still to have been ignoring the fact that under the German-Swiss treaty the awards of the conciliation body were not binding but merely recommendations. But correspondence in the German archives shows that the German dislike of unlimited arbitration treaties was mainly political, and that some officials saw advantages in the treaties being unlimited, both because France and Belgium would be more completely bound and because more disputes with Poland could be raised: 4509/E127720-45, E127880-88; 4562/E155860-67. See also below, pp. 421-2.

the nature and purpose of their original proposals. ...,,,I cannot suppose that any responsible statesman, realising what this would mean, will enter upon so disastrous a course".(70)

The original objects of the German proposals were in fact a good deal narrower than the preservation of peace and the cultivation of more friendly relations, but these more limited objects had in large measure already been achieved, as Hoesch pointed out in a despatch urging the continuation of negotiations. The pact proposal, he maintained, had had a significant effect on the disarmament note, it had separated the question of the evacuation of the Cologne zone from that of future supervision under Article 213, and had killed the idea of an Allied security treaty directed against Germany. Hoesch picked out three elements in the French note for special comment : (a) the right to resist failures to observe the peace treaty even where the Western powers were not directly concerned seemed objectionable, as it appeared to allow a French veto on the return of Eupen and Malmedy even if Belgium agreed. (b) Unlimited arbitration treaties were not objectionable so far as those in the west were concerned: indeed it was to Germany's interest to get the greatest security against arbitrary action by France and Belgium, and their

70. Desp. 1307 to Berlin, 17 Jul. 1925, C 9066/459/18, FO 371/10735; Chamberlain wrote to D'Abernon in a similar sense on 10 July. Lampson wrote to Addison that while it might not be wise to go on "belabouring" Stresemann, he and others ought to be made to realise that if they turned down the French overtures they would be regarded as having opted for revenge, and this would have a far-reaching effect on the policy of other countries, especially Britain. Lampson spoke on the same lines to the Counsellor of the German Embassy, Dufour-Feronce: Lampson to Addison, 6 Jul.; desp. 1250 to Berlin, 7 Jul.; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 10 Jul., C 8804, 9103, 9066/459/18, FO 371/10735; Dufour desp., 10 Jul., 3123/D643869-76.

efforts should be directed towards getting breaches of existing treaties included. It would obviously be very difficult to find convincing reasons for concluding different treaties in the east, and Hoesch thought that Germany might have to concede this point. (c) Although Hoesch thought that a French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties would not give France a greater right to intervene in a German-Polish conflict than she already possessed under the Covenant, it would set France up as a kind of arbiter of Germany's relations with the eastern countries and implied recognition of France's alliances. It ought therefore to be rejected and Hoesch thought that resistance might succeed. In general he believed that the only possible policy was to pursue the negotiations seriously: if they could get a guarantee pact, even by making a sacrifice on the character of the arbitration treaties, Germany's security against French attack would be significantly increased.(71)

On 3 July Schubert told D'Abernon that it had been decided to send a note to the French Government, but that drafting it was very difficult.(72) D'Abernon had asked Lampson for suggestions on overcoming the difficulty about the guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties. Lampson replied that D'Abernon would realise "the nicety of the question of France's commitments in the east and the necessity of finding some way out for her". He should be especially careful to say nothing of this to the Germans, but he could point out that France

71. Hoesch desp., 30 Jun. 1925, 4509/E126960-72.

72. Memorandum by Schubert, 3 Jul. 1925, 4509/E126988-91. Six drafts of the German reply are preserved in this file.

already had an alliance with Poland and the proposed guarantee would be of both sides. Even if the Germans were sceptical about this aspect, they ought to realise that they would have ample opportunity during the negotiations to go fully into the terms of the guarantee.(73) Ignoring the specific warning, D'Abernon not only told Schubert that Germany would be better off with the guarantee because it would apply to her as well as to Poland, but also said that Britain would support the German view and that the relationship of France to Poland was that of a man who wanted to part from his mistress elegantly.(74)

Nevertheless the French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties was rejected in the German note which was delivered in Paris on 20 July. The note also objected to (1) the statement that the peace treaties would not be modified by the proposed pact as unnecessary and undesirable. The German Government, it said, believed that conclusion of the pact would have an effect on the occupation of the Rhineland. (2) The proposal for unlimited arbitration treaties and the retention of the possibility of coercive action in case of a breach of existing treaties. (3) The guarantee of the arbitration treaties leaving the guarantor to decide who had been the aggressor. (4) The demand for German entry into the League of Nations. The last letter from the Council, it was said, had not met the German objections to Article 16: Germany was disarmed and exposed, and could not be regarded as enjoying equal rights until her disarmament were followed by general disarmament. In conclusion the German Government expressed

73. Berlin tel. 252, 3 Jul. 1925; tel. 137 to Berlin, 5 Jul., C 8939/459/18, FO 371/10735.

74. Memorandum by Schubert, 8 Jul. 1925, 4509/E127066-70; Berlin tel. 257, 8 Jul., C 9177/459/18, FO 371/10735. D'Abernon did not himself report this statement.

the hope that further discussions would lead to a positive result, and that these discussions could be accelerated.(75)

The German note was not well received in Paris and London. Although Briand and Chamberlain made the best of it to each other, and although Briand convinced Hoesch of his good will, both Ministers were concerned at the continued German objections to joining the League and agreed that there would have to be another note.(76) Chamberlain was also annoyed at the reference to the occupation, which he regarded as near to a breach of Stresemann's promise that the question would not be raised as a condition for the pact. Chamberlain commented to D'Abernon that he had given due weight to the fact that the note had been drafted with an eye to German public opinion, but he felt bound to observe that in pursuing an international settlement it was also necessary to satisfy public opinion in other countries. In this note the German Government appeared no longer "in the role of a far-seeing contributor to the general cause of peace, but rather in that of a somewhat unwilling participant, who acquiesces in a scheme, not because of its intrinsic merits, but merely in the hope that consent will enable him to drive a bargain in other directions."(77) When D'Abernon reported Schubert's hope that there would not be another French note Chamberlain retorted that the Germans should have

75. Note from the German Government, 20 Jul. 1925, C9581/459/18, FO 371/10736; 3123/D643918-33; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 79; Cmd 2468 of 1925, Reply of the German Government to the Note handed to Herr Stresemann by the French Ambassador at Berlin on June 16, 1925 respecting the proposals for a pact of security; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 16.

76. Desp. 2503 to Paris, 22 Jul. 1925; desp. 2539 to Paris, 27 Jul., C 9789/459/18, FO 371/10736; Hoesch tels., 20 and 23 Jul., 4509/E127279-85, E127363-65.

77. Desp. 1413 to Berlin, 28 Jul. 1925, C10034/459/18, FO 371/10737; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 29 Jul., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/289, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48929, FO 800/258.

thought of that before publishing "an election manifesto". They were now asking the Allied Governments to show "a patience, forbearance and statesmanship, not to say a courage, in face of public opinion, of which in effect they avow themselves incapable".(78)

Although the German reply made a further note inevitable, it also called for a decision on how the future negotiations were to be conducted, and how soon the Germans were to be brought into the consideration of a text. Drafts of a treaty had already been under discussion between the British and the Frence for a month. Two drafts had been produced in the Foreign Office as early as 12 May, before the receipt of the French draft reply to the German proposals; but these were solely for the internal purpose of mind-clearing and Chamberlain did not intend to submit a text to the Cabinet as yet.(79) Once agreement had been reached with the French on the terms of the reply to Germany, the Foreign Office set seriously to work with the dual object of producing a basis for discussion and forestalling any possible French attempt to reintroduce points that had already been rejected.

A draft of the mutual security pact was circulated to the Cabinet on 27 June. The main points were : (1) France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other undertook in no case to resort to war

78. Berlin tel. 283, 28 Jul. 1925; tel. 153 to Berlin, 30 Jul., C 9992/459/18, FO 371/10737.

79. One draft contained a mutual guarantee by Belgium, the British Empire, France, and Germany, and an undertaking by all four to submit disputes likely to lead to hostilities to arbitration or judicial settlement. The other contained a guarantee of the frontiers between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other, and no arbitration provision. In both the parties undertook to respect the demilitarisation of the Rhineland and in both the operation of the guarantee was made subject to a decision by the Council of the League. Neither contained any reference to a guarantee of arbitration treaties in the east, but both reserved the rights and duties of the parties as memeber of the League: C 6579, 6580, 6581, 6582, 6583/459/18, FO 371/10731.

except in resistance to attack or when acting with the authorisation of the League. (2) An alleged breach of the preceding provision or of Articles 42, 43, or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles would be brought before the Council of the League. If the Council established the existence of a violation it would notify the parties to the treaty, who would then come immediately to the assistance of the victim. (3) The parties to the treaty would guarantee the arbitration treaties between France and Germany and Belgium and Germany. An alleged breach (refusal to submit a dispute to the machinery provided, or refusal to comply with an award) would be referred to the Council of the League. If it were satisfied that there was a breach it would propose steps to secure compliance. If the party committing the breach resorted to war against the other, the guarantors would immediately come to the help of the victim. (4) The treaty would not prevent one of the parties taking military action in fulfilment of a guarantee given to an arbitration treaty between one of the other parties and a third state, nor would it affect rights under existing treaties. (5) No obligations were imposed on the Dominions or on India unless they chose to accept them.(80)

The question of how to treat the Dominions in the proposed pact had been raised by the Colonial Office on 24 June, and they had been told that Chamberlain preferred to make the obligations inapplicable unless they contracted in.(81) But this was merely the end of a

80. C.P. 311(25), 312(25), CAB 24/174. Draft of 17 Jun. 1925, C 8158/459/18, FO 371/10733; notes by Hurst, C 8211/459/18, FO 371/10734.

81. Harding to Lampson, 24 Jun. 1925; Lampson to Harding, 30 Jun., C 8530/459/18, FO 371/10734.

long discussion. On 24 March the Australian liaison officer in London, R.G. Casey, sent the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office some notes on the position of the Dominions in relation to the security pact, and asked for a discussion. Casey thought that it would be difficult to get the Dominions to discuss the pact, and that it was even less likely that they would all sign. If not all did so the unity of the Empire would be visibly impaired and even the "loyal" ones would be more doubtful. He therefore suggested that Britain should join the pact alone, and should not even include an accession clause in the treaty. Casey was not worried about the constitutional point that if the United Kingdom were at war the whole Empire would be at war, but Crowe commented that he had overlooked the point that the Empire would be exposed to belligerent action by the enemy: whether the Dominions sent troops or not was secondary.(82)

Chamberlain told Casey that even though it might in the end prove necessary for Britain to join the pact alone, he hoped that the Empire would speak with one voice. The Colonial Office preferred a clause by which the Dominions could contract out of the obligations of the pact if they wished, and Casey wrote to this effect to his Prime Minister at the beginning of April.(83) Bruce then wrote to Amery. He thought a pact between Britain, France and Belgium as objectionable as the Geneva Protocol, and considered that a pact

82. Casey to Bland, 24 Mar. 1925, C 4257/1704/18, FO 371/10752. Casey's appointment as liaison officer with the Cabinet Office, Colonial Office and Foreign Office arose out of conversations in 1924 between MacDonald and Bruce: C.O. 54369/24, CO 532/271; Cecil Edwards, Bruce of Melbourne, London 1965, pp. 86-87.

83. Casey to Bruce, 8 Apr. 1925, C 5630/459/18, FO 371/10730.

including Germany would be no more effective than Germany's entry into the League. If Britain joined such a pact alone a fatal blow would be struck at Empire unity; but if Germany joined the League the whole security problem might be treated, "as it really is, as a purely Continental question". Sending Chamberlain and Baldwin copies of this letter, Amery commented that Bruce's views were significant because he was likely to back British policy more strongly than any other Australian Prime Minister, and certainly more strongly than any Canadian or South African Prime Minister. Amery repeated his own doubts about British participation in a pact and said that he had only acquiesced so far because he thought the commitment so remote that British intervention was unlikely ever to be needed.(84)

Chamberlain replied that he agreed with much of what Bruce wrote; but he was sure that no Franco-German agreement was possible without British participation and that if Germany entered the League at all she would only do so if entry were insisted upon as a condition of the pact. Moreover the security question was not a purely continental one. Britain had a vital interest in the Channel coast, and could not remain untouched by any major European conflict. If Britain withdrew from Europe there would be no chance of permanent peace, and disaster would come in a couple of generations. "I at any rate could not be responsible for attempting to conduct the foreign policy of this

84. Amery to Baldwin, 15 Jun. 1925, Baldwin Papers, F.2 (Vol 115); Amery to Chamberlain, 15 Jun., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/32, 37, FO 800/258; both with copies of Bruce to Amery, 6 May.

country in conditions which to my mind make war inevitable".(85)

The Dominion Governments received by telegram full information on the progress of the negotiations. Except for the New Zealand Government, who said that they would follow Britain, none had expressed an opinion on the pact by the time of the debate on it in the House of Commons on 24 June. One of the strongest pleas in Chamberlain's speech was that isolation was impossible for Britain, who was a member of the League, had rights and obligations under the Treaty of Versailles, and was geographically closely linked to Europe. Most speakers in the debate, and notably the leaders of the Labour and Liberal parties, agreed: and although MacDonald still hankered after some general instrument like the Geneva Protocol, the policy set out in the correspondence with the French Government was generally approved. Anxiety was, however, expressed about the relationship between the proposed guarantee and the machinery of the League.(86) After the debate Chamberlain wrote to Crewe that he was well satisfied and believed that so far as British opinion was concerned "we really have the pact in our pocket" - provided that the principle were maintained that except to repel invasion no party should resort to war until the methods of settlement by the League had been exhausted. "If we left a loophole for war (except in the one case of self-defence against aggression) without previous

85. Chamberlain to Amery, 19 Jun. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/38, FO 800/258. On 6 August Chamberlain sent another letter to Amery with a reply to similar criticisms of the pact by Smuts: AC 52/51, FO 800/258.

86. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 185, cols. 1555-1671.

submission of the question to the Council, that would be the point on which all criticism and all opposition would centre".(87)

At the Cabinet's request the Committee of Imperial Defence considered the draft security treaty on 1 July. Here too much of the discussion was about the relationship between the pact and the League. Chamberlain explained that Britain was obliged to intervene if the Council failed to reach agreement, but that the treaty had been so framed as to prevent any case arising in which the use of force was justifiable without previous recourse to arbitration in its broadest sense, except that France, Belgium and Germany might act in self-defence against attack. If Britain were to guarantee the western arbitration treaties the terms would have to be scrutinised very carefully; but he was sure that no French Government would be so foolish as to go to war unless they were certain of carrying Britain with them. In fact Britain's liabilities were reduced, because by making it clear that in the case of one frontier she was prepared to make her maximum effort it was implied that in the case of the other frontier she was not. The First Sea Lord and the Chief of the Air Staff had no comments. Cavan said that the General Staff were wholeheartedly in favour and did not think that the military obligations were any greater than those already existing under the peace treaties and the Covenant. The Committee decided that there should be a clause allowing the treaty to be terminated if the Council of the League decided by a majority that the League itself afforded sufficient

87. Chamberlain to Crewe, 27 Jun. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/221, Crewe Papers, C/8, FO 800/258.

protection; and they agreed to recommend the draft to the Cabinet subject to four minor amendments.(88) On 3 July the Cabinet approved the amended draft without questioning its principles, and agreed to send it to the Dominions and the French Government.(89)

Chamberlain was now anxious to speed up the negotiations and get to the stage of conversations with the Germans,(90) but it took another month to reach agreement with the French on the draft of the treaty. The difficulty was that subordination of the operation of the guarantee to decision by the Council to which British opinion was believed to attach so much importance. The French also feared that the British draft weakened the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles relating to the demilitarisation of the Rhineland. These points were raised at once by the French Ambassador when he received the draft, and were spelled out in instructions sent to him by Briand on 9 July.(91) Chamberlain commented that the provisions in the draft were the maximum or minimum obligations to France and Germany, according to the point of view, outside which Britain retained entire freedom including liberty to act if Germany violated the frontier before the League could take a decision. He replied to Fleuriau that the draft did distinguish between the decision required of the Council in the case of a threat of war and that required in case of an act of war. It was essential to set up some machinery to

88. C. 32(25), 1 Jul., CAB 23/50; C.P. 309(25), 311(25), CAB 24/174; C.I.D. 201st meeting, CAB 2/4. There does not seem to have been any discussion of the military aspects of the pact: this was the only occasion on which it came before the C.I.D. But see also Chapter 7, pp. 540-3.

89. C. 33(25), CAB 23/50; C.P. 381(25), CAB 24/174; desp, 2286 to Paris, C 8861/459/18, FO 371/10735. For the text see Appendix.

90. Desp. 2286 to Paris, 4 Jul. 1925, C 8861/459/18, FO 371/10735; Chamberlain to Crewe, 7 Jul., Crewe Papers, C/8.

91. Minute by Nicolson, 6 Jul. 1925; Briand to Fleuriau, 9 Jul; desps. 2362, 2370 to Paris, 10 Jul., C 9186, 9216, 9223, 9243/459/18, FO 371/10736; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 79.

decide whether the casus foederis had arisen: it was in the interest of all concerned that the allegation must be established as correct; and as the recent debate had shown it was hardly too much to say that public opinion would not endorse the guarantees unless it were provided that the question would be decided by the Council. Briand had also objected to the omission of a provision that all the agreements envisaged should come into force at once. Chamberlain agreed that this was desirable, but he said that it would be difficult to make the western settlement depend on a settlement between Germany and her eastern neighbours.(92)

The Belgian Ambassador and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vandervelde, who had been given a copy of the British draft, also expressed anxiety about procedure in the event of sudden attack. Chamberlain assured Moncheur that the guarantors would not wait for the League in a case of self-defence.(93) In order to sort out these problems it was agreed that Fromageot, the French legal adviser, should come to London for discussions with Hurst. He arrived almost simultaneously with the German note of 20 July, which included a firm objection to the possibility of action by any of the parties without

92. Minute by Chamberlain, 6 Jul. 1925; Chamberlain to Fleuriau, 11 Jul., C 9186, 9216/459/18, FO 371/10736; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 79.

93. Desp. 2405 to Paris; desp. 831 to Brussels, 14 Jul. 1925; Brussels desp. 538, 17 Jul., C 9367, 9411, 9539/459/18, FO 371/10736; D.D.B., Vol. II, Nos. 76, 78, 79. On 29 July Vandervelde sent a lengthy comment on the British draft proposing something akin to a return to the Geneva Protocol. The document was sent by post from Brussels, a proceeding which caused some astonishment in the Foreign Office. Briand was annoyed with Vandervelde for interfering, and on 6 August sent him a rather crushing reply: Note from the Belgian Government, 29 Jul.; Phipps to Lampson, 6 Aug., C 10080, 10406/459/18, FO 371/10737; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne Vols. 80-1; D.D.B., Vol. II, Nos. 86, 92, 93.

a carefully regulated procedure. From the discussions with Fromageot it emerged that there were two French anxieties, first about the possible delay in getting a Council decision, and secondly about the possibility that, since some of the minor powers on the Council might not dare to pronounce Germany to be the aggressor and since unanimity would be required, there might be no decision and so the guarantee would never come into play.(94)

Chamberlain held a meeting on 22 July to discuss the German note and the results of the discussion with Fromageot. The Central Department had suggested, as a possible final compromise, that provision might be made for a guarantor to act in advance of a Council decision in cases where an actual invasion of territory had taken place. Chamberlain said that this must include the demilitarised zone as well: if armies were marching across it, it would be intolerable to have to wait until they crossed the French frontier. Hurst said that Fromageot was prepared to concede that an allegation that a casus foederis had arisen must be referred to the League, but he wanted something that would allow Britain to go to the help of France at her own discretion and subject to subsequent endorsement by the League. He accepted that Britain would not be bound so to act, but he refused to accept a distinction between French territory and infringement of the demilitarised zone. Hurst had therefore drafted some articles which allowed the parties to the treaty to act in case of a "manifest violation" of the undertaking not to go to war or of Articles 42, 43, or 180 of the

94. Minutes, 21 Jul. 1925, on C 9581, 9693/459/18, FO 371/10736.

Treaty of Versailles, if they were agreed that the violation was an "unprovoked movement of aggression and that by means of the outbreak or the imminence of hostilities" immediate action was necessary, or if a breach of the arbitration treaty were accompanied by hostilities.

Hurst said that he believed that Fromageot would accept these articles, but he had pointed out that, apart from the attitude of British public opinion, the Germans were very unlikely to accept provisions which left it to the judgment of one of the parties whether to take action. At the meeting Lampson agreed that the Germans would reasonably refuse to accept any such provision and British opinion would agree with them. Chamberlain said that he would justify the articles to Parliament on the ground that they preserved British freedom of action and that if events were happening which showed that a particular country was deliberately taking aggressive action, the British Government clearly ought not to be prevented from taking appropriate steps. He thought that the German objections might be met by showing that the proposal would operate as much to Germany's advantage as to that of France. Sterndale Bennett pointed out that the new provisions also left liberty to France, and it seemed equally necessary to guard against French action in bad faith. Hurst said that he had discussed this point with Fromageot, who had replied that it was ruled out by the fact that France would not be strong enough. However, said Lampson, the German fear of France was genuine. He thought that the French request should be rejected and that the French would presumably acquiesce rather than have no treaty.

Chamberlain remarked that he and the Department seemed to be proceeding from different standpoints. They appeared to be saying: "Here are the French asking for something. Ought we to give it?"

whereas he wanted to give it because he wanted it too. He wished to ensure that if war broke out it should be on a frontier as far as possible from Britain. He did not wish to give Germany the advantage that she would have if Britain found herself blocked from acting by delay in the Council or a failure of the Council to reach a decision owing to obstruction organised by Germany. Sterndale Bennett replied that they all agreed that the British Government ought to have a certain liberty of action: the only question was whether it should be stated in the treaty, since stating the right to act in flagrant and urgent cases contained dangerous possibilities.

The discussion then turned to procedure, Lampson saying that he was afraid of getting to the position where there was an unalterable Anglo-French draft before the Germans came on to the scene. Chamberlain said that his idea was that the draft should be put forward as a British one that committed no one. He was doubtful how long its existence could be kept secret, but Hurst should warn Fromageot to put forward as few changes as possible at this stage. As for the guarantee, Hurst should try to get Fromageot's consent to an article so worded as to make it clear that the guarantor would only act in advance of a decision by the Council in cases where hostilities had actually broken out or when the armed forces of either side had indubitably entered the demilitarized zone. If Fromageot accepted he should be told that Chamberlain was prepared to submit such a text to the Cabinet, but that Hurst doubted whether the Cabinet would agree.(95)

95. Record of meeting, 22 Jul. 1925, C 9784/459/18, FO 371/10736. D'Abernon revealed the existence of the draft, and the fact that Fromageot was going to London to discuss it, to Schubert on 23 July. A copy of the draft as approved by the Cabinet and sent to the Dominions was given to the German Consulate-General in Dublin by an Irish informant on or before 2 August: 4509/E127388-90, E128723-26.

This was the inception of the idea of a flagrant violation of the demilitarised territory. After talking to Fromageot again Hurst minuted that for the French the demilitarisation of the Rhineland was more than a screen for the French frontier; it was a protection against another war having to be fought on French soil. Chamberlain noted that he agreed, and that the General Staff said that it was important for Britain also.(96) Chamberlain told Fleuriau and Fromageot that he thought that it was now in the Government's power to give with general national approval a guarantee that would operate effectively in case of a serious threat from Germany, but he wished to warn them against two dangers. The first was that popular acceptance of the obligation depended on the guarantee being clearly limited to the case against which it was intended to provide. He was worried lest attempts to fill every gap might so confuse and alarm public opinion that the real guarantee might slip through France's grasp. The second danger lay in the eastern arrangements, about which he had said very little since Britain did not intend to take part. It was on these arrangements that it was likely to be most difficult to reach agreement

96. Minutes, 23 and 24 Jul. 1925, C 9801/459/18, FO 371/10736. On 20 July D'Abernon raised the question whether a guarantee of the Channel ought not to be included in the treaty. Lampson replied that there were three objection: first, it was desirable from the point of view of public opinion that Britain should have the moral advantage of not seeking any material benefit for herself; second, if Britain sought similar rights she would have to accept the same obligations, viz. unlimited arbitration treaties; third, a guarantee was unnecessary because securing the Rhine frontier ensured ample protection for the Channel: D'Abernon to Lampson, 20 Jul.; Lampson to D'Abernon, 7 Aug., C 9886/459/18, FO 371/10737; D'Abernon, Ambassador of Peace, Vol. III, pp. 177-9.

with Germany, but he trusted that the western pact would not be allowed to founder on them, for if it did there would be no British guarantee at all.(97)

When D'Abernon told Schubert of the existence of a draft treaty and the fact that Hurst and Fromageot were discussing it, Schubert expressed alarm lest it should reach a final form before the Germans had had a say. But he was hostile to the idea that Gaus should join in discussions with the other two legal advisers, and was not impressed by D'Abernon's suggestion that Gaus was the best politician of the three and would have the advantage. The Germans evidently feared that Gaus might be led into making what were essentially political decisions and wanted ministers to meet and agree on principles before the drafting was done, whereas the British idea was that the jurists could establish the areas of agreement more easily in conversation than by continued correspondence; leaving the ministers to come in and take the final political decisions.(98) There were obvious objections to a ministerial meeting before success was reasonably assured, and the French dislike of conferences had to be borne in mind. But although Chamberlain and Lampson encouraged Sthamer to recommend the idea of an experts' meeting after the next French note was sent, the German objections continued although now directed more against Gaus being

97. Desp. 2515 to Paris, 23 Jul. 1925, C 9802/459/18, FO 371/10736; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 80.

98. Berlin tel. 278, 24 Jul. 1925, C 9857/459/18, FO 371/10737; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 25 Jul.; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 29 Jul., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/288, 289, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48929, FO 800/258; memoranda by Schubert, 23, 24, and 28 Jul., 4509/E127388-90, E127412-14, E127442-47.

being expected to discuss a draft which he would ostensibly not have seen in advance.(99)

Meanwhile Briand suggested that he should visit London. He was more disposed than Berthelot to consider a meeting with Stresemann, but was anxious to reach agreement with the British first. Discussing the German note with Phipps he agreed that every encouragement should be given to the German Government to resist the Russian pressure against joining the League. On the arbitration treaties Briand said that his main object was to close the door to any possibility of future conflict, but he was also anxious to avoid the possibility of France being prevented from taking justified measures against German aggression by the dissentient vote of one member of the Council. He would subscribe to any provision that could be found to overcome this difficulty.(100)

Briand's visit was fixed for 10-12 August. Hoesch had come to the conclusion that further Anglo-French conversations were to Germany's advantage so long as the British did not fall in with French views, and he was impressed with Briand's attitude on the eve of his

99. Desp. 1446 to Berlin, 31 Jul. 1925, C 10255/459/18, FO 371/10737; desp. 1475 to Berlin, 6 Aug., C 10531/459/18, FO 371/10738; Sthamer tels., 28 Jul., 1 and 6 Aug.; memorandum by Schubert, 31 Jul., 4509/E127844, E127479-80, E127525-27, E127458-62; memorandum by Stresemann, 3 Aug., 3123/D644145-48, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 163-6; tels. to Sthamer and Hoesch, 4 Aug., 3123/D644155-56, D644149-50; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 7 Aug., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/290, BM Add. MS 48929, FO 800/258. Gaus had in fact seen the British draft by 5 August.

100. Paris tel. 259, 27 Jul. 1925; Paris tel. 261, 28 Jul., C 9984, 9994/459/18, FO 371/10737.

departure for London. Tyrell was encouraging Dufour, saying that if Germany joined the League British opinion would move in her favour. He also said that Briand was anxious to liquidate France's obligations to Poland, but could only secure Polish consent if France guaranteed the German-Polish arbitration treaty. When Dufour said that he did not think that his Government could agree, Tyrell replied that he thought that it was a matter of finding a formula by which the real guarantor would be the League.(101)

Despite all this encouragement, the completion of the evacuation of the Ruhr, and the announcement that the three "sanctions towns" occupied in 1921 were to be evacuated at the same time, the German position was still stiff. D'Abernon asked Schubert for a list of points that he could send to London, and reported them (as coming from "an exceptionally reliable secret source") as follows: (1) The German Government would insist that forcible intervention could only take place after an impartial decision. (2) The arbitration procedure must cover differences on the interpretation of the Treaty of Versailles. (3) A French guarantee of the German-Polish arbitration treaty was unacceptable if it gave France a right to decide on the application of the guarantee, and useless if it added nothing to Article 16. (4) Objections to joining the League seemed to be receding. It was beginning to be recognised that the danger of the French sending troops through Germany was rather theoretical.

101. Hoesch tels., 5 and 6 Aug. 1925; Dufour tel., 7 Aug.; Dufour desp. 9 Aug., 4509/E127504-06, E127540-44, E127551-56, E 127633-47.

Point (4) was D'Abernon's own idea and did not altogether fit the facts.(102)

In advance of his visit Briand sent to London drafts of the proposed reply to the German note of 20 July and a new draft of the security treaty. The chief differences between it and the British draft were that (a) the undertaking not to resort to war was not to apply to resistance to "hostile acts" as well as to invasion or attack; (b) provision was made for action in case of "manifest violation" of the demilitarisation of the Rhineland; (c) the provision in the British draft for termination of the treaty was deleted.(103) The first meeting at midday on 11 August was taken up with discussing the reply to the German Government. The British proposed only minor amendments, which were settled either on the spot or later in the day by Hurst and Fromageot. Chamberlain suggested that in the last paragraph the invitation to verbal negotiations should be made more definite, and put forward the idea of inviting Gaus to meet Hurst and Fromageot, and perhaps Van der Velde's chef de cabinet Rolin Jaecquemins, to exchange ideas and explanations. Gaus could then inform Stresemann and the latter would then visit Briand

102. Berlin tel. 297, 10 Aug. 1925, C 10554/459/18, FO 371/10738; memoranda by Schubert, 8, 9, and 10 Aug., 4509/E127563-71, E127574-76, E127588-91. On this last point Phipps had mentioned to Berthelot a suggestion by Chamberlain that some reassurance might be given to the Germans about Art. 16: for example it might be pointed out that it would be impossible for France to send troops across Germany without being assured beforehand of German approval: Phipps to Tyrell, 17 Jul., C 9552/459/18, FO 371/10736.

103. Note from the French Ambassador, 31 Jul. 1925, C 10146/459/18, FO 371/10737; drafts of note to the German Government, C 10308/459/18, FO 371/10737; C 10418, 10529/459/18, FO 371/10738; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol 81. A translation of French draft treaty is in the Appendix.

and himself, at Geneva or elsewhere. Briand, who was anxious to avoid giving the impression that the French and British Governments had arranged everything before the play started but was also averse to a formal conference, agreed that this was the best way out.(104)

The discussion the same afternoon on the French redraft of the treaty was less simple although equally friendly. The addition of "hostile acts" was the first problem. Chamberlain asked that the expressions be omitted, and said that he wished to avoid the reproach that he was promising armed assistance to France and Belgium in cases where it was not called for. Fromageot pointed out that the expression was that of the Treaty of Versailles and really covered two categories of act. Minor breaches such as the discovery in the demilitarised zone of a railway siding overlooked by the Control Commission clearly could not be regarded as hostile acts, but positive actions such as the assembly of armed nationalist associations would enable France to act without waiting for the League. Chamberlain explained that in the British view, although the Treaty of Versailles created a right for the Allies to respond to a violation of the demilitarised zone by hostilities, they were bound by the Covenant

104. Notes of conversation, 11 Aug. 1925, C 10609/459/18, FO 371/10738. The idea of a meeting at Geneva appears to have been first mentioned by Briand to Phipps on 28 July. The Germans had natural objections to Geneva but suggested somewhere else in Switzerland: the French were inclined to suggest Paris. Chamberlain minuted that he was not disposed to accept Paris: if it were to be an Allied capital it must be London. He saw the objections to Geneva, but "why not go to some nice place in the neighbourhood?" Paris tel. 261, 28 Jul.; desp 1446 to Berlin, 31 Jul.; desp. 2675 to Paris, 6 Aug., C 9994, 10255, 10417/459/18, FO 371/10737; Sthamer tel., 1 Aug.; Hoesch tel., 6 Aug., 4509/ E127479-80, E 127540-44.

not to resort to hostilities in any case until they had exhausted the procedure for peaceful settlement. It might thus happen that although Germany committed a hostile act, the first breakers of the peace would be the Allies. Fromageot objected that this interpretation seemed to offend the maxim that texts must be interpreted according to common sense; but Chamberlain went on to say that just because the term "hostile acts" might include minor cases, it was important that it should not be used. As a general rule, he felt, the Council should be called in to decide whether the alleged violation was important or not, and he wished to reserve the immediate operatiion of the guarantee for cases where urgent action was clearly necessary. Briand suggested that provision might be made for consultation between the parties to decide whether the alleged hostile act was a menace of war; but Fromageot objected that this would mean a double restriction on independent action and on immediate action in case of a violation of Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. Chamberlain asked what France would really lose. Everyone appeared to agree that Articles 42-44 gave the Allies rights which they would not dream of using in practice; but if they tried to reserve such rights something vital might be lost. Briand said that he for one would not dream of losing the substance for the shadow: no one could possibly hesitate if the choice lay between a defensive war against Germany with Great Britain acting on the side of France, and an independent war by France, unsupported by Great Britain, for reasons of minor importance. Chamberlain said that when there was time every method of conciliation must be exhausted before action were taken. But provision must be made for immediate action when there was not time for the concilation machinery to operate without prejudicing

the position of the country against which the hostile act was directed. The French agreed that it should be possible to draw up an article giving effect to Chamberlain's definition.

After some lesser points had been disposed of or referred for discussion between Hurst and Fromageot, the discussion came to the question of termination. Here Chamberlain said that the passage in the British draft, which the French had deleted, was intended to avoid the necessity of a time limit. A treaty of unlimited duration would arouse criticism. The French agreed that a time limit was undesirable, but objected to the British text because under it a majority decision of the Council could cause the lapse not only of the guarantees but of the obligation not to resort to war and the arbitration obligation. It was agreed to consider another version.(105)

On the following morning the draft reply to the German note was approved, and the various amendments worked out for the draft treaty. Chamberlain pointed out that the text was still subject to approval by the Cabinet, and Briand said that he was in the same position. The main changes were that (a) the undertaking not to resort to war was now not to apply (in addition to the case of resistance to invasion or attack) to a case of "a flagrant violation of Articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles, if such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and by reason of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone, immediate action is necessary"; (b) the guarantors would act immediately in this case;

105. Notes of conversation, 11 Aug. 1925, C 10610/459/18, FO 371/10738.

(c) for the treaty to be terminated at least two of the parties would have to ask the Council of the League to decide that the League ensured sufficient protection.(106)

The Cabinet approved the new text, and the reply to the German note of 20 July, on 13 August. In the discussion it was emphasised that the British guarantee would not operate automatically if Germany attacked Poland, France in consequence attacked Germany, her troops were driven back, and Germany invaded France.(107) Two days earlier Amery had written to the Dominion Prime Ministers in connexion with a study by the Chiefs of Staff of the problem of diverting shipping from the Channel in time of war. Amery wrote that he regarded the security pact not as an entanglement of Britain in Europe for the sake of peace in the abstract, but as a disentanglement from undue concern about sectors other than that where Britain's own interests demanded stability. The slight extension inland from the traditional area of interest of the Channel coast was due to the new range of warfare brought about by the aeroplane. The fact that the guarantee was given to both sides would prevent military intimacy.(108)

106. Notes of conversation, 12 Aug. 1925, C 10611/459/18, FO 371/10738. The revised text of the treaty is in the Appendix.

107. C. 45(25), CAB 23/50.

108. Colonial Office to Foreign Office, 13 Aug. 1925; explanations of the pact were given by the Foreign Office to Casey and the South African High Commissioner: C 10678, 10846/459/18, FO 371/10738. For the study of shipping see pp. 540-3.

At the end of the first meeting with Briand on 11 August Chamberlain wrote off to tell D'Abernon how well things were going, how admirable was the attitude of the French, and how it was Briand who had insisted that they must prepare for a real discussion with the Germans. The object of the invitation to Gaus was to give him a copy of the form into which the British and French had put their ideas, and all necessary explanations of their real intentions. Gaus would not be asked to commit himself to anything: he would go home and discuss the plan with Stresemann and after that Stresemann and any other German representative could meet Briand, Vandervelde and Chamberlain for conversations. After the second meeting had gone well Chamberlain added to his letter an outline of the pact and the guarantee, stressing that it was Britain who would have to be satisfied that a flagrant act had taken place and that there was immediate danger. Germany ought not to find anything to object to in such a treaty. As to the eastern guarantee, "don't the Germans see that this is the way and the only way of rewriting the Franco-Polish Alliance? It is all in the German interest, and ours". Chamberlain warned D'Abernon to be careful what he said, except in the most general terms, and particularly to avoid using the word "conference."(109)

D'Abernon, who quoted this letter to Schubert on 14 August, was anxious that the ministers should meet before the League Assembly so that Germany's entry into the League could be settled at once. But

109. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Aug. 1925, FO 800/258, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48929, Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 281-3.

Schubert said that this would hardly be possible since, apart from the necessity of reaching an understanding on Article 16, the Cologne zone had not been evacuated and the new French note would have to be considered. When the note did not arrive at once (because Briand was taking a short holiday and did not want it to go in his absence) Schubert's suspicions were aroused again, and he continued to resist D'Abernon's pleas for speed in sending Gaus to London.(110)

While awaiting the French reply the Germans had been considering the fundamental questions which remained to be decided. In a memorandum completed in August Gaus wrote that the first was the operation of the guarantee in the west. It was a nice question whether Germany had a greater interest in a promise of immediate British assistance against France, or in protection against a French assertion that peace was endangered by a German violation of the demilitarised zone. Gaus considered that the best solution would be that the guarantee should only operate automatically in the event of French forces crossing the frontier or German forces entering the demilitarised zone. In all other cases the operation of the guarantee should depend on a decision by the Council. The second question was the form of the arbitration treaties. Here there were three possibilities: standing by the previous German system; widening it by including the categories of dispute referred to in Article 13 of the Covenant as being suitable for arbitration; or acceptance of unlimited arbitration;

110. Dufour was also being given encouragement in London: Dufour desp., 11 Aug. 1925, 3123/D644252-55; Dufour tels., 13 and 15 Aug.; memorandum by Schubert, 14 Aug.; Hoesch tel., 21 Aug.; memoranda by Schubert, 22 and 24 Aug., 4509/E127657-58, E127659-60, E127648-53, E127754-55, E127772-74, E127777-79.

on the model of recent treaties concluded by Switzerland. Gaus considered that there was little practical difference between the second and third possibilities; but he regarded it as dangerous for a government to abandon the final decision on a question of major national interest to a court whose decision could not be predicted because the legal norms were not clear. He suggested that the final decision would depend on whether the advantage to Germany of having unlimited treaties with France and Belgium were thought to outweigh that of retaining some freedom vis-à-vis the eastern countries. The third point was the French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties. This was politically undersirable but of little practical significance if the right of unilateral decision by the guarantor were removed. Finally, there was the problem of Article 16. In practical terms this was a matter of Germany, as a member of the League, being able to keep out of conflicts involving her neighbours. She need not ask for release from all the stipulations in every case, and a formal amendment to the article was neither practicable nor desirable. The most important problem was that of a Russo-Polish war, and Gaus discussed at length the procedure under Article 17 of the Covenant for dealing with a conflict between a member of the League and a non-member and the possibilities open to Germany so long as Russian aggression were not glaring. In case of a conflict between two members, e.g. Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Gaus said that Germany would only be able to avoid acting if it were not clear which was the aggressor. The essential point was to secure Germany's right to decide on participation in joint League action while avoiding accusations of disloyalty. The article of the Geneva Protocol referring to a country's geographical position and military situation might serve as a starting point, but

it was inadequate because it would not allow Germany to refuse to take part in economic sanctions or allow passage of troopes.(111)

When Hoesch received a copy of an early version of this paper he wrote to Schubert that he had thought all along that Germany would have to accept unlimited arbitration treaties. He agreed that the French claim to guarantee the eastern arbitration treaties was an unjustified pretension: it would have to be decided whether in the last resort it was worth wrecking the whole pact on this point. Hoesch thought that a formal release from Article 16 was impossible. The whole point for the West was to remove not only the possibility of joint German-Russian military action against Poland but also to remove that of Germany, despite membership of the League, becoming a bulwark for Russia against the League and ensuring by benevolent neutrality a Russian destruction of Poland. But some of Gaus's fears seemed unfounded: Russia was not likely simply to invade one of the border states and in more doubtful cases German membership of the League could help her. The example of a Hungarian-Czechoslovak conflict, however, raised in Hoesch's view the question whether Germany ought to join the League. If she did, she would have to come to terms with its basic purpose and give up ideas of promoting or helping Hungarian aggression.(112)

111. Memorandum by Gaus, final version, 21 Aug. 1925, 4509/E127720-45; an earlier version is in 6698/H108347-74.

112. Hoesch to Schubert, 8 Aug. 1925; Schubert to Hoesch, 11 Aug., 4509/E127579-87, E127601-05. In his reply Schubert discussed the political difficulties in Germany, but was himself less doubtful about the chances of finding a formula on Art. 16. A memorandum of 4 April on the effect of a German-Czechoslovak arbitration treaty on German-Hungarian relations, arguing that although such a treaty would make it more difficult for Germany to help Hungary her overall policy must not be held up by Hungarian considerations, is in 4582/E175452-59.

The French note was delivered in Berlin on 24 August. Comments on the German note of 20 July were confined to three points, and the German Government were invited to enter into negotiations. The German reply of 27 August was a short acceptance of the invitation to a meeting of the legal experts. The Belgian Minister in Berlin joined D'Abernon and de Margerie in giving the invitation, and Mussolini now decided to send a representative too with a view to joining in the pact.(113)

The jurists' meeting and the approach to Locarno

The meeting of the legal advisers to the British, French, German, Belgian and Italian Foreign Ministers was held in London from 1 to 4 September. The basis of discussion was the Anglo-French draft of 12 August. The jurists agreed on a number of amendments regarding the western treaties, being clear, however, that these were for submission to the Governments and were not binding. The most important amendments related to the western arbitration treaties and to the territorial guarantee. On the first, there was a discussion on the meaning of the word "dispute" and on the question whether a state could be obliged to accept the recommendation of a tribunal or commission on matters in which it was acting within its rights but in conflict with the interests of another state. The agreed new version of the article

113. Locarno-Konferenz, Nos. 17-18. Tel. 160 to Berlin, 20 Aug. 1925, C10822/459/18, FO 371/10738; Paris tel. 304, 25 Aug.; Paris tel. 310, 26 Aug.; Paris tel. 312, 27 Aug.; tel. 245 to Paris, 28 Aug.; desp. 1289 to Rome, 28 Aug.; Rome tel. 206. 28 Aug.; tel. 250 to Rome, 29 Aug., C 11069, 11101, 11158, 11204, 11215, 11220/459/18, FO 371/10739; D.D.I., Vol. IV, Nos. 95, 102, 112, 114.

in the security treaty referring to the arbitration treaties now provided for judicial arbitration for questions with regard which the parties were in conflict as to their respective rights, with binding awards; a conciliation commission for other disputes; and if the recommendations of this commission were not accepted by both parties, submission of the question to the League of Nations. Gaus regarded this redrafting as a return to the German system of arbitration treaties in which the conciliation procedure had no binding force. The provision for submission of the dispute to the Council did not, he believed, involve any fresh obligation for Germany.

As for the guarantee, Gaus claimed that the provision for action in advance of a Council decision would operate one-sidedly, since it required all the parties other than the attacker and the victim to agree and Belgium was unlikely to pronounce against France. The other jurists first described this objection as unjustified but next day, to Gaus's surprise, accepted that each guarantor should act alone if it agreed that a flagrant violation had taken place. Hurst's report on the conference suggests that the reason for the change was the new possibility that Italy would take part in the pact, which made it desirable that Britain should be able to act without needing Italian agreement. Gaus now regarded the placing of the responsibility on the individual guarantor as preferable to a search for some objective test of the conditions for the operation of the guarantee.

No agreement, however, was reached on the clause about the guarantees for the eastern arbitration treaties. Gaus set out the German objections and said that he did not think that any German Government could sign an agreement which recognised such a guarantee. Fromageot explained that arbitration treaties with the eastern neighbours were part of the original German proposals, and he did not

think it would be possible to induce Poland to sign such a treaty with Germany unless it were guaranteed by France. It was as much in Germany's interest as in France's that disputes with Poland should be settled amicably. Hurst explained that he believed that Chamberlain had accepted the idea of a French guarantee because the Franco-Polish alliance existed and France was bound to fulfil her obligations to Poland. There was always a risk that Poland, feeling that France was bound to support her, might take some unwise action and precipitate a conflict with Germany. If Poland attacked Germany, France would be in a difficult position if the alliance obliged her to support Poland while her membership of the League obliged her to support Germany. The proposed guarantee would not merely diminish the risk of armed conflict but would bring the existing treaty arrangements more into harmony with the League and would enable France to exercise a moderating influence on Poland. Gaus, however, continued to maintain that either the guarantee added nothing to the Covenant, in which case it was superfluous, or it gave France a special right in relation to Germany, in which case it was impossible. When Hurst asked whether Germany might prefer to sign an express renunciation of warlike measures in respect of Poland too, Gaus replied that Germany saw no reason to go beyond the arbitration treaty and the provisions of the Covenant.

Hurst at the end of the meeting thought it unlikely, despite his and Fromageot's explanations, that the German Government would accept the mention of a French guarantee; but he privately considered that another scheme might satisfy Poland and achieve the French object. This was that France should by herself give Poland a guarantee of the arbitration treaty, in a separate instrument which would be

communicated to the League. France would then be able to take action against Germany if she attacked Poland in breach of the arbitration treaty, because such an attack would bring Article 16 into play and hence France would not be violating the security pact.(114)

At Geneva on 9 September Chamberlain discussed the results of the jurists' meeting with Briand, Vandervelde, and Scialoja, and they agreed that it was generally satisfactory. It was decided to ask Mussolini where in Switzerland he would go, and then to ask the Germans to a meeting. It was recognised that the eastern frontiers of Germany formed the great obstacle. Briand said that the possibility of war in the east must be excluded, but a way out might be found by putting the eastern arbitration treaties under the guarantee of the League, with France in some way acting as its agent. He said that Skrzyński had not been altogether unfavourable to the idea, and Vandervelde said that Beneš would certainly agree. The question of how Poland and Czechoslovakia were to be brought into the meeting was then discussed. Chamberlain suggested that it should

114. Report by Hurst on the jurists' meeting, 4 Sep. 1925; note by Hurst, 5 Sep., C 11425, 11455/459/18, FO 371/10739. The terms of the report were agreed between the participants and copies of it (but not of Hurst's note) were given to them for communication to their Governments. Hurst's explanation of Chamberlain's views on the guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties was warmly welcomed by Fromageot, but it was deleted from the report because Fromageot did not want it to appear in a joint document to be communicated to the Belgian and Italian Governments. The other jurists were of course free to report Hurst's words, and Gaus and Rolin at all events did so. Gaus's report (4509/E128045-67) is printed in Locarno-Konferenze, No. 20; Rolin's in D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 104. The text of the treaty as amended is in the Appendix.

start with the western pact and that then the Polish and Czechoslovak representatives could be invited to join them. Briand and Vandervelde agreed.(115)

Chamberlain also saw Skrzynski and Beneš at Geneva. Both were concerned that the western pact should not be concluded before the eastern questions were settled. Beneš emphasised the differences between the positions of Poland and Czechoslovakia and the very limited extent to which he would do anything to help the Poles. Skrzynski said that he would be satisfied if German conversations with Poland began at the same time and in the same place as the conversations with the Western powers.(116) Before leaving for Geneva Skrzynki had told the British Minister in Warsaw that Poland would not stand in the way of the western pact, but it must not contain anything that could be interpreted as weakening Poland's right to her present territory. He was gloomy about the prospects for an arbitration treaty with Germany, and said that he really believed that Germany had a fixed anti-Polish policy whereas Poland was anxious to live on correct terms. Max Muller asked what the British could do, and Skrzynski replied that nothing would contribute more than a categorical statement in Berlin that in the present negotiations the

115. Memorandum by Chamberlain, 9 Sep. 1925, C 11670/459/18, FO 371/10739. Beneš told the German Consul-General at Geneva on 19 September that he would agree to any formula on the guarantee that would make it supportable for Germany so long as its content were not destroyed: 4509/E128079-81.

116. Memoranda by Chamberlain, 11 and 12 Sep. 1925, C 11813, 11814/459/18, FO 371/10740.

British Government did not contemplate the possibility of a modification of Poland's frontiers. Replying to Max Muller's report the Foreign Office said that it would not be possible to state that the British Government did not contemplate the possibility of frontier revision even by peaceful means, although they thought that a German appeal to Article 19 of the Covenant would be unwise and they had done their best to discourage the idea.(117)

The invitations to the German Government to take part in a meeting of ministers were delivered in Berlin on 15 September.(118) Before the conference met there were two agitations. The first was over the eastern arbitration treaties: at a press conference on 18 September Stresemann said that neither Poland nor Czechoslovakia had approached Germany about a treaty, a statement which so far as Czechoslovakia was concerned was untrue. Beneš promptly instructed the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin to inform the German Government on Sunday, 20 September, that his Government were ready to open negotiations. Beneš did not inform the Poles; they were upset; and Skrzynski told Max Muller that he would take no steps in Berlin until he heard from the Western Governments. He was again taken aback when Max Muller told him that the Foreign Office did not at all wish to deter him from taking similar action. Skrzynski said that his

117. Warsaw tel. 82, 26 Aug. 1925; Warsaw desp. 398, 26 Aug.; desp. 709 to Warsaw, 12 Sep., C 11103, 11210/459/18, FO 371/10739.

118. Tels. 180, 181 to Berlin, 12 Sep. 1925, C 11673/459/18, FO 371/10739; Berlin tel. 335, 15 Sep., C 11848/459/18, FO 371/10740; memorandum by Stresemann, 15 Sep.; memorandum by Schubert, 17 Sep., 3123/D644503-04, D644520-21.

idea had been that it would be for the French at the conference to suggest to the Germans the advisability of getting into touch with him.(119) The Germans were ready to take up the Czechoslovak approach in order to prevent Polish and Czechoslovak participation in the conference - an aim in which D'Abernon was ready to encourage them - or at least to separate the two countries. But although Beneš was willing and indeed perhaps anxious to get better terms for his country than, he knew, Germany would be willing to give Poland, he certainly did not wish to negotiate with Germany entirely on his own. So apart from an inconclusive discussion with the German Minister in Prague about possible terms nothing happened before the meeting at Locarno.(120)

The second upset was over the decision of the German Government, on the insistence of Hindenburg and the Nationalist ministers, to accompany their acceptance of the invitation to the conference by a statement on war guilt and the evacuation of the Cologne zone. Forecasts that conditions would be attached to the acceptance appeared in the press on 22 September and provoked an enquiry from the Foreign Office to D'Abernon.(121) D'Abernon had already told

119. Berlin tel. 337, 21 Sep. 1925; Warsaw tel. 93, 23 Sep.; tel. 57 to Warsaw, 25 Sep.; Warsaw tel. 100, 28 Sep., C 12063, 12148, 12339/459/18, FO 371/10740; memorandum by Schubert, 20 Sep., 4509/E128090-94; Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, pp. 356-8.

120. Memorandum by Schubert, 21 Sep. 1925, 4509/E128100-07; memorandum by Stresemann, 25 Sep., 3123/D644658-61; memoranda by Schubert, 30 Sep. and 1 Oct.; Koch desp., 2 Oct, 4509/E128413-15, E128422-24, E128443-45; memorandum by Hoetzsch, 8 Oct., 4582/E176486-90; Warsaw tel. 101, 30 Sep., C 12427/459/18, FO 371/10741; tel 18 to Prague; Prague tel 34, 3 Oct., FO 840/1/2. During the summer Beneš had tried to arrange a meeting with Stresemann, but without success: L417/L120587-89, L120610; 3086/D617810-11, D617813-15; 4509/E127107-08.

121. Tel. 185 to Berlin, 22 Sep. 1925, C 11950/459/18, FO 371/10740.

Stresemann that the only sensible answer to the invitation was an unconditional acceptance. His report of the conversation, although more optimistic than was really warranted, said that Stresemann hoped to be able to get authority for an unconditional acceptance accompanied by a verbal statement. There was thought to be insufficient time for an attempt to prevent this proposal from being carried out; but D'Abernon was told to leave Stresemann in no doubt that it was considered ill timed and most unfortunate.(122)

The German declaration was delivered, with the acceptance of the invitation to the meeting, in London, Paris, Brussels and Rome on 26 September. It stated that the eventual entry of Germany into the League was not to be understood as a recognition of the allegation of responsibility for the war made in the Treaty of Versailles; and that the object of the pact would not be achieved if the Cologne zone were not evacuated before the conclusion of the pact and Germany's entry into the League.(123) The Germans hoped that the Allies would

122. Berlin tels. 338, 339, 340, 23 Sep. 1925; tel. 187 to Berlin, 24 Sep.; Nicolson to D'Abernon, 25 Sep., C 12109, 12110, 12111/459/18, FO 371/10740; memorandum by D'Abernon, 22 Sep., D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48929; memorandum by Stresemann, 22 Sep., 3123/D644614-15, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 177-8; minutes by Schubert, 25 Sep., 4509/E128193-97. For the difficulties with the D.N.V.P. and the German Cabinet decision see Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 178-80; Stockhausen, Sechs Jahre Reichskanzlei, pp. 175-6; notes of Cabinet meeting, 24 Sep., 3242/D713885-97.

123. Desp. 1726 to Berlin, 26 Sep. 1925; German note, 26 Sep.; German declaration, 26 Sep., C 12224, 12225, 12226/459/18, FO 371/10740; 3123/D644624-29, D644635-41, D644642-43; Locarno-Konferenz, Nos. 21-2; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 107.

refrain from answering the declaration or at most would issue an innocuous communiqué. But although Briand and Chamberlain were agreed that the episode should not be allowed to upset the meeting they felt bound to reply; and since the Germans felt bound to publish their declaration the Allied replies were published as well.(124) The British answer was cold. It noted with pleasure that the acceptance of the invitation was unconditional, but said that the questions raised in the declaration were new and had nothing to do with the security pact. The British Government were obliged to observe that the pact could not alter the Treaty of Versailles nor their judgment of the past; and the evacuation of the Cologne zone depended entirely on Germany fulfilling her disarmament obligations. The French reply was similar but shorter; the Belgian Government referred to Bethmann-Hollweg's declaration in the Reichstag on 4 August 1914; the Italian reply made no comment.(125) The incident was of the kind that was most apt to annoy Chamberlain, and he wrote angrily to D'Abernon: "Your Germans - I use the possessive pronoun as one says to one's wife: your housemaid - are very nearly intolerable. From first to last very nearly every obstacle to the Pact negotiations has come from them. Briand has almost taken my breath away by

124. Desp. 3212 to Paris, 26 Sep. 1925; Paris tels. 327, 329, 28 Sep.; minutes by Wellesley, 28 and 29 Sep.; note from French Embassy, 29 Sep.; C11227, 12299, 12300, 12335, 12343, 12344/459/18, FO 371/10740; German documents, 3123/D644656-57, D644717-19, D644742-44; 4509/E128244-54, E128256-57, E128326-28, E128332-33, E128353-59, E128374-75, E128381-83.

125. Paris tel. 330; tel. 269 to Paris, 29 Sep. 1925, C 12345/459/18, FO 371/10740; German documents, 4509/E128378-79, E128387, E128389, E128393; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 108.

his liberality, his conciliatoriness, his strong and manifest desire to promote peace. The German attitude has been just the contrary - niggling, provocative, crooked.... I have chosen my path within the limits set to me by forces beyond my control. God forgive me if I have allowed myself to be duped by the Germans, but either Stresemann is crooked and a coward, or the value of any Pact which may be made is for the present singularly discounted by the opposition which he meets".(126)

By the eve of his departure for Locarno Chamberlain's wrath had subsided. He now thought that the incident might even have done some good as it had demonstrated Allied solidarity and had cut little ice in Germany. Chamberlain had suggested to Baldwin that another Minister should accompany him to the meeting, but the Prime Minister said that this was unnecessary as the Cabinet had full confidence in him. Chamberlain therefore set out his views in a memorandum for the Cabinet. He approached the conference, he wrote, in a spirit of sober hopefulness. The French would do all that they could to make the negotiations succeed. The Belgians too would be liberal; and the jurists' conversations had shown that the western pact was not likely to be difficult although the Germans might cause unexpected difficulties. The eastern frontier was much more difficult, and even with good will it might not be easy to find a solution. Briand's attitude was all that could be desired: he was bound to respect France's obligations to Poland and Czechoslovakia, but ever since the jurists' meeting he

126. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 30 Sep. 1925, Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/297, D'Abernon Papers, BM Add. MS 48929.

had been seeking a solution that Germany might accept, including a guarantee by the League and putting the French army as it were at the disposal of the League to support it. The case of Czechoslovakia was not expected to be difficult but that of Poland was very different, and there were signs that the Germans were trying to escape from their assurance that they did not wish to alter the frontier by force.

Chamberlain wrote that he might not be involved in the eastern negotiations at all, and that he would strictly maintain the British refusal to undertake new obligations in respect of the eastern frontiers. But it would be a mistake to suppose that Britain was indifferent to what went on there. Her one great interest was peace; and although the western pact would greatly strengthen the prospects of peace in Europe, full security could not be obtained without corresponding arrangements for the east. "It is not right that we should accept any obligations in advance in respect of a war originating in Eastern Europe, but it does not follow that we ought to be or can be indifferent to the possibilities of such a conflict, for it might easily raise issues and assume dimensions which would compel the Government of the day, free though it were from treaty obligations, to take part". Chamberlain therefore thought that he must take an interest in the eastern negotiations and perhaps use his influence to ensure their success. Furthermore it would be a mistake to go too far with the western negotiations until the eastern situation had developed, lest a firm bargain with Germany in the west reduce the chances of an eastern settlement.(127)

127. Memorandum by Chamberlain, 2 Oct. 1925, C12491/459/18, FO 371/10741.

The position of the German Government on the eve of the conference was not such as to encourage unsober hopefulness. Guidelines laid down for the delegates stated that the basis of the Government's policy remained the note of 20 July; the wording of the western pact must not imply any renunciation of German territory; a French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties must be refused; the objections to Article 16 must be met; before Germany could enter the League the problem of general disarmament must be tackled seriously; and before the pact was concluded the Cologne zone must be evacuated and the question of disarmament (including the right of investigation and the air question) must be cleared up; and the occupation régime in the Rhineland revised; and efforts must be made to secure a curtailment of the occupation of the second and third zones.(128) In accordance with this policy the Chancellor, who was going to the meeting as well as Stresemann, held forth to D'Abernon on the questions that would need to be settled in Germany's favour if the Reichstag were to approve the pact, and on his doubts whether the pact would improve the position sufficiently to bring about the removal of Germany's grievances. D'Abernon was left with the impression that Luther would be more difficult at Locarno than the representatives of the Auswärtiges Amt.(129)

128. Undated memorandum, 3123/D645128-29; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 24.

129. Berlin tel. 357, 2 Oct. 1925, C 12490/459/18, FO 371/10741.

The Russian Factor

It is not the intention to examine in this section the whole question of German-Soviet relations in 1924-25 in connexion with Germany's entry into the League of Nations and the western security pact. To do so in detail would be to move too far from the central theme of British policy. The object rather is to consider the importance of the Soviet Union in the British policy leading towards the western pact, with only a summary account of German-Soviet negotiations.(130)

In December 1924 the Russians raised with the German Embassy the possibilities of an agreement on Poland, and an agreement that the two countries would not enter with third parties into any understanding or alliance directed against the other and would concert their action on joining the League. Although the then State Secretary, Maltzan, was ready to take up discussion of an agreement on Poland and wrote to Brockdorff-Rantzau, the Amabssador in Moscow, about forcing Poland back to her ethnic frontiers, the German attitude to the larger proposal was cautious and no answer on it had been given by the time that the security proposals were made to the Western powers.(131)

130. The literature on German-Soviet relations in the 1920's is large, and the most important works are listed in the bibliography. The specific problem of the interaction for Germany between eastern and western policy is dealt with by Eleonore Breuning in her unpublished Oxford D.Phil. thesis, "Germany's policy between East and West", 1965; also by Spenz, Die diplomatische Vorgeschichte des Beitritts Deutschlands zum Völkerbund, and Martin Walsdorff, Westorientierung und Ostpolitik, Stresemanns Russlandpolitik in der Locarno-Ära, Bremen 1971.

131. Correspondence with Rantzau, 3-29 Dec. 1924, 4562/E154862-65, E154874-76, E154921-30, E124907-09. On 29 September 1925 (see

The Soviet desire for a new political agreement with Germany appears to have been prompted by the prospect of improved German relations with the West after the London Conference of August 1924 and especially by the prospect of Germany's entry into the League which became actual from September 1924.(132) A further cause for Soviet concern was the failure of the treaty negotiations with Britain with the fall of the Labour Government in October. At the same time there was, with the French de jure recognition of the Soviet Union, a prospect of a Franco-Soviet rapprochement and even some chance of improved relations with Poland.(133)

The news of the security proposals for the west caused alarm both to the Russians and to Brockdorff-Rantzau who, although sceptical of the possibility of close collaboration and opposed to any far-reaching treaty commitment to the Soviet Union, was also violently

131. Cont'd. (p. 167)
Stresemann professed to Chicherin ignorance of Rantzau's remarks about Poland. Although the State Secretaries, first Maltzan and then Schubert, were in charge of the correspondence with Moscow Stresemann would hardly have failed to consult it before sending instructions to Rantzau on the security proposals in March. It seems rather that although the question of Poland was raised by a Soviet official, Kopp, it was readily taken up by Maltzan; but that his instructions resulted in Rantzau making statements to Chicherin which did not fit the policy which Stresemann was trying to develop. G. Freund is wrong in stating (Unholy Alliance, p. 218) that the initiative for the alliance proposal came from the German side: he is corrected on this point by later writers.

132. Correspondence with Moscow Embassy, 13 Sep. - 19 Nov. 1924, K281/K096775-79; L1837/L531420-22, L531437; 2860/D554498-500, D554551-52.

133. Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki S.S.S.R., Vol. VII, No. 287. Rantzau was particulary worried about the possibility of a Franco-Soviet understanding: 2860/D554551-52, D554724-26; 4556/E148639-42, E148535-37.

opposed to any commitment to the west since he believed that it would subject Germany to Western hegemony. Brockdorff-Rantzau was not convinced by Stresemann's arguments that the negotiations with the Western powers need not prevent the development of German-Soviet relations since Germany had no intention of guaranteeing or recognising her frontier with Poland, and since entry into the League, if accepted at all, would only take place on conditions that would allow Germany to reamin neutral in a conflict between the League and the Soviet Union and would enable her to frustrate League action.(134) Enjoying as he did a position of unusual independence of the Auswärtiges Amt, Brockdorff-Rantzau virtually declined to pursue with the Soviet Government the discussions, which Stresemann wanted, of the effects of German entry into the League, and he returned to Berlin in the middle of April.(135) Here he remained until the end of June warning, as Addison reported to the Foreign Office, against subservience to the west but unable to suggest any alternative policy that would secure Stresemann's aims.(136)

Negotiations with the Russians continued, however, in Berlin. After another attempt to convince them that the conclusion of a

134. Rantzau to Schubert, 25 Feb. and 8 Mar. 1925, 4562/E155004-09, E155020-28; Stresemann to Rantzau, 6 Mar., 2860/D554907-10; memorandum by Stresemann, 10 Mar., 2860/D554919-21, extract in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 512-13; Rantzau tels., 11 and 13 Mar., 3123/D642617-19, D642639-42; Stresemann to Rantzau, 19 Mar., 3123/D642742-62, Locarno-Konferenz, No. 9.

135. Correspondence, 25 Mar.-9 Apr. 1925, 4509/E125656-61; 2860/D555002-05, D555070-73, D555047-50, D555057-59, D555077; 3123/D642935-41.

136. Memoranda by Rantzau, 13 Apr. and 8 Jun. 1925, 2860/D555109-13; 4562/E155343-48; Addison to Lampson, 26 Jun., C 8804/459/18, FO 371/10735.

security pact would not lead to a reorientation of German policy, that Germany would not enter the League unconditionally, and that the chances of her being compelled, as a member of the League, to act against the Soviet Union were remote, produced merely a repetition of the Soviet viewpoint,(137) the German Government decided to offer a preamble to be attached to the trade treaty then under negotiation in Moscow. This would pledge the two Governments to friendly political and economic collaboration in the spirit of Rapallo, and would be supplemented by a verbal declaration that even if Germany did not secure formal release from the obligations of Article 16 she would maintain her standpoint on it and would conduct herself on those lines as a member of the League. Brockdorff-Rantzau took the preamable back to Moscow, and he was accompained by Dirksen of the Eastern Department ~~of the Eastern Department~~ of the Auswärtiges Amt.(138) Although the Russians did not accept the preamble and repeated their own previous suggestions, the German offer seems to have served the purpose of preventing a real crisis

137. Memorandum by Stresemann, 15 Apr. 1925, 3123/D645992-97, extract in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 513-14; Gaus-Bülow memorandaum on Art. 16, 17 Apr., 6698/H108117-26; memorandum by Schubert, 25 Apr., 4562/E155223-48; memorandum by Stresemann, 25 Apr., 2860/D555130-36, extracts in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 514-15; tel. to Hey (Moscow), 23 May, 2860/D555196-200; Hey tel., 29 May, 2860/D555233-35; memorandum by Schubert, 2 Jun., 4562/E155328-42; memorandum by Stresemann, 13 Jun., 2860/D555257-67, extracts in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 516-18; memorandum by Schubert, 13 Jun., 4562/E155369-73.

138. Correspondence and memoranda, 23 May-26 Jun. 1925, 6698/H108183-85; 4562/E155360-65, E155413-20; 2860/D555303-08, D555311-14, D555339; Cabinet meetings, 24 and 25 Jun., 3242/D713846-49; 2860/D555332-38.

of confidence. At the end of August it was agreed not to hold up the trade treaty for the political negotiations, and the Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Litvinov, stated that the Soviet Government were willing to continue the latter even if Germany had to join the League.(139)

The Foreign Office and the French were well aware that anxiety about relations with the Soviet Union was a major ground of the German objections to joining the League; but they did not know of the German-Soviet negotiations and appear not to have fully understood the way in which the problem presented itself to the Germans. Schubert mentioned anxiety about the Soviet Union in his memorandum for D'Abernon at the end of February, and Luther, Stresemann, and Schubert all stressed it to D'Abernon in the first ten days of March.(140) Some attempts were made to counter the argument. On 15 May Chamberlain, while acknowledging that Germany must have regard to her relations with the Soviet Union, maintained to Sthamer that Soviet opposition to German entry into the League was intended to keep Germany weak.

139. Negotiations were held up by Soviet attempts to implicate a member of the German Embassy staff in the trial for espionage of the two German students in July, but there was no breach. It is clear that Stresemann on the one hand was anxious not to let the Russians go and on the other hand did not want to sign a political agreement before the conclusion of the western pact. Correspondence and memoranda, 29 Jun.-29 Aug. 1925, 2860/D555357-60, D555393-95, D555415-19, D555461-65, D555484-85, D555494-97, D555656-62, D555683-89, D555699-703, D555743-48; 4562/E155522-25, E155573-75, E155723-27, E155839; 4556/E149230-38, E149239-43.

140. See above, pp. 370-1.

He also said that he was not following an anti-Soviet policy and even if he were it would be a mistake to try to use the League for the purpose; but he did not think that Germany had anything to gain from the Soviet Union.(141) Stresemann's suggestions to D'Abernon that if her relations with the Soviet Union were to be upset by entry into the League Germany must be given something extra, were contested by Addison, who told Schubert that the Russians generally bluffed and the Germans should not be taken in. Schubert replied that an Englishman could say this, but for Germany in her "catastrophic geographical position" the danger was much greater.(142) To Schubert and Stresemann at the end of June D'Abernon described Soviet assertions that Britain was trying to get Germany into an anti-Bolshevik coalition as nonsense; but he agreed that Germany could not risk Soviet hostility and he reported to the Foreign Office that many German politicians were wondering whether it was wise for their country to break the Russian connexion.(143)

Under the new Conservative Government Anglo-Soviet relations

141. Desp. 902 to Berlin, 15 May 1925, C 6652/459/18, FO 371/10731; Sthamer tel., 15 May, 4509/E126279-83. Early in April, when the question of the League and relations with the Soviet Union was acute, Schubert asked Hoesch and Sthamer for their opinion on the whole problem. Sthamer advised that if it came to a choice, giving up relations with Russia would be more harmful than losing the western negotiations. Hoesch on the contrary believed that securing the practical aims in the west was more important than the remote prospect of using a Russo-Polish conflict to achieve German aims in the east, and that on general grounds Germany would gain by joining the League: 4562/E155163-66; 3123/D645960-68, D645979-86.

142. See above, p. 389; memorandum by Schubert, 18 Jun., 1925, 4509/E126720-21.

143. Berlin tels. 244, 245, 28 and 29 Jun. 1925, C 8699, 8770/459/18, FO 371/10735; memorandum by Schubert, 27 Jun., 4509/E126878-87; memorandum by Stresemann, 28 Jun., 3123/D643748-54.

deteriorated. Although there was, and is, no evidence that they intended to pursue an anti-Soviet policy to the extent of organising a new crusade, the fear of the Soviet leaders that they would do so seems to have been genuine, at least initially. Later in 1925 the fear of attack diminished to a fear of isolation or boycott, but uneasiness was kept alive by the frequent anti-Soviet utterances of certain members of the Government, notably Birkenhead and Joynson-Hicks, and by the publication in some American newspapers of Nicolson's memorandum of 19 February.(144) On 19 March Chicherin gave Brockdorff-Rantzau a copy of a memorandum purporting to be one addressed by Chamberlain to the French Government on 7 March, advocating political treaties binding a number of states to mutual defence, non-aggression and prevention of revolution, and including Germany to forestall a German-Soviet alliance; and promising precise proposals in the near future. The document is obviously a fabrication, and is an extremely amateurish production. In addition to the inherent implausibility of crediting the British Government with plans for a large-scale allaince at the moment when they were about to reject the Geneva Protocol, the memorandum does not even mention the Protocol as a genuine document of this date obviously would have done; and some of the terminology (for example "national chauvinists") would never have been used by British civil servants or politicians. The Auswärtiges Amt regarded the document as spurious on internal evidence alone.(145)

144. See p. 321, n. 53.

145. Brockdorff-Rantzau desp., 21 Mar. 1925, 4562/E155106-13. A. Anderle, Die deutsche Rapallo-Politik, [East] Berlin 1962, pp. 118-120, treats the memorandum as genuine.

The Russians were also worried by Chamberlain's refusal to contemplate new Anglo-Soviet negotiations. On 6 January the Soviet representative in London, Rakovsky, asked Chamberlain to explain a comment which he had made in the House of Commons, that normal relations with any government required that it should observe the normal rules of friendly conduct. Chamberlain replied that he did not intend to argue about the Zinoviev letter, which the Government were convinced was genuine: what he meant was that normal relations were not possible if one of the countries concerned, by its own organs or by means of a body such as the Comintern, interfered in the domestic affairs of the other or campaigned against its interests in third countries.(146) In April and again in July Rakovsky suggested general discussions to explore what agreements could be substituted for the abandoned treaties of 1924. On both occasions Chamberlain, although carefully polite, was unforthcoming: he said that he saw little use in discussions so long as the political conditions in the trade agreement of 1921 were not being fulfilled.(147)

However, Chamberlain had no desire to break off relations with the Soviet Union and he had no great difficulty for the present in persuading the Cabinet to his view. When at the end of February the British representative in Moscow, R.M. Hodgson, reported that Chicherin was unable to shake off the idea that Chamberlain was instigating an anti-Soviet coalition, Chamberlain replied that the Government had

146. Desp. 17 to Moscow, 6 Jan. 1925, N 102/102/38, FO 371/11015.

147. Desp., 249 to Moscow, 1 Apr. 1925, N 1852/102/38, FO 371/11015; desp. 690 to Moscow, 13 Jul., N 4021/102/38, FO 371/11016.

not departed from an attitude of strict correctness: they had neither undertaken nor lent countenance to any such combination, nor did they intend to do so.(148) On 20 May Chicherin told another member of the British mission that he wanted to conclude an arrangement which would lead to a diminution of British unfriendliness to the Soviet Union all over the world. Peters commented to the Foreign Office that the desire for an arrangement seemed to be genuine, and was due to pressure of circumstances, disappointment over trade, and above all a dislike of being ignored.(149) After the League Council meeting in June Chamberlain circulated a record of a conversation with the Estonian General Laidoner, who had said that the Russians were afraid of everyone, but chiefly of Britain because she was doing without them. Chamberlain commented that this confirmed his belief that it would be a mistake to provoke a controversy with the Soviet Government or denounce their behaviour: it was much better to ignore them. The Cabinet on 8 July approved the policy of maintaining relations, and Chamberlain appealed to his colleagues to remember this when making their speeches.(150)

148. Moscow desp. 123, 26 Feb. 1925; desp. 229 to Moscow, 30 Mar., N 1314/102/38, FO 371/11015.

149. Moscow desp. 347, 22 May 1925, N 3153/102/38, FO 371/11016. Reports reaching the German Government in May of Anglo-Franco-American discussion of a plan of intervention against the Soviet Union led Schubert to make enquiries of the German Embassies in London, Paris and Washington. All three dismissed the reports as invention: one particularly improbable feature, as Hoesch pointed out, was the suggestion that the United States Government, who were said to be the moving spirits of the plan, had offered to take over the Russian debt to France and cancel the French debt to the United States: 4562/E155288-89, E155297-98, E155306; 2860/D555211.

150. Memorandum by Chamberlain, 10 Jun. 1925, N 3432/102/38, FO 371/11016; C. 36(25), CAB 23/50.

Later in July Chamberlain evidently felt it necessary to spread the responsibility for his advice to the Cabinet. He wrote to Baldwin that the constant flow of information about hostile Soviet activity, especially in the east, made it difficult to maintain the attitude that he had recommended. His reasons for not wishing to push things to a breach were the possible repercussions in China, where a breach would help the Russians to pose as the champions of the Chinese against the West, the reactions in Germany, where opponents of the security pact described it as a British plot to cause a breach between Germany and the Soviet Union, and the likely reactions at home. Chamberlain still thought these reasons sufficient, but he asked Baldwin to appoint a Cabinet committee to look at the information that was too secret to be circulated. Balfour and Cecil met Chamberlain for the purpose on 30 July, and they agreed that the existing policy should be continued. A week later the Cabinet confirmed that there was no occasion at present to change their policy towards the Soviet Union.(151)

One area of possible anti-Soviet collaboration with other countries, the exchange of information about Communist activities, was deliberately avoided in 1925. The Soviet press claimed that Chamberlain's visits to Paris and Rome in December 1924 had the object of starting a campaign against the Soviet Union. In fact the subject of the Soviet Union was barely mentioned between Chamberlain and Herriot, and not at all in Rome. But the two Ministers contemplated exchanging information, although not concerting action about Communist activites.(152)

151. Chamberlain to Baldwin, 24 Jul. 1925; note by Chamberlain, 30 Jul., Chamberlain Papers, AC 52/18; C. 43(25), CAB 23/50.

152. Note by Herriot, 5 Dec. 1924, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 71; note by Laroche, 13 Dec., Vol. 57, minute by Tyrell, 18 Dec. 1924, N937/108/38, FO 371/10480. See pp. 295, n.29, and 447.

Nothing appears to have been done, however, and when in the summer the Portuguese Government suggested co-operation in combating Communism the Foreign Office and the Home Office agreed that, while there was no objection to ordinary police collaboration over known criminals, it was particularly desirable at present, in view of the allegation that Britain was engaged in creating an anti-Soviet bloc, not to depart from the practice of deprecating arrangements with foreign Governments about Communist activities. Again at the end of the year, when a similar enquiry came from the Swiss Government, the Foreign Office replied: "We are anxious to avoid being involved in anything which could be regarded as a concerted anti-Bolshevik movement or as tending to the organisation of or participation in an anti-Bolshevik bloc".(153)

Although the Foreign Office rejected a suggestion from Hodgson that they should issue a formal denial of the story of an anti-Soviet coalition, on the ground that a denial would not convince the Russians and would only lend importance to the story, Max Muller was instructed in August to give a denial to Skrzynski since the Poles appeared to believe the tale.(154) Skrzynski said that while he had never believed in

153. N3600, 4225/29/38, FO 371/11010; N 5536, 6173, 6282, 6390, 7081/29/38, FO 371/11011.

154. Moscow tel. 291. 7 Aug. 1925; tel. 244 to Moscow, 12 Aug.; Chamberlain to Max Muller, 12 Aug., N 4519, 5059/102/38, FO 371/11016. At the same time, in answer to another enquiry from Berlin, Dufour reported his conviction that the British Government did not want a war with the Soviet Union, and that even if they did they would be unable to conduct one for reasons of finance and of public opinion: 4562/E155742-44.

the bloc story he thought that the Russians had really done so until recently. But he found it hard to believe that the British Government would not think it in their interest to detach Germany from the Soviet Union.(155)

How large a factor in British policy on the security pact a desire to detach Germany from the Soviet Union may be said to have been is not easy to determine. A good deal depends on the degree of detachment envisaged. One consideration in taking up a policy of mutual security in western Europe was certainly a desire to convince Germany that she had more to gain from friendly relations with the west than from a commitment to the Soviet Union. It is much less certain whether it was thought that Germany would have to choose between east and west, or whether it was expected that she would continue to tread the narrow path between the two. On the one hand one has assurances to the Germans that Britain understood the necessity for Germany to have regard to her relations with the Soviet Union and did not wish to promote a breach. On the other hand one has words like those of Chamberlain to the Polish Minister in London about "the European Powers on the one hand and the Soviet Government on the other fighting for the soul of the German people".(156) Perhaps the best answer is that provided Germany were not thrown into the arms of Russia the question in British eyes did not present itself as one

155. Max Muller to Chamberlain, 25 Aug. 1925, N 5059/102/38, FO 371/11016.

156. Desp. 540 to Warsaw, 7 Jul. 1925, C 9132/459/18, FO 371/10735. An argument addressed to the Poles on such a subject was, however, always a special one.

of a hard and fast choice. It was probably assumed and hoped that for Germany better political relations with the west and return to the European political community would lead to a weakening of political ties with the east. The importance to Germany of economic ties with the Soviet Union was certainly acknowledged and there was no suggestion that they should be cut off; but despite the disappointing experience of Anglo-Soviet trade since 1921 the intimate connexion, in Soviet and German eyes, between economic and political relations was probably not appreciated in Britain.(157)

The French too may be said to have wished to detach Germany from the Soviet Union to some extent; but in French policy there was a second element not paralleled on the British side, that of detaching the Soviet Union from Germany. In this respect there was not much difference between Herriot and Briand. When Chamberlain visited Paris in December 1924 Herriot told him that one of his reasons for recognising the Soviet Government a couple of months earlier and sending an ambassador to Moscow was the fear lest, left to herself, the Soviet Union should combine with Germany.(158) Briand could talk

157. A discussion of the very different parts played by economic policy in the foreign policy of Britain and of Germany falls outside the scope of this study. As far as German-Soviet relations are concerned, the economic aspect is discussed much more fully by Dr. Breuning than by Spenz or Walsdorff. As regards German-Polish relations, see Harald von Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations 1918-1933, Baltimore 1971, Chs III, VI, VII, and below, pp.

158. Record of conversation, 5 Dec. 1924, N 9223/44/38, FO 371/10747.

to Phipps about detaching Germany from Russia as a very worthy object, and to Hoesch about the perils of Bolshevism;(159) but at the same time he could suggest political consultations to the Russians. The motive here was, as the French Ambassador said to Chicherin, that "the French Government were greatly interested in the establishment of lasting peaceful relations between [the Soviet Union] and Poland", and as he wrote to Herriot, "il n'y a pas de salut pour nous que si nous arrivons à entretenir, avec la Russie qui renaît actuellement, des relations qui excluront une co-operation russo-allemande contre la France et contre les amis de la France".(160)

Chicherin's visits to Warsaw and Berlin on the eve of the Locarno meeting caused little concern to the British and French. They did not seriously fear that his final efforts to deter Germany from the western pact would succeed, and they used the occasion for some exhortation to the Poles and for some contact with Chicherin himself. Skrzynski told Max Muller that he found Chicherin absolutely convinced that the British Government were working to create a common front against the Soviet Union. Max Muller therefore, meeting Chicherin at a reception in Warsaw, told him that the common front was pure invention, and that even if the British Government wanted to embark on so hazardous a venture they had too many other pre-occupations to do so. Chicherin asked why then Chamberlain had twice

159. Paris tel. 261, 28 Jul. 1925, C 9994/459/18, FO 371/10737; Hoesch tel., 6 Aug., 4509/E127540-44.

160 Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki S.S.S.R., Vol. VIII, n. 128 and No. 272; Herriot, Jadis, Vol. II, pp. 240-1.

turned down overtures for conversations. Max Muller replied that so soon after the failure of the last negotiations he thought that it was pointless to expect a new treaty on the same lines, and that no negotiations were preferable to another breakdown. He also said that he hoped the improvement in Polish-Soviet relations would be permanent.(161)

Further information about Chicherin's visit to Warsaw came from Briand and Skrzynski at Locarno. Briand told Chamberlain that the Poles had consulted him about the visit and that he had encouraged it, saying that Poland had every interest in being on good terms with the Soviet Union: her relations with Germany could only be bettered and the prospects for the western negotiations improved if the Germans felt that there was "no likelihood of Russia making trouble for Poland in the rear". Indeed if Poland had nothing to fear from the Soviet Union it might help to dispel the German nightmare of a French army marching across Germany to help her, "an idea which Briand observed no Frenchman contemplated".(162) Chamberlain told both Briand and Skrzynski that it was no part of Britain's policy to embroil Poland with either of her neighbours: on the contrary he would be glad to see relations improve. Skrzynski said that Chicherin's visit marked a welcome détente. He had told Chicherin that he was ready to sign a non-aggression pact at any time with any

161. Warsaw tel. 98, 28 Sep. 1925; Warsaw desp. 467, 29 Sept., N 5491, 5575/102/38, FO 371/11016.

162. Chamberlain to Tyrell, 4 Oct. 1925, N 5714/710/38, FO 371/11022.

country, but that Polish agreement with the Soviet Union must not endanger or ignore the Baltic States or Roumania.(163)

Despite Chamberlain's words to Skrzynski, it seemed that the Poles were anxious about the British attitude to a possible rapprochement with the Soviet Union. At all events such an anxiety was thought to be the reason why Skrzynski's private secretary told a member of the British delegation that his Minister would probably return Chicherin's visit. Chamberlain minuted that he felt no jealousy of conversations between Warsaw and Moscow, although not all British opinion would feel the same.(164) But at the end of the conference the Foreign Office thought it well to instruct Max Muller to make it clear to Skrzynski that they would welcome better Polish relations with Germany as well as with the Soviet Union.(165)

As for Chicherin's visit to Berlin, Schubert at his first encounter with Lampson was at pains to dispel any idea that it had altered the German Government's policy towards the western pact.

163. Locarno desp. 17, 9 Oct. 1925, C 12818/459/18, FO 371/10742; Warsaw desp. 458, 29 Sep., N 5570/1805/55, FO 371/11005. Chicherin's own account of his visit to Warsaw, Dokumenty Vneshnei Politiki S.S.S.R., Vol. VIII, No. 323, describes his talks as concerned with the desirability of a Franco-Soviet rapprochement, the possible recognition of the Polish frontier, and a non-aggression pact. The German Embassy in Moscow believed that the Poles had first suggested the visit in the spring when the western pact negotiations became known: 4509/E128483-84. In May Skrzynski dismissed as nonsense suggestions (which worried Chamberlain) that Poland might seek protection against Germany in closer relations with the Soviet Union: Warsaw desp. 256, 13 May, N 2818/1805/55, FO 371/11005. See also J. Korbel, Poland between East and West, Princeton 1963, pp. 162-6.

164. Minute by V. Cavendish-Bentinck, 11 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/7.

165. Desp. 818 to Warsaw, 16 Oct. 1925, N 5803/1805/55, FO 371/11005.

Schubert said that Chicherin had come uninvited and unwanted and that the talks with him had merely been the conclusion of discussions which had been proceeding "for a good two years, dealing with a variety of technical matters between the two countries".(166)
On 7 October Stresemann gave Chamberlain a long and ostensibly frank account of his conversations with Chicherin. He said that Chicherin had reverted to the alleged British invitation to other countries to join in an anti-Soviet bloc, and asked whether Chamberlain could tell him whether such a document existed. Chamberlain said that there was no word of truth in the story, and expounded British policy for Stresemann's benefit. There were enough grounds, he said, for a breach with the Soviet Union but he did not want one if it could be avoided. He had at no time made any proposal to any government for concerted action against the Soviet Union, but on the contrary had always encouraged her neighbours to get on to the best possible terms with her. He welcomed the recent conversations between Chicherin and Skrzynski, for the less danger there was of a quarrel between the Soviet Union and Poland the easier would be their work at Locarno. For Britain he saw no advantage in making a new agreement with the Soviet Union so long as the terms of the trade agreement were being broken: rather it was British policy to leave the Soviet Union alone until she discovered that she needed Europe more than Europe needed her.

166. Minute by Lampson, 4 Oct. 1925, C 12660/459/18, FO 371/10741.

Stresemann said that he had never believed the story of the British memorandum. Chicherin's argument, so far as Germany was concerned, had been that to conclude the pact, and still more to enter the League, was to make Germany party to an anti-Soviet combination and subordinate her policy to that of Britain. D'Abernon would become dictator of Germany and the Reichswehr British mercenaries. Stresemann said that he had tried to show Chicherin that these suspicions were unfounded, and that he had asked what evidence Chicherin had for a British plot. He had finally extracted the statement that a British bank (not the Bank of England) had advised a German bank to stop giving credits to the Soviet Union. Stresemann commented to Chamberlain on the pro-Russian attitude of the German conservatives, saying that it was a compound of the Bismarckian tradition that all was well for Germany when Russia was her friend with a new sympathy for Communist authoritarianism. But he thought that Chicherin's public propaganda had probably been a mistake.

Chicherin had also tried to frighten him, said Stresemann, with a suggestion that a Russo-Franco-Polish understanding was in process of formation; but he had replied that Chicherin must make up his mind which story he wanted to have believed. A Franco-Polish understanding with Germany could not be intended as an attack on Germany: if a French agreement with Germany were a danger to Russia, there could not at the same time be a Franco-Russian rapprochement. Stresemann then explained the agreement with the Soviet Union that was about to be signed. The negotiations, he said, had been going on for a long time, about such matters as how trade relations could be conducted between a country with an ordinary economy and one with a Governemnt monopoly of foreign trade, about tariffs and so on.

He had not wanted to postpone the whole question until after the Locarno meeting because any conditions that the German side might make afterwards would then be blamed on the pact. But the negotiations did not in any way affect the German attitude towards the conference or circumscribe his freedom of action. Chamberlain assured Stresemann that he was perfectly satisfied. Soviet policy seemed to be to approach each country in turn with offers, which were always contingent upon a loan. He did not think that much would come of them at present, but he would not be jealous of a recovery of German trade with Russia. Whenever a large trade with Russia became possible again, Germany would naturally have the largest share as she had done in the past. Britain would have a smaller share: the gain to her would be the general restoration of trade and increased German capacity to buy Empire products. "I had, I repeated, never sought to interfere with the establishment of good relations between Russia and any other country. When the Polish Minister in London, summarising something I had said to him, had spoken of my desire to 'detach' Germany from Russia, I had said that the word did not correctly represent my idea. I had no desire to detach Germany from Russia, but I had a very real desire not to throw Germany into the arms of Russia by closing to her every other opportunity of friendship or even normal relations".(167)

167. Locarno desp. 14, 8 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/5. The top copy in N 5959/265/38 has been weeded: print in FO 418/64. Stresemann's record of his conversations with Chicherin on 29 September and 2 October, 2860/D555899-910, D555911-17, short extracts in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 523-7; his record of his conversation with Chamberlain, 3147/D655659-61. Stresemann did not, naturally, tell Chamberlain of his wrangle with Chicherin

While in Berlin Chicherin saw the French Ambassador, to whom he repeated the story of Britain's anti-Soviet policy and said that he would prefer an agreement with France to an alliance with Germany. De Margerie replied that the anti-Soviet bloc story was rubbish, and in any case Anglo-French relations were of the best and he would not listen to such talk. Chamberlain, after hearing this from Briand, then took another opportunity to tell Schubert that Chicherin was falling into the fatal mistake of supposing that the establishment of good relations between any two countries was a menace to his own. In stressing the complete confidence existing between Britain and France, Chamberlain indirectly warned Schubert not to try to play one off against the other.(168) Summing up Chicherin's visit to Berlin, D'Abernon wrote that his main object had been a great campaign against Britain. But he had found the German Government not prepared to abandon the pact policy, and France also unwilling to be separated from Britain.(169)

167. Cont'd.
about the responsibility for the suggestion in December 1924 of a German-Soviet agreement on Poland, nor of their discussion on the League of Nations and the proposed preamble, the last paragraph of which meant, Stresemann said, that Germany as a member of the League would so deal with Art. 16 that a war against the Soviet Union was excluded. The German-Soviet trade agreement was signed in Moscow on 12 October. Chicherin's press interviews in Berlin are printed in J. Degras, Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, Vol. II, London 1952, pp 57-9, 60-1.

168. Locarno desp. 33, 13 Oct. 1925, N 5812/102/38, FO 371/11016; minute by Chamberlain, 13 Oct., FO 840/1/8.

169. Berlin desp. 583, 17 Oct. 1925, D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol I, No. 8.

Chapter 6

The Conference at Locarno and the Signature of the Treaties

The meeting at Locarno in October 1925 of the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Italy, and the attendance of the Foreign Ministers of Poland and Czechoslovakia, was the culmination of months of negotiation. The discussions of the legal advisers in London at the beginning of September had resulted in substantial agreement on the articles of the draft treaty of mutual guarantee for the frontiers between France and Belgium and Germany; but none of the Governments were committed to the precise terms of the text of 4 September, and one important provision remained the subject of disagreement - the mention in the treaty, and therewith the acknowledgment by Germany, of a French guarantee for the arbitration treaties to be concluded between Germany and her eastern and south-eastern neighbours. All the arbitration treaties, both in the west and in the east, had yet to be negotiated although the system on which the western ones would be based had been agreed. Germany's entry into the League of Nations had been accepted in principle but her obligations under Article 16 of the Covenant had not yet been discussed. And outside the treaties, the German Government intended to raise desiderata about disarmament and the occupation of the Rhineland. The meeting was therefore one for political negotiations, not merely to set the seal on agreements already reached.

The negotiations were completed on 16 October. A protocol, eight treaties or conventions, and one collective note were initialled, and were to be signed in London on 1 December. While there was little doubt that the results would be accepted in the other countries, the

outcome in Germany was less certain despite the fact that Germany was probably the greatest beneficiary from the settlement. During the interval between the conference and the signature, therefore, attention centred mainly on the domestic position of the German Government and the extent to which they might satisfy their critics by the attainment of additional advantages or by interpreting away what they had undertaken. The events of these weeks did not only answer this question: they raised others about the consequences of the settlement. All concerned were aware that Locarno was a beginning as well as an end: not all viewed the future with the same eyes.

The conference

Between 5 and 16 October there were nine meetings of the delegates of the five western countries, two of which were also attanded by the Polish and Czechoslovak representatives, and a number of informal meetings. No official record was made, but the secretary to each delegation compared his notes of the conference meetings with those of the other secretaries. All the resulting sets of notes can therefore be regarded as semi-officially agreed even though not authoritative.(1)

1. Lokarnskaya Konferentsiya, Moscow 1959, contains a Russian translation of all the secretaries' notes; the German notes are printed in Locarno-Konferenz; the French notes are in A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 85, and a copy is in the German Foreign Ministry archives, 4509/E129061-747, passim. I have relied mainly on the British record, which is the fullest, and on British and German accounts of informal meetings. D.D.B., Vol. II contains some letters from Vandervelde to his Prime Minister about the progress of the conference. D.D.I., Vol. IV contains only a few short telegrams from Scialoja to Mussolini. Stresemann's journal of the conference is printed in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 185-203. Later accounts by participants include H. Luther, Politiker ohne Partei, Stuttgart 1960, pp. 368-85, and Schmidt, Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, pp. 76-91. Suarez, Briand, Vol. VI, pp. 104-32, gives an account of the atmosphere rather than of the proceedings.

All the unsettled points were mentioned as soon as the delegations arrived at Locarno. On the afternoon of 4 October Schubert told Lampson "emphatically" that it would be absolutely impossible for Germany to agree to the French guarantee of the German-Polish arbitration treaty. In the evening Scialoja, the chief Italian delegate unless or until Mussolini should decide to attend, repeated to Chamberlain various statements that the Germans were said to have been making since their arrival: Article 16 was an insuperable obstacle; Cologne must be evacuated. It was rumoured that the Germans would demand mandates over some of the former colonies. Scialoja himself thought that agreement over the eastern frontier would be very difficult. Chamberlain, with deliberate optimism, replied that he did not think that the difficulty would be insurmountable if the Germans adhered to their original assurance that they were ready to exclude the use of force in the east, and would put it in writing. As for Article 16, there was no probability that the Assembly would change the Covenant, but he thought that the Germans were frightening themselves with a problem which would never arise.(2)

The conference got under way on the morning of 5 October with a welcome by the Mayor of Locarno, after which Chamberlain proposed that they should do without a chairman.(3) At the first meeting various

2. Locarno desps. 1 and 3, 5 Oct. 1925, C 12660, 12662/459/18, FO 371/10741.

3. This had been Chamberlain's idea before he left London, but he found that Briand favoured British chairmanship. The Germans, however, to stress equality, objected to any one delegation providing the chairman throughout, so it was agreed to have none: Locarno desps. 2 and 3, 5 Oct. 1925, C 12661, 12662/459/18, FO 371/10741; Chamberlain to Tyrell, 4 Oct., N 5714/710/38, FO 371/11022.

amendments to the draft treaty were proposed and were remitted to the jurists. The most important were, first, that the Germans wished, in the provision about flagrant violations of the demilitarised zone, to specify "German, French or Belgian" forces in order to emphasis the mutual character of the guarantee and forestall possible British excuses for not helping Germany. The German desire was eventually partly met by specifying the crossing of the frontier (as well as the outbreak of hostilities or the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone) as a case which might make immediate action necessary.(4) The second important amendment proposed by the Germans was that only one of the parties need approach the League for a decision that the treaty had become superfluous. Stresemann explained that the present article smacked of inequality, since the Allies were a group in which it would be easy to find a seconder whereas Germany was on her own. The German desire was eventually met, but it was provided at the same time that a two-thirds majority of the Council would have to approve before the treaty could be terminated.(5)

The question of the French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties was tackled on 6 October. Stresemann asked for an explanation of the proposal, especially on the questions of how the arbitration treaties were to be concluded and how a state could guarantee a treaty to which an ally was a party. Briand said that the French position

4. Notes of First Meeting, 5 Oct. 1925, C 12792/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25; Locarno desps. 5 and 6, 6 Oct., C 12711, 12712/459/18, FO 371/10741.

5. Notes of First Meeting, 5 Oct. 1925; Third Meeting, 7 Oct., C 12792, 12943/459/18, FO 371/10742; Fifth Meeting, 10 Oct., C13241/459/18, FO 371/10743; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

had been fully explained. France had treaties with certain states, which were binding upon her. In her anxiety about her own frontiers she could not forget nor diminish her obligations to others. If it were a question of form, of doing the same thing in a different way, agreement ought to be possible; but if the objection were fundamental and France were asked to abandon altogether the idea of giving a guarantee, it would be impossible to conclude the pact. There ought to be no difficulty if the question were approached in the spirit of the Covenant. It was not a matter of an old-style alliance directed against another country, but rather of mutual protection. There were to be arbitration treaties in the west and the east; if it were agreed that these treaties ruled out resort to force in all cases, Briand could not see why the German Government should object to the obligations just assumed being guaranteed. Of course public opinion had to be taken into account, but on both sides. The guarantee was already implied: if the impossible happened, no one would be surprised if some countries interpreted the obligation of Article 16 as involving for them the obligation to use armed force. Finally Briand begged the Germans to consider what a change had already taken place in the way of looking at the western guarantee. The 1919 treaties had provided for a guarantee of one side only; now they envisaged a mutual one. It had taken a lot of work to get French public opinion to accept the change: he must ask that similar work be done on the German side, for there was no reason why the same principles should not be applied to the other frontier.

Stresemann replied that German public opinion had moved too since the Cuno offer. The necessity of taking into account France's relationship with Poland had been accepted, and was the reason why the idea of

arbitration treaties had been included in the pact proposals. France had gone farther and demanded that Germany should guarantee peace in the east and enter the League. Despite hard conflict at home the German Government had agreed to the latter demand in order not to jeopardise the security pact, and her entry would give the Allies additional guarantees. He would like to be clear on two points: how the French guarantee would be effective under Article 16, and why it was necessary if it fell under the provisions of the Covenant.

Briand observed that the latter question might apply equally to the guarantee for the Rhine frontier. As to the former, the answer was that the terms of Article 16 were not as clear as those of the pact and it did not fully safeguard security. It was natural and logical to give a special guarantee to the execution of the arbitration treaties. Moreover France already had binding agreements with Poland and Czechoslovakia and her own security was involved. Stresemann night say that there was no danger on the eastern frontier, and Briand did not doubt the present German Government's desire for peace. But there would be another Government one day; there might be some public outcry, and when public opinion became heated who knew what might happen. It was necessary to take precautions even if the eventualities were never likely to arise. Briand repeated that if the difficulty were one of form he was absolutely ready to seek the wording that approached most nearly to the Covenant.

Luther said that the question at issue seemed to be whether the difficulty was one of form or of substance. The German Government had not discussed a formula, but perhaps the French would be able to suggest one. Briand replied that the article in question had been drafted with a desire to meet the Germans and to link the idea of the pact with that

of the Covenant. If German public opinion would not accept this draft, he was sure that both sides would try to find another solution. He would point out that the pact provided for its own demise when the League Council should decide that the Covenant provided sufficient security. In accepting this provision the German Government showed that they recognised the necessity of some special provision now. So long as the gap remained it was logical to consider how to fill it.

Chamberlain said that he would like to explain the British position. It was understood that the British Government could not undertake any new obligation in the east, but they were not uninterested in the situation there. Britain's greatest interest, like that of all the world, was peace; and no one could say where a war, once started, would end. Moreover Britain was a member of the League and had undertaken all the obligations of the Covenant, including those of Article 16. These obligations were not exactly defined and might be interpreted differently according to the circumstances of a given case. The effort which Britain would make, for example, in a South American conflict would obviously not be the same as that which she would make in a western European one. The British Government were in effect prepared to put all their forces at the disposal of the League for the support of Germany or France if the other committed the act of flagrant aggression defined in the pact. This was more definite than Article 16. In the same way it seemed necessary that Article 16 should be supplemented by a special guarantee in the case of Germany's eastern frontier.(6)

6. Notes of Second Meeting, 6 Oct. 1925, C 12942/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

The discussion was then adjourned until the following afternoon. After the meeting Chamberlain had a conversation with Luther, who said that the German Government honestly desired the conclusion of the pact but the guarantee of the eastern treaties was an almost insuperable difficulty. Chamberlain reminded him of France's existing obligations and said that the guarantee would limit them by defining and limiting the occasions on which assistance could be asked for or given. Luther said that he saw the force of this argument, but no German Government could accept the idea. He asked whether Chamberlain knew what alternative proposal Briand might have. Chamberlain replied that he knew only that Briand was genuinely ready to consider any form more acceptable to the Germans that would still fulfil the fundamental French condition. The French and German delegates must discuss the problem between themselves in the first place, and the sooner the better.(7)

On the same evening the British delegation discussed possible alternatives if the French and Germans could not settle the issue between themselves. Three suggestions were drawn up. The first was that there should not be a new French guarantee but that the Polish Government should address a note to the French Government asking how the security pact affected the Franco-Polish alliance, and receive a reply that if Poland were attacked in breach of the German-Polish arbitration treaty the casus foederis would apply. The second suggestion was that France should place it on record that in the event of a Polish-German dispute going to the League Council her forces would be available to the Council, and that if it failed to agree the situation

7. Locarno desp. 8, 7 Oct. 1925, C 12746/459/18, FO 371/10741.

would be that of Article 15(7) of the Covenant, i.e. members had the right to act as they thought necessary. The third suggestion was that there should be definite agreements between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, not only that they would submit all disputes to peaceful settlement but also that they would not resort to war. Then all that would be needed would be a French declaration that if Germany or Poland (or Czechoslovakia) did resort to war and bring Article 16 into play, France's forces would be at the disposal of the League to uphold the Covenant.(8)

On the morning of 7 October Luther met Briand at Ascona, and among other topics discussed the guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties. On this occasion Luther made it clear that whatever the modalities and however much it were based on League procedure, the whole idea of a French guarantee was unacceptable. Briand said that he would try to find a new proposal, but he had already gone a long way and did not know whether more would be possible.(9) At the afternoon conference meeting the article about the guarantee was not discussed further but was referred to the jurists. After Hurst had reported on certain amendments Vandervelde proposed an amendment to the article dealing with the western arbitration treaties, the effect of which was apparently to reintroduce unlimited arbitration.(10)

8. Locarno desps. 10 and 11, 7 Oct. 1925, C 12748, 12749/459/18, FO 371/10741.

9. Memoranda by Luther, 7 Oct. 1925, 3123/D645137-48. Luther and Briand also discussed the League and the additional German desiderata, and Luther also spoke to Vandervelde.

10. Notes of Third Meeting, 7 Oct. 1925, C 12943/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

The problem of the eastern guarantee was not settled for another six days. Meanwhile at the conference meeting on 10 October Vandervelde explained the purpose of the Belgian amendment to Article 3. Besides adopting the wording of the Covenant for defining disputes of a legal nature, the object was indeed to extend arbitration to all differences. Vandervelde was concerned lest a conflict might arise for which no solution could be found. Disputes of a political nature were to be submitted to conciliation commissions, and if their recommendations were not accepted the dispute would go to the Council of the League. But if the Council failed to agree there would be an impasse, and the Belgian Government proposed that in such a situation the dispute should be referred for final decision to some other form of arbitration. This return to the Geneva Protocol and to an argument of the summer must have been disconcerting to the other delegates; but Briand was the first to attempt to dispose of it by pointing out that France and Belgium and Germany were undertaking in no case to attack each other or resort to war, so that the gap of which Vandervelde spoke did not really exist. If when they came to discuss the arbitration treaties it appeared that war had not been effectively ruled out, they could look at the amendment again. Chamberlain supported Briand, saying that if war were excluded and forcible measures put outside the bounds of possibility, a case where a settlement could not be reached would be very improbable. Although not all the parties to the pact were prepared to submit all disputes to compulsory arbitration, they were not prevented from having recourse to arbitration when it was not obligatory. The British Government had not been able to consent to the principle of universal compulsory arbitration, but they had actually practised arbitration as much as any country in the world.

The Germans said nothing except to associate themselves with Chamberlain, and Vandervelde agreed to postpone his amendment until the arbitration treaties came up for discussion.(11)

After the meeting of 7 October Hurst suggested a solution of the difficulty over the guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties in the form of an amendment to Article 2 of the pact (under which France and Belgium and Germany undertook not to go to war except in resistance to attack or flagrant violation of the demilitarised zone or with the authority of the League). Gaus said that the German delegation might accept the amendment, and it was presumably this that allowed Chamberlain to report home that the jurists were thought to have nearly reached a solution.(12) But next day Gaus again said that any guarantee of the eastern treaties was unacceptable, and in addition Hurst found that the Germans wanted protection against individual action by France in a case when, the League Council having failed to agree, members recovered their freedom of action under Article 15(7) of the Covenant. The Germans professed to fear that in such a case France would say that Germany had attacked Poland when it was not she who had started the conflict, and they wanted provision made for an impartial examination of the question of who had made the first attack.(13)

11. Notes of Fifth Meeting, 10 Oct. 1925, C 13241/459/18, FO 371/10743; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

12. Locarno tel.13; Locarno desp. 13, 8 Oct. 1925, C 12780, 12791/459/18, FO 371/10741.

13. Minute by Hurst, 8 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/6; German del. tel. to Berlin, 9 Oct., 4509/E128590-92.

The British delegation discussed the new German demand on 9 October. Chamberlain said that he did not think that the French could meet it; but he wondered whether a demilitarised zone on the German-Polish frontier might be practicable. It was pointed out, however, that such a zone would cover the whole of the Polish Corridor near the sea and would include the fortresses of Grudziadz, Torun and Bydgoszcz, so that the Poles would not accept it; and the idea was dropped at once. Chamberlain then said that Skrzynski had suggested to him a tripartite pact of guarantee between France, Poland and Germany, to take the place of the Franco-Polish alliance. He had advised Skrzynski to discuss the idea with Briand, because he did not wish to intervene in the eastern negotiations unless it became clear that the parties could not solve the problem.(14)

The German demand for a restriction of France's liberty of action under the Covenant was discussed by the principal delegates on their lake trip on 10 October, but still without result. Chamberlain and Hurst, however, pointed out to the Germans that they could not at the same time refuse to limit their own country's liberty of action by undertaking in no case to go to war with Poland and demand that France's liberty of action under the Covenant should be limited. As a result Gaus agreed to try to induce his ministers to drop the latter demand.(15)

14. British delegation meeting, 9 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/6; Locarno desp. 17, 9 Oct., C 12818/459/18, FO 371/10742. Skrzynski had been suggesting a tripartite or quadripartite pact of guarantee in the east to the French since June; but he had apparently made no attempt to consider whether the Germans would agree: Panafieu (Warsaw) to Berthelot, 27 Jun.; note by Laroche, 4 Jul.; note by Laroche, 13 Aug.; Panafieu to Berthelot, 21 Aug.; note by Laroche, 4 Sep.; aide-mémoire by Skrzynski, 6 Sep., A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vols. 76,78,79,81,82.

15. Minutes by Hurst, 11 and 12 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/7; Locarno tel. 22, 12 Oct., C 12899/459/18, FO 371/10742.

This he evidently succeeded in doing, for at the conference meeting on 13 October Hurst was able to produce an agreed final version of Article 2 of the pact giving France the right to act against Germany, in addition to the cases already included, in pursuance of Article 16 of the Covenant or a decision by the Council or Assembly or in pursuance of Article 15(7) of the Covenant provided that Germany had been the first to attack. The jurists believed, Hurst said, that France's right to help Poland and Czechoslovakia in case of need was completely safeguarded and the reference in Article 6 of the pact to a guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties could be dropped. Briand still had to consult the Polish and Czechoslovak representatives, but they gave their consent and the text of the pact was agreed on 14 October.(16)

In the discussion of the second major obstacle to the pact, the question of Germany's entry into the League, the German delegates continued to base their objections to assuming any obligations under Article 16 not on a desire to help the Soviet Union attack its neighbours with impunity, but on the disarmed state of their country, and they made ingenious use of the question of general disarmament. Luther told Briand at Ascona on 7 October that it was not just a question of military action: economic measures too involved the risk

16. Notes of Seventh and Eighth Meetings, 13 and 14 Oct. 1925, C 13053, 13095/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25. A solution of this kind, with a treaty of guarantee between France and Czechoslovakia, is mentioned in a letter from Beneš to Berthelot of 20 September: A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 83. It was therefore presumably one of the alternatives considered by Briand before going to Locarno.

of war, and there were dangers in allowing the passage of troops.[17] Next morning Stresemann said much the same to Chamberlain, and asked how the British interpreted Article 16. Chamberlain said that it was not easy to interpret. He supposed that when the Covenant was drafted its framers, expecting the United States to be a founding member of the League and Germany to be admitted shortly, had felt that the moral force of a unanimous Council decision would be so great that no state would be likely to defy it. Furthermore the economic pressure on a recalcitrant state would be so overwhelming that it would be convinced that resistance would be hopeless. It must therefore have seemed most improbable that it would ever be necessary to resort to military measures. But the force of economic sanctions had been greatly weakened by the abstention of the United States, and the British Government had had to consider what the position would be if they had to be enforced by sea and the Empire came into conflict with the United States. However, Chamberlain said, he thought it impossible to define Article 16 more precisely than the Council had done in its letter to the German Government in the preceding March. As regards military sanctions the Council would make recommendations but Germany would decide whether and how much she could contribute. As regards economic sanctions members were to some extent free to decide the extent and even the timing of their co-operation, but a member obviously could not decide not to co-operate at all. Stresemann asked whether there could be an interpretation applicable not only to Germany but to other disarmed countries. He suggested, as he did later in the day, an

17. Memorandum by Luther, 7 Oct. 1925, 3123/D645137-43; Locarno tel. 12, 7 Oct., C 12720/459/18, FO 371/10741.

exchange of letters between the German Government and the League secretariat, and proposed that it should be supplemented by a private correspondence between Germany and the principal Allies, in which the latter would explain that the special consideration which the public correspondence acknowledged to be necessary would in their opinion make it unreasonable to expect any German participation in measures taken in the event of aggression by the Soviet Union.(18)

At the meeting of the conference in the afternoon of 8 October Stresemann began by outlining the history of Germany's attitude to the League. He referred to the German note of September 1924 with its questions on representation on the Council and the secretariat, the claim in principle to colonial mandates, the problem whether recognition of international obligations implied a fresh acknowledgement of moral responsibility for the war, and the application of Article 16. The replies from the members of the Council had been satisfactory on representation, but on other points satisfaction had not been given. The question of Article 16, for instance, remained open. The German Government had sought further explanations but the reply of the Allies, that once Germany was a member she could vote against decisions, was not satisfactory. In cases where there was no doubt as to the identity of the aggressor Germany would isolate herself by voting against a decision. Not only, however, could Germany not take part in military measures, it was impossible to imagine her taking indirect military action such as allowing the passage of foreign troops. Nor was co-operation in an economic boycott possible. He would take the

18. Locarno desp. 15, 8 Oct. 1925, C 12881/459/18, FO 371/10742.

example of a war between Poland and Russia - but not because there was any secret agreement between Germany and Russia: there were no agreements other than the Treaty of Rapallo. Without doubt Moscow would answer a German boycott with a declaration of war. In 1920 Germany had only been saved from serious difficulties by the breaking of the Russian advance in Poland. If the Russians advanced again Germany was defenceless: they would have to reckon on Bolshevism up to the Elbe. Germany was in a special position: she asked not for privileges but for special treatment in a transitional period. If greater progress had been made with general disarmament there would be no difficulty; but so long as there were unarmed and armed countries each must be able to decide on its participation in action under Article 16. In the Geneva Protocol regard had been paid to the military and geographical situation of a country in considering active measures against an aggressor, but this was not enough: the same regard must be paid in considering economic measures and the transit of forces. The question of German participation in action under Article 16 must be deferred until general disarmament was complete. There would have to be a further exchange of notes on the question. If Germany were assured that it was for her alone to decide on the extent of participation, then she would be willing to promise co-operation to the utmost of her power.

Briand said that he believed this to be the central point of the negotiations. The whole pact turned on the League, and if that pivot were broken or put out of joint all their combinations became impossible or inoperative. The League was a reality, an association for mutual assurance against war, and was trying to bring in a system based on that equality which seemed to dominate the Germans' minds. But equality

must apply all round: one could not choose what was pleasant and reject what was unpleasant. Article 16 did not provide enough organised force and therefore an attempt had been made in the Geneva Protocol to provide a more comprehensive system of sanctions. Security was not yet organised: only when it was could disarmament be contemplated. If countries could withdraw their support it was a motive for the better armed not to reduce their forces. Germany was not militarily negligible: if she said that she could not help, the League could not ask other countries to disarm. But Germany was going farther and saying that she could not associate herself with economic measures. She was economically strong: if she could not give anything even in this way the League would be positively weakened. If Russia were the aggressor, the League would be at war with her. To refuse help to the League would be equivalent to giving economic support to the aggressor. Nothing was being done against Russia: the agreements were directed not against her but against war, and the League was open to her. If Russia had no aggressive intentions there would be no problem; but if Russia had aggressive intentions the very danger in which Germany would be placed should remove her hesitations. Germany would be much safer in the League, and she would be in a stronger position to discuss Article 16 on a footing of equality in order to get general disarmament. But if she started on a footing of wilful inequality her voice would be greatly weakened. In any case these questions were outside the competence of the delegations at Locarno: the Great Powers could not do what they liked at Geneva and could not bind the League. Briand begged the Germans to think again.

Vandervelde supported Briand and said that he was disappointed at the German objections. He had thought that the question was settled.

Chamberlain said that the reason why British opinion, which had at first been doubtful, now supported the pact was that it meant that Germany would join the League. He understood the German anxieties, and he supposed that in any case of war the League would have to consider the situation of each country upon which it made demands. But for a nation to say that it would join the League and enjoy all the privileges and guarantees that it afforded, and at the same time to refuse in advance all help to the League and other members in certain cases, was to take up an impossible position. If the League agreed, all the countries which had disarmed voluntarily, as well as those which had been disarmed, could demand the right to be neutral. Chamberlain also supported Briand's statement that the Great Powers did not control the Council; and he was sure that Scialoja would confirm how jealous also the Assembly was of the Council. He too hoped that the Germans would think again. Finally he would state clearly and categorically that it had never entered the British Government's head to make any kind of alliance or bloc against the Soviet Union, through the League or through the pact.

Scialoja supported Chamberlain and then Luther took up the debate. He emphasised again that there were no bonds with the Soviet Union, but said that Germany could not change her geographical position and her disarmament made it worse. The dangers in Article 16 did not exist for Britain and France. When Briand and Chamberlain at once contested this assertion Luther maintained that all the same Article 16 affected Germany in a particular way and a formula must be found that would give her a feeling of safety.

Briand replied that if war broke out in the east the countries separating Germany from the war zone would be fighting for her as well as for themselves. Germany was bound to be affected in any case, but

failure to act would in certain circumstances help the common enemy. Luther said that all that Germany asked was that during the transitional situation before universal disarmament came about she should be sheltered from bearing the general dangers of the League. Stresemann said that if there were a blockade or boycott Germany would not be able to help Russia. She was not asking for a change in the Covenant: she would be satisfied by a declaration on the lines of the provision in the Geneva Protocol, but applying to economic measures as well.

Chamberlain wound up by saying that supposing Germany did participate in a conflict that originated with an act of aggression by the Soviet Union, she would become allied with every other country in the League and they would be bound to support her. "Her strength would become their strength. Her weakness would be their weakness. Honour and their own interests would compel all the other nations to aid Germany and equip her, and those who had disarmed her would be the first then to rearm her". Briand agreed that this was self-evident, and Chamberlain suggested that they should now reflect on the matter and try to find a solution.(19)

The British delegation discussed the problem the same evening. The idea of a secret exchange of notes was dismissed at once by Chamberlain, but no conclusions were reached as to what might be said publicly about Article 16. Hurst said that the provisions for protecting

19. Notes of Fourth Meeting, 8 Oct. 1925, C 13094/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25. Schmidt, the German interpreter, thought that the fact that Stresemann's remark about war guilt was passed over in silence meant that the Allies accepted the German thesis. The German Nationalist Party were particularly insistent on satisfaction on this point as a condition for approving the pact: Berlin desp. 562, 8 Oct.; Berlin desp. 567, 9 Oct., C 12807, 12925/459/18, FO 371/10742; Schmidt, Statist auf diplomatischer Bühne, p. 86.

a country which allowed the passage of troops were inadequate, and that he gathered that the Germans feared internal disorder and might apply for the military clauses to be relaxed to allow extra police. Chamberlain said that such talk was premature, and that the Germans could be told that their country would certainly not be used as a line of communication if they could not keep order. But any appearance of a Holy Alliance directed against Bolshevism must be avoided. Lampson drew attention to the Assembly resolution of 1921 and the proposed addition to Article 16, which he thought might satisfy the Germans.(20)

There was no conference meeting on 9 October but a number of private conversations took place, between Briand and Stresemann, Briand and Vandervelde, Vandervelde and Schubert, and Chamberlain and Luther. Chamberlain said that he thought it impossible to accept the proposal that Germany should be allowed to remain neutral, and that the idea of a secret exchange of letters was unacceptable.(21) And Hurst had a long discussion with Fromageot and Gaus, as a result of which a draft was produced of a note which the powers represented at the conference might address to the German Government stating that they interpreted Article 16 as "obliging each Member of the League to co-operate loyally and affectively in support of the Covenant and in resistance to any act of aggression to the extent which its geographical position and its military and economic situation permit".(22)

20. British delegation meeting, 8 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/6. For the Assembly resolution of 1921 see p.208, n.19.

21. Locarno desp. 23, 10 Oct. 1925, C 12882/459/18, FO 371/10742; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 115; memorandum by Schubert, 9 Oct., 4509/E129175-82.

22. Minute by Hurst, 9 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/6.

The whole question was discussed again on the trip on Lake Maggiore which the British, French and German delegates took in the boat Fior d'Arancio on Saturday afternoon, 10 October. No one made a record of the conversation, and few even partial accounts exist.(23) It resulted in a draft collective note on the interpretation of Article 16, known as the "texte du bateau", the operative paragraph of which read: "les obligations resultant dudit article pour les membres de la Société doivent être entendues en ce sens que chacun des États membres de la Société est tenu de collaborer loyalement et efficacement pour faire respecter le Pacte et pour s'opposer à tout acte d'agression, dans une mesure qui ne soit pas hors de proportion avec sa situation militaire, et qui tienne compte de sa position géographique".(24)

During the discussion on the boat Chamberlain tried to explain to Luther that the German position on Article 16 was not so exceptional as he thought, and spoke of the British fears of possible conflict with the United States. Once in the League, he said, Germany would be able to discuss the application of the article; and since there seemed to be a certain community of interest between Britain and Germany on the matter, they might find themselves working together and carrying more weight than either could do separately. "Voilà", said Briand, "une alliance qui se forme contre moi". To Chamberlain's alarm Luther seemed to take this jest literally and spoke of Chamberlain's having,

23. Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 192-3, records some conversation on disarmament. See also below, p. 492.

24. Notes of Sixth Meeting, 12 Oct. 1925, C 13637/459/18, FO 371/10744. At that meeting Stresemann asked for a drafting amendment to remove, he said, a double negative which was awkward in German but which also had the effect of slightly strengthening the last phrase. It now read: "dans une mesure qui soit compatible avec sa situation militaire, et qui tienne compte de sa position géographique". This was the final text. The German translation in Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25 is that of the text as amended.

as it were, suggested an alliance. Chamberlain therefore had to say that he had not: all that he had done was to call Luther's attention to the fact that others besides Germany were worried about the consequences of Article 16, so that they might find themselves working together if the matter came before the Assembly again.(25)

The "texte du bateau" was given to the Belgian and Italian delegations after the boat trip, and the discussion was resumed in the conference on 12 October. Despite the fact that the note gave the Germans all that they had publicly asked for, although not in the form of a note from the League, Stresemann said that it still entailed a very serious situation for Germany, and he proceeded to develop the theme of disarmament. One of the first questions that the delegation would be asked at home, he said, was whether the League was really going to take practical steps in this direction. The German Government could only be satisfied with the proposed note if they were convinced that the League's next great accomplishment would be disarmament and that the intention of the powers represented at the conference were serious.

Briand replied that there was no doubt that the League was taking disarmament seriously,(26) and that the idea corresponded to the general sentiments of France. One of the essentials, however, was that each member of the League should contribute to the forces needed to apply sanctions. If, say, twenty of the fifty-two members said that they could not participate and their number included some of the

25. Locarno desp. 35, 14 Oct. 1925, C 13052/459/18, FO 371/10742.

26. On 25 September the Assembly adopted a resolution asking the Council to make a preparatory study with a view to calling a disarmament conference; see p. 539.

most important, the others would have to make up the difference and disarmament would be more difficult. France had already done a good deal, but she must also be constantly anxious about her security. The German Government were not alone in having difficulties at home.

Stresemann said that Briand seemed to be justifying the stabilisation of inequality in armaments, and suggesting that because Germany was disarmed others must arm more to replace the effort which she could not make. The Reichstag would certainly not concur in such an argument: the German principle was an equality of armaments sufficient for each country. Briand replied that Stresemann had misunderstood him. He had not said that some countries would have to make a greater effort as a result of others' failure to co-operate in action by the League. He had said that if the League accepted the non possumus formula put forward by the Germans at an earlier meeting, such a state of affairs would arise. This was not what he wanted, but what would happen. Chamberlain said that the Council had started work. His view had been that without security there could be no disarmament. The moment there was a sense of security the Allies were bound to work to the utmost for general disarmament.

Vandervelde said that the "texte du bateau" went a good deal farther than the Geneva Protocol in allowing account to be taken of an individual country's position. The Belgian Government would support it, but he really disliked the exclusion of economic sanctions. Chamberlain replied that there must be no misunderstanding. He could not tell Parliament that the proposed solution gave Germany a right to neutrality in regard to Article 16. As far as he understood, the Germans did not demand neutrality, but asked that in a given case Germany's present situation in the present European situation might be taken into

account. No country could be asked to contribute beyond its capacity. Germany could not be asked to send troops which she did not possess, or which were needed to preserve order at home. As for economic sanctions, he interpreted them in the sense of the Assembly resolution of 1921.

Luther agreed that Germany had never said that she wished to remain inactive in all cases. Now she wanted a new effort towards disarmament. She wished all members of the League to be in a state of armament which should be as small as possible but proportionate. He asked whether the conference could make some statement. The other delegates said that they would consider a declaration calling attention to the importance of what had been done and the effect that it ought to have from the point of view of disarmament. But they said that it was not possible to discuss general disarmament at Locarno, and Chamberlain refused to consider the word "proportionate". The question of Germany's entry into the League was thus concluded.(27)

The negotiation of the various arbitration treaties is not well documented. Since Britain was not directly involved, the lack of a full account in the British records is not surprising; but the meagreness of the information from the German side is rather strange: the French archives give more information about preliminary intentions. Vandervelde evidently abandoned his attempt to reintroduce arbitration as the final stage if the Council of the League failed to agree, so

27. Notes of Sixth Meeting, 12 Oct. 1925, C 13637/459/18, FO 371/10744; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25. Chamberlain was so much impressed by the German insistence on general disarmament that he telegraphed home that the Western powers ought to give a definite assurance that they meant business and that disarmament was no longer a mere pious aspiration: Locarno tel. 22, 12 Oct., C 12899/459/18, FO 371/10742.

that the Franco-German and Belgian-German conventions followed the line agreed at the jurists' meeting. Disputes over respective rights were to be submitted to an arbitral tribunal or to the Permanent Court of International Justice but might first be referred to a permanent conciliation commission. Other disputes were to be submitted to the conciliation commission and then, if its recommendations were not accepted, to the Council of the League under Article 15.

The path towards the arbitration treaties between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia was less smooth. On the eve of the conference the Germans had hoped to keep the negotiation of these treaties as far as possible distinct from the negotiations with the Western powers. Beneš had announced his willingness to start negotiations but had not revealed to the Germans his ideas about terms.(28) The Poles had taken no initiative. When Skrzynski arrived at Locarno Chamberlain advised him to consult Briand as to whether he ought now to tell Stresemann that he was ready to start discussing the arbitration treaty.(29) Up to the middle of September Beneš appears to have envisaged a treaty much more like recent treaties signed by the Swiss Government or the Czechoslovak-Polish treaty of April 1925 than the German model, that is a treaty providing for a permanent conciliation commission in the first instance for all disputes, followed by binding arbitration if the commission's recommendations were not accepted; and he wished to include a provision whereby the parties repudiated all idea of war and undertook to respect the

28. Koch desp., 2 Oct. 1925, 4509/E128443-44.

29. Locarno desp. 17, 9 Oct. 1925, C 12818/459/18, FO 371/10742.

territorial status quo between them. While at Geneva in September Beneš accepted a French suggestion that the eastern arbitration treaties should be on the same pattern as the western ones, but he still wanted a non-aggression clause. It was presumably this that caused Stresemann later to describe the draft produced by Beneš when the negotiations began as a guarantee pact, which Gaus rejected with a declaration that Germany would not discuss recognition of frontiers or renunciation of war.(30)

At the conference meeting on 13 October Hurst reported that all the arbitration treaties were likely to be ready on the same day as the treaty of mutual guarantee; but Fromageot said that while the western arbitration treaties would almost certainly be ready on the following day, the eastern ones required further discussion because they must contain provisions of principle analogous to those of the Rhine pact.(31) Chamberlain offered his own services and those of Hurst if they could be of help. He wrote to Tyrell that there were two main difficulties. In the first place Skrzynski was determined that frontier questions

30. Beneš to Bethelot, n.d. [c.27 July 1925]: Beneš to Berthelot, 14 and 20 Sept.; Briand to de Margerie, 22 Sep.; Beneš to Berthelot, 5 Oct., A.A.E. Grande Bretagne, Vols. 80, 83, 84. Stresemann gave brief accounts of the negotiations, emphasising German success, in speeches to the central executive of his party on 22 November and to the Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Landmannschaften on 14 December: Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, XV(1967), pp. 415-36; Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik, Series B, hereafter cited as A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Göttingen 1966, pp. 727-53, edited version in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 231-44. A full account of the conversations between German and Czechoslovak representatives at Locarno, including the topic of the German-speaking minority in Czechoslovakia but not including any more information about the arbitration treaty, is given by Manfred Alexander, Der deutsch-tschechoslowakische Schiedsvertrag von 1925 im Rahmen der Locarno-Verträge, Munich and Vienna 1970, Ch. XI.

31. Notes of Seventh Meeting, 13 Oct. 1925, C 13053/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

should not be made subject to arbitration. Since Stresemann was also anxious to avoid any mention of frontiers, this might seem to make things easier, but in fact it introduced an element of danger which worried the French and made Chamberlain anxious lest so many causes of quarrel might be left open that the position would look insecure. The other difficulty was that the Germans refused to declare that they renounced war as a means of ultimately changing the eastern frontier. Chamberlain took a grave view of this and had instructed Hurst to work to secure that war should in fact be made impossible except in the conditions allowed in the wast and that it should be stated that the purpose of the treaty was the avoidance of war. If the Germans objected Hurst was to remind them of their assurance to him in the spring and to say that they owed it to him to confirm it.(32)

Partly at least at Chamberlain's instance Beneš and Skrzynski attended the conference meeting on 15 October to hear the discussion of the western arbitration treaties. Fromageot explained their scope and Chamberlain then asked what was the position about the eastern treaties. Beneš replied that it had been decided that the articles of the German-Czechoslovak treaty would be identical with the Franco-German convention. The preamble would have to be different and there was still one political question to be discussed, but he hoped that the treaty would be ready for the next meeting. Skrzynski said that he was in the same position.(33)

32. Chamberlain to Tyrell, 14 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/6. To judge from a conversation between Luther and Skrzynski on 14 October the Poles were still uncertain about mentioning the frontier in the treaty: 3123/D645200-01.

33. Memorandum by Selby, 14 Oct. 1925, FO 841/1/8; notes of Eighth Meeting, 15 Oct., C 13095/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

The two treaties were indeed ready for the final meeting next day. In addition to the articles identical with those of the Franco-German arbitration convention there was one, analogous to Article 7 of the treaty of mutual guarantee, reserving the rights and obligations of the parties as members of the League and the position of the League itself. The preambles mentioned neither frontiers nor the renunciation of war but spoke of maintenance of peace and settlement of disputes without recourse to force. They also referred to respect for rights established by treaty. Stresemann later described them as a collection of platitudes.(34)

From the German point of view, as the guidelines laid down for the delegation show, the questions of the occupation and their own disarmament were almost as important as those of the pact and the other treaties. The method chosen for raising them was to indicate at an early stage that discussion was desired,(35) then to wait to see how the main negotiations went, and finally to press them hard at the end when the pact was assured.

On the boat trip on 10 October it was evidently agreed that the French, British and German delegates should meet to discuss German disarmament. At this meeting, on the afternoon of 12 October, Stresemann started by asking whether a date could be fixed for the evacuation of the Cologne zone, and set out the points on which the German Government wanted concessions. These were (a) the General Staff, the training of

34. Notes of Ninth Meeting, 16 Oct. 1925, C 13638/459/18, FO 371/10744; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, p. 741.

35. Memorandum by Luther, 7 Oct. 1925, 3123/D645137-43; Locarno desp. 15, 8 Oct., C 12881/459/18, FO 371/10742; Chamberlain to Luther, 8 Oct., FO 840/1/5; memorandum by Schubert, 9 Oct., 4509/E129175-82.

troops and the numbers of the Schutzpolizei; (b) reduction of the occupation forces in the Rhineland; and (c) the nature of the occupation régime. There were also a couple of questions about legal cases arising out of the Ruhr occupation; and there were the questions of civil aviation and League of Nations supervision after the withdrawal of the Control Commission.

Briand replied that it was certain that if the pact went through there would be an immediate détente and changes would be made. But in the first place he had no mandate to deal with these questions here and in the second place the evacuation of Cologne depended on the execution of the Treaty of Versailles. His information about progress on disarmament was not as hopeful as Stresemann seemed to think, but once a serious beginning was made on completing the outstanding points he would be disposed to believe that they would be carried out and therefore to accelerate the evacuation. But he could not make promises outside the subject of the pact and before it came into force. Could not the German Government enlarge to public opinion on the effects that the general reaction resulting from the pact would produce? Chamberlain agreed that once security had been attained other things would follow naturally. But he was not in a position to go into details now and would not make binding promises in advance or as a condition of the pact.

Luther said that he was going to be asked at home what concrete results he had brought back. Could they not find some formula which Briand and Chamberlain could carry in their own countries and would enable him to meet the charge that he had come home empty-handed? Briand replied that he understood that the Germans could not be satisfied with espressions of hope. He could envisage going so far as

to say in the Chamber that the occupation system must be reviewed in the light of the pact and that certain changes would follow its ratification. But as for going home empty-handed, the German delegates should look at their hands and see what they had gained - the return of Germany to a footing of complete equality among the nations and in the League. Surely the German public could understand this? He was going to be reproached with weakening the position of France, and Luther's position might be stronger than his own.

Stresemann said that the points outstanding on disarmament were quite small, and the only thing the German people were thinking about was the improvement of conditions in the Rhineland. Chamberlain observed that the scheme of League control had been deliberately postponed so that it should be discussed after the pact was concluded and with Germany in the Council. As to Cologne, evacuation depended solely on satisfaction of the Control Commission's requirements. He did think it important to hasten the evacuation and was very anxious to avoid any obstacles. After some further discussion about the occupation régime and the number of forces, the conversation ended on that note.(36)

Next day Stresemann told Chamberlain that it was essential to come to an agreement on the evacuation if the difficulties on the pact were to be overcome. Chamberlain said that he desired nothing more than the earliest possible evacuation of the Cologne zone, but the Germans must meet the wishes of the Allied Governments so far as lay in their power.(37) Both Chamberlain and Lampson explained to Schubert

36. Locarno desp. 31, 13 Oct. 1925, C 13004/459/18, FO 371/10742; memorandum by Schubert, 12 Oct., 3123/D645168-80. The question of League supervision under Article 213, having been adjourned at the March Council meeting (see p.329), was withdrawn from the agenda of the June meeting and did not appear on that for the September meeting.

37. Memorandum by Selby, 14 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/8.

that in the view of the British legal authorities Article 213 did not allow for permanent organs anywhere in Germany, and that the supervision scheme was still in abeyance; but Schubert told Lampson that Germany could not enter the League without showing definitely that she did not admit the right of the Council to set up the scheme, which in her view was not covered by the Treaty. Lampson retorted that Chamberlain had made it clear that unless Germany joined the League the pact would not go through. Schubert was delivering two long memoranda on the occupation régime and the League's right of investigation. He said that obviously the technical details about the occupation could not be dealt with at Locarno, but it would ease the position of the German delegation if the final protocol could contain a reference to alleviations in the Rhineland. He did not want to harp on public opinion, but it was very desirable that the Nationalists should be induced to endorse the delegation's policy for they were the best elements of the country and even of the Government. Lampson replied that he could say that specific complaints about the Rhineland would of course be gone into, but he did not think that it would be easy to mention these matters in the final protocol partly because Italy was not an occupying power and partly because such a mention would introduce that element of bargaining which Chamberlain and Briand had said was inadmissible.(38)

It was the discussion on the evening of 15 October that produced the first really discordant note. Briand repeated a promise already

38. Minute by Chamberlain, 14 Oct. 1925, FO 840/1/8; Locarno desp. 39, 14 Oct., C 13093/459/18, FO 371/10742; memoranda by Schubert 14 and 15 Oct., 4509/E129612-21, E129656-59, E129660-64. Schubert also gave the memoranda to Vandervelde and Berthelot.

given to Luther, that he would press on his colleagues to the point of resignation the necessity for new conditions in the Rhineland. But the Germans battled hard, first to get a date fixed for the evacuation of the Cologne zone and then to get a favourable interpretation of Article 213 before Germany joined the League. They asserted that most of the conditions in the Allied disarmament note of June had been met, that the disarmament of Germany was complete, and that the German people considered the non-evacuation of Cologne unjustified. Chamberlain said that he would be delighted to leave Cologne next day, but the points outstanding were not as small as Schubert maintained. If they were so small that in the German view it was silly of the Allies to insist on them, it was even more stupid of the Germans not to carry them out and so make evacuation possible. Luther said that he would not be able to carry the pact in the Reichstag until evacuation had taken place. The three Allied Ministers replied that they had no mandate to settle the question at Locarno. The German Government should undertake to settle the remaining points and begin to do so, and they would then support a solution favourable to Germany. They refused to mention the Rhineland in the final protocol.

Then Luther raised the question of League control and said that Germany could not join the League until it was settled. The three western Ministers replied that they had no power to discuss it: it was a question for the Council; they had gone a long way to meet the Germans and the latter must not go on producing new demands. After a rather tense silence, followed by some argument over whether this was or was not a new demand, Luther abandoned the point.[39] The Germans did,

39. Locarno tel. 41, 16 Oct. 1925, C 13091/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno desp. 44, 17 Oct., C 13133/13120/18, FO 371/10759;

however, get in a final word. Before leaving Locarno Schubert told Chamberlain's private secretary, Selby, that German public opinion expected the whole occupied territory to be evacuated. Selby replied that if the German Government were so foolish as to raise this question they would wreck the pact.(40)

This final discussion on the German associated demands took place on the eve of the last conference meeting, at which Mussolini appeared. He had probably made up his mind, as soon as it was clear that the pact was going to come off, that he could not afford to be absent; but his attitude gave rise to some suspicion and rumour and his attendance was not certain until the last moment.(41)

At the last meeting of the conference on the afternoon of 16 October, Chamberlain's sixty-second birthday, it was agreed that signature of the treaties would take place in London on 1 December, the final protocol and the various instruments were initialled, and the delegates made their final speeches. Vandervelde, the only man present who had signed the Treaty of Versailles, contrasted with that occasion the feeling of shared happiness with which they concluded the pact.(42)

39. (Cont).
Chamberlain to Tyrell, 16 Oct., FO 840/1/9; memorandum by Schubert, 15 Oct., 4509/E129696-712; memoranda by Luther, 15 Oct., 3123/D645228-29; 4509/E129721-28.

40. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 7.

41. Locarno desp. 3, 5 Oct. 1925; Locarno tel. 13, 8 Oct., C 12662, 12780/459/18, FO 371/10741; Locarno desp. 15, 8 Oct., C 12881/459/18, FO 371/10742; Rome desp. 877, 15 Oct.; Locarno desp. 43, 17 Oct., C 13174, 13128/459/18, FO 371/10743; Prittwitz desp., 8 Oct., 3123/D644895-99; D.D.I., Vol. IV, Nos. 102, 142, 146; Alan Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, Princeton 1970, pp. 278-9.

42. Notes of Ninth Meeting, 16 Oct. 1925, C 13638/459/18, FO 371/10744; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

The complex of treaties and agreements consisted of nine instruments: the final protocol with six annexes, the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, the arbitration conventions between Germany and France and Germany and Belgium, the arbitration treaties between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, the letter to the German Government regarding Article 16; and treaties between France and Poland and France and Czechoslovakia.(43)

The protocol stated that the purpose of the conference had been to seek by common agreement means for preserving the nations concerned from the scourge of war and for providing for the peaceful settlement of disputes of every kind that might arise between them. The delegates were convinced that the entry into force of the treaties would contribute to a moral relaxation of tension between nations, would help towards the solution of many political or economic problems, and, in strengthening peace and security in Europe, would hasten the disarmament provided for in Article 8 of the Covenant.

The final text of the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee did not differ greatly from that of 4 September except for the removal of the reference to a French guarantee of the eastern arbitration treaties, and the consequential amendment to Article 2. The arbitration conventions between Germany and France and Germany and Belgium were identical. As noted above, a clear distinction was drawn between judicial arbitration and conciliation. The machinery was laid down in detail in nineteen

43. All are printed in Cmd 2525 of 1925, Final Protocol of the Locarno Conference, 1925 (and Annexes), together with Treaties between France and Poland and France and Czechoslovakia, Locarno, October 16, 1925, and in B.F.S.P., Vol. CXXI, pp. 923-6; Vol. CXXII, pp. 124-8, 287-8, 288-9. The final text of the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee is in the Appendix.

articles. The arbitration treaties between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia were identical and, as noted above, their substantive articles were almost identical with those of the western arbitration conventions. The collective note to the German Government about Article 16 was that of the "texte du bateau", modified at the meeting of 12 October.

The treaties between France and Poland and France and Czechoslovakia did not form part of the Locarno settlement, but they were referred to in the final protocol and to that extent the German Government acknowledged their existence. The terms of the two were identical. The preamble stated that the parties, desirous of seeing Europe spared from war by a sincere observance of the undertakings arrived at at Locarno, guaranteed to each other the benefit of these undertakings within the framework of the Covenant and of the treaties already in force between them. The main provision of the treaties was that in the event of either party suffering from a failure to observe the undertakings arrived at with Germany the other, acting in application of Article 16 of the Covenant, would immediately lend aid and assistance if such failure were accompanied by a recourse to arms. If the Council of the League were unable to have its report on such a question accepted, and if either Poland [Czechoslovakia] or France were attacked without provocation, the other party, applying Article 15(7) of the Covenant, would immediately lend aid and assistance. Compared with the previous French treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, the obligations in these treaties were restricted and tied closely to the machinery of the League.

Despite the often serious arguments the atmosphere of the conference was constructive. It was in particular the contrast with

other meetings with German representatives in the years since the war that made a deep impression on the British participants and that probably contributed more than any of the concrete results to the almost lyrical manner in which they were inclined for a time to talk of Locarno. The first short report to London of the meeting of 5 October remarked that the most striking atmosphere of helpful good will prevailed. After a few days Lampson wrote home that the absence of chicanery was amazing: two days later Chamberlain wrote of the "extraordinary" atmosphere. Only briefly towards the end, over the question of control of German disarmament, did the Germans' persistent demands for additional concessions cloud the sky and cause Chamberlain to compare them to a nagging old woman. But that cloud soon passed, and at the end Chamberlain was able not only to write of his thankfulness at the success attained but also to regard all the months of negotiation as "so simple, so natural, so easy".(44) The Germans were less enthusiastic: about 12 October they were considering the possibility of failure; but afterwards Schubert too could write of an "agreeable" atmosphere and of the "frank and straightforward" tone of the conversations.(45)

44. Locarno tel. 4, 5 Oct. 1925, C 12598/459/18, FO 371/10741; Lampson to Tyrell, 9 Oct., C 12984/459/18, FO 371/10742; Chamberlain to Tyrell, 11 Oct., FO 840/1/7; Chamberlain to Tyrell, 18 Oct., Chamberlain Papers, AC 6/1/623, printed in Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp. 287-90.

45. Hoesch tel., 13 Oct. 1925; Schubert to Neurath, 23 Oct., 4509/E129975-79, E130032-39.

From initialling to signature

During the six weeks between the conclusion of the treaties and their signature in London attention centred less on the treaties themselves than on the immediate additional benefits that Germany might gain. Luther and Stresemann were exposed chiefly to attacks from the Right in Germany: they therefore found themselves compelled to defend their work not as a gain for Germany in itself but as one that did not involve any renunciation, and to press for additional concessions before signature, to the point of wearying the British and French Governments with their importunity and calling down upon Briand attacks from the Right in France. How far this line corresponded to their real views it is hard to say precisely. Stresemann, it is clear, returned to Berlin well satisfied with the achievement of Locarno and regarded it as a considerable step forward in the process of Germany recovering her position and freedom as a Great Power. The three major estimates that he gave of the Locarno policy and the possibilities that it opened up for the future - his letter to the ex-Crown Prince and his speeches of 22 November and 14 December - differ in emphasis according to the audience, but in all of them he stressed the security actually achieved in the west and the possibility of future gains in the east.(46) As for renunciation Stresemann emphasised in both speeches that in renouncing war for the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine

46. Letter to the ex-Crown Prince, 7 Sep. 1925, Stresemann Nachlass, 7138/H159871-75, incomplete in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 553-5; speech of 22 Nov., Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, XV (1967), pp. 415-36; speech of 14 Dec., A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, App. II, incomplete in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 231-44. Cf. also his statement in a letter of 27 Nov. (op. cit., p. 246): "Ich sehe in Lokarno die Erhaltung des Rheinlandes und die Möglichkeit der Wiedergewinnung deutschen Landes im Osten".

Germany was not undertaking any moral or political obligation but was simply abandoning something that she was not in a position to use; but he also admitted that he saw no prospect of recovering Alsace-Lorraine by peaceful means. Also in both speeches Stresemann rather played down the importance of the "Rückwirkungen" in the Rhineland; but for the purpose of securing Reichstag approval of the treaties he was well aware of the importance of having immediate progress to show.(47)

Luther, although supporting the pact policy after his initial hesitations, was less personally committed than was Stresemann, and felt no need to be gracious about it.(48) He carried a greater responsibility than Stresemann for keeping the Government together, and was more inclined to make concessions to the Nationalist ministers. Equally he resented their resignation on 23 October as much as or more than Stresemann. But this event did not free Luther and Stresemann from the need to pursue a "national" line on the treaties. They had both been very anxious to get the Nationalists into the Government in the first place and hoped that they would join another: a breach was therefore to be avoided. Thus they were more rather than less impelled to defend themselves against right-wing attacks by repeating that Germany had renounced nothing and was entitled to immediate benefits from the pact, even some that Stresemann had earlier denied any intention of seeking.(49) The drawback of this line was not only that

47. Circular tel., 20 Oct. 1925, 3123/D644936-38.

48. For his attitude at Locarno and in London see his Politiker ohne Partei, pp. 398-401.

49. For the political struggles in Germany after Locarno see Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, pp. 213-17; Luther, Politiker ohne Partei, pp. 386-94; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp 203-07; Stockhausen, Sechs Jahre Reichskanzlei, pp. 181-5.

it was defensive and apologetic and obscured recognition of the gains actually made, to Stresemann's eventual political detriment: it also carried the risk that unless all the benefits were forthcoming quickly, which was hardly to be expected, public opinion in Germany would become soured while confidence abroad in German policy, necessary for the achievement of further gains, would be in no way strengthened.

The concrete urgent task was to secure a date for the beginning of the evacuation of the Cologne zone. The Allied Ministers had said at Locarno that the German Government should send a note to the Ambassadors' Conference undertaking to settle the remaining points on disarmament and give instructions for carrying them out, and for their part they would support an early decision on evacuation. The note from the German Government was delivered in Paris on 23 October. It stated that the great majority of the demands set out in the Allied note of 4 June had been met or were well on the way to completion. Only on a very small number had decisive progress not been made, but the German Government hoped that a satisfactory solution could be found if the Allies took account of German interests.(50) Unfortunately the points causing difficulty - the organisation of the Schutzpolizei, the status of the Chef der Heeresleitung, prohibition of army training with certain weapons, the artillery of the fortress of Königsberg, and the "patriotic" associations - included some of great importance. In addition little progress had been made in producing legislation on

50. Cmd 2527 of 1925, Correspondence between the Ambassadors' Conference and the German Ambassador at Paris respecting German disarmament, evacuation of Cologne Zone and modification in the Rhineland régime, Paris, October-November 1925; D.D.B., Vol. II, No. 124 (without annexes). For the progress made on disarmament in the summer and early autumn see Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 313-14.

the manufacture of and trade in war material.(51)

While the Allied Military Committee at Versailles were considering the details of the German note the Governments were preparing for an essentially political decision to accept the German assurances and fix a date for the evacuation to begin. They did not really need the German démarches stressing that the Reichstag's approval of the treaties depended on the Allies carrying out their assurances.(52) But at the same time some of the outstanding points were regarded as important. On 3 November Chamberlain instructed Crewe to tell the French Government that the British wished to confine themselves to those points which, if not liquidated, might constitute a real danger to peace. Locarno had introduced a wholly new spirit into relations with Germany, which in this instance led to the conclusion that peace would be better guaranteed by mutual conciliation than by insistence on the fulfilment of all the demands in the note of 4 June. Provided that the Germans completed the destruction of the remaining unauthorised plant and showed a reasonable spirit of compromise on the matters of difficulty, Chamberlain saw no reason why evacuation should not begin at an early date. He suggested that a reply should be sent promising that it would begin on 1 December provided that agreement were reached

51. See the British General Staff's comments in D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 28, n.3.

52. Tel. to Sthamer, 22 Oct. 1925; Hoesch tel., 23 Oct.; tels. to Sthamer and Hoesch, 27 Oct.; Hoesch tel., 28 Oct.; Sthamer tel., 28 Oct., 3123/D644971-74, D645285-92, D645316-21, D645348-49, D645353-59; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 36.

on the points of difficulty and the German Government gave an undertaking to carry this agreement out.(53)

Briand was doubtful both about the date of 1 December and about the wisdom of making specific demands on the points of difficulty, partly because it would seem like the bargaining which he had made it plain at Locarno that he would not allow, and partly because incomplete German acceptance would cause further trouble. It seemed to him better to ask the Germans to put forward proposals for settling the points. Chamberlain accepted the latter suggestion but argued strongly for 1 December as the date of the signature of the treaties; and Briand deferred to his wishes. The reply to Hoesch was accepted by the Ambassadors' Conference on 6 November. It took note with satisfaction of the progress made and asked the German Government to make immediate proposals for settling the points of difficulty. The proposals should be such as to deprive the police of any military character, to prevent associations from concerning themselves with military matters or having connexions with any military authority, and to prevent the constitution of a command organisation larger than that for an army corps. The Allied Governments, the note said, would be happy if the German answer enabled them to fix the date for beginning the evacuation of the Cologne zone as 1 December.(54)

Relaxations in the occupation régime of the second and third zones,

53. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, ~~Op. cit.~~, No. 50. The British were prepared to waive the demand about the fortification of Königsberg. The Belgian Ambassador understood this to mean that they did not wish to weaken Germany vis-à-vis the Soviet Union: minute by Lampson, 3 Nov. 1925, C 14087/21/18, FO 371/10710.

54. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 59, 63, 70, 71; Cmd 2527 of 1925.

such as a reduction in the number of ordinances, and the appointment of a Reich Commissioner, were being discussed at the same time. But German demands mounted too and became increasingly embarrassing. On 26 October Chamberlain instructed D'Abernon to tell Luther and Stresemann that he knew that the treaty would be accepted, for no nation could afford to reject "this great act of oblivion and reconciliation"; but that he was worried by the attitude of the Nationalists who were doing their best to prove to the British and French public that the Germany that mattered (a reference to Schubert's assertion at Locarno that they represented the best in Germany) did not want peace. Chamberlain repeated the warning next day after arriving in Paris for a League Council meeting, saying that Briand's difficulties were being greatly increased and he himself was receiving "most unfortunate reactions".(55) Hoesch and Sthamer duly conveyed assurances that the German Government were determined to carry through the pact, but within a few days Hoesch was again being instructed to press Briand on the alleviations and the evacuation and Stresemann was saying that he hoped that Briand would say something about shortening the period of the occupation of the second and third zones.(56)

This last request produced a fairly sharp reaction in London and Paris. Chamberlain telegraphed to D'Abernon that he did not understand Stresemann's request for "action" under Article 431 of the Treaty of Versailles. Throughout the negotiations of the spring and summer it had been made perfectly clear that the pact would not involve any

55. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 26, 27, 32.

56. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 28, 31, 36, 43; 3123/D645316-21, D645348-49, D645353-59, D646381-82; K1886/K475467-70.

modification in the occupation clauses of the Treaty, and at the very outset the German Government had disclaimed any intention of asking for such a modification. Great steps were being taken to grant alleviations, but there was a limit and if the Germans tried to push the Allies too far they were defeating their own object. "In short they are in grave danger of falling into their usual error of opening their mouths too wide. Time is on their side if they play their cards even moderately well. Can you not make them realise this"?(57) And Briand instructed de Margerie to tell Stresemann that the French Government had decided of their own accord to hasten the evacuation and reduce the burden of the occupation. But they would not abandon the disarmament questions still unsettled, nor would they allow Germany to raise the question of shortening the occupation, which had played no part in the pact negotiations, which constituted a guarantee of the execution of the peace treaty, and which was still bound up with the question of reparations.(58) Stresemann and Hoesch still hoped that something could be said about future possibilities; but Berthelot refused and Hoesch thought that the limit of demands was being reached.(59)

57. Chamberlain spoke in similar vein to Sthamer on 5 November: D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 53, 64; Sthamer tels., 5 Nov. 1925, 3123/D646401-09; K 1886/K457664-66.

58. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 56. Laroche told R.F. Wigram of the British Embassy in Paris that Locarno marked a change in French policy from one of "magnificence" to one of "consolidation". But that did not mean that Germany could flout the peace treaty. The occupation was bound up with reparations: if Germany would pay a large lump sum France would be ready to leave the Rhineland tomorrow; otherwise she would stay till the treaty date, or beyond it if Germany were not at that time showing good faith: op. cit., No. 66.

59. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, ~~Op. cit.,~~ No. 68; memorandum by Stresemann, 8 Nov. 1925, 3123/D646451-56, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 223-7; Hoesch tels., 5 and 6 Nov., 3123/D646419-22, D645400-03.

Other matters that caused concern in London and Paris were interpretations of the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee itself. On 31 October Stresemann made a speech at Dresden in which he was reported as saying that Chamberlain had assured him that the entire British navy and army were at Germany's disposal if the French crossed the frontier. On learning of this report Chamberlain told D'Abernon to warn Stresemann to be careful about what he said, and Stresemann replied that he had been misquoted.(60) The same point came up in a broadcast by Stresemann, as well as a statement that Germany had not renounced Alsace-Lorraine but retained the possibility of recovering it by peaceful means. Stresemann was particularly anxious that Briand and Chamberlain should not themselves refer to Alsace-Lorraine in speeches because it was a central point of the argument with the Nationalists; but his own statements on the subject earned Hoesch a rebuke from Briand.(61)

In the first few days of November the Germans were pressing for an early announcement of the alleviations which the occupying powers were going to introduce in the Rhineland, without which, Stresemann maintained, the Government could not be reconstructed.(62) Chamberlain

60. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 48, 54; tel to Sthamer, 4 Nov. 1925, 3123/D645379.

61. Tel. to Hoesch, 4 Nov. 1925; Hoesch tels., 5 and 6 Nov.; tel. to Hoesch, 7 Nov., 3123/D645384, D645395-96, D646400-03; memorandum by Schubert, 7 Nov., 4509/E130227-28; memorandum by Stresemann, 8 Nov., 3123/D646451-56, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 223-7; D.B.F.P., Ser.IA, Vol. I, No. 69, n.2. The first drafts of the preamble to the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee contained a reference to the necessity of stabilising the territorial status quo. The German delegation at Locarno secured the substitution of a reference to the need to secure peace: Notes of Third Meeting, 7 Oct., C 12943/459/18, FO 371/10742; Locarno-Konferenz, No. 25.

62. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 49, 64, 69; Stresemann tel., 4 Nov. 1925; Sthamer tel., 5 Nov.; Hoesch tel., 5 Nov., 3123/D645380-81, D646407-09, D646419-22.

too was anxious for early decisions, despite his annoyance at the German appearance of bargaining or even threatening and his anxiety at the understandable reactions in France. The treaties were to be debated in Parliament on 17 November and he needed to be able to state the decisions and in particular to name the date for the beginning of the evacuation of Cologne.(63)

The German reply on disarmament was sent to Paris on 9 November. There followed a week of intensive negotiation over some points of the note, over the date of announcing the beginning of evacuation, and over including a terminal date. On 14 November the Ambassadors' Conference sent Hoesch a note on the alleviations in the occupation régime. It stated that the occupying powers were prepared to grant measures of amnesty subject to the German Government doing the same, and were ready to introduce reforms facilitating the exercise of German administration, revising the ordinances, and reducing the number of troops - "se rapprochant des chiffres normaux".(64) At the same time Hoesch was given a verbal declaration that the evacuation of the Cologne zone would begin on 1 December: the reason for this was that the Ambassadors' Conference reply on disarmament could not be ready for the meetings of the Centre Party and the D.N.V.P. on 15 November. The note itself, which followed on 16 November, stated that agreement had been reached on the completion of the points of disarmament still outstanding, and that the evacuation would begin on 1 December and

63. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 73, 75.

64. Cmd 2527 of 1925; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No. 1, n.3. Hoesch asked for an undertaking that the member would be reduced to the pre-war figure. The French put in "normaux" as deliberately vague but indicating a "normal" situation: D.B.F.P. Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 192, n.2, 203.

would if possible be completed in January. The Control Commission would be withdrawn as soon as it had completed the tasks still remaining. The list of alleviations to be introduced in the occupied territory was published on 18 November.(65)

The German Cabinet met with the President on 16 and 18 November to discuss the outcome of the negotiations. Not all the ministers were thoroughly satisfied, but most of them agreed that Locarno was a major breach in the Treaty of Versailles and opened the way to further dismantling. Gessler, the Reichswehr Minister, said that he would have preferred to wait to decide on the treaties until disarmament had been finally wound up, but he did not think that Germany had renounced anything. In renouncing war in the west she was abandoning something that she did not have the power to undertake: it was like a man who had lost both legs saying that he had decided not to go dancing. Hindenburg grumbled that Germany's position was still quite unequal and that Poland was still guaranteed by France. The Government, he said, must not forget the Soviet Union and must make sure that Germany's freedom of action was recognised. The Cabinet decided to recommend to the Reichstag acceptance of the Locarno treaties.(66)

The Land Governments accepted the treaties on 19 November: the

65. Cmd 2527 of 1925. For the final negotiations see D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 85-112, passim; Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 321-5.

66. Notes of Cabinet meetings, 16 and 18 Nov. 1925, 3243/D713972-99. For the attitude of Hindenburg and of Seeckt, the head of the Reichswehr, see Andreas Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic, Princeton 1964, pp. 94-8; General Friedrich von Rabenau, Seeckt, aus seinem Leben, Leipzig 1941, pp. 420-1, 430; Meier-Welcker, Seeckt, pp. 481-2, 494-5; Gessler, Reichswehrpolitik in der Weimarer Zeit; F.L. Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933, ~~Oxford~~ London 1966, pp. 206-08.

Reichstag approved them on 27 November by 292 votes to 174 and entry into the League by 272 to 183. The opposition consisted of the Communists and the D.N.V.P., and two small parties. In addition to the Government parties (D.V.P., Centre, Bavarian People's Party, and D.D.P.) the Social Democrates voted in favour.

The House of Commons debated the treaties on 18 November. In his opening speech Chamberlain stressed that, valuable as the agreements initialled were, Locarno was even more important for the spirit which produced them, which informed them, and was already at work. Locarno was not the end of the work of appeasement and reconciliation but its beginning. In describing the conference Chamberlain emphasised the perfect equality, confidence and friendliness of the delegations. The greatest difficulty had been that of Germany's entry into the League, but the letter on Article 16 contained no more than what had been declared by the Assembly and was the common sense of the Covenant. In describing the Treaty of Mutual Guarantee Chamberlain laid stress on the importance of the demilitarised zone, but made it clear that for Britain to take action in advance of the Council the breach must be so serious as to give rise to danger if she delayed. He went on to say that without a détente on Germany's eastern frontiers the work of Locarno would have been only half done; but there too security had been strengthened and war rendered more remote, and Locarno had already borne fruit in the Polish decision not to expel those who had opted for German citizenship. Now the Allies had decided to begin the evacuation of the Cologne zone and to introduce far-reaching modifications in the occupation régime.(67)

67. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 188, cols. 419-32. In conversation with Skrzynski at Locarno Chamberlain had particularly asked that the Polish Government might show magnanimity over the expulsion of optants who under a German-Polish convention were due to leave Poland by 1 November or 1 July 1926. See D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 6, 24, 57, and, for the whole question, Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, pp. 57-70.

Labour and Liberal speakers in the debate agreed that Locarno marked a great advance and directed their criticisms mainly at what had not been done, calling variously for general disarmament, more arbitration, Russian entry into the League, and settlements in south-east Europe. In answer to MacDonald Chamberlain declared that Locarno had not been engineered for the purpose of uniting the West against the Soviet Union nor of detaching Germany from co-operation with her. In his winding-up speech Chamberlain said again that there was no foundation for any suspicion that the Government had at any time since taking office endeavoured to engage any nation or nations in a league against the Soviet Union. In reply to charges of failure to consult the Dominions Chamberlain said that the Government had done their best to have a conference but the Dominions had been unable to send representatives to London. He could not go to meeting after meeting of the League and say that Britain had no policy because all the Governments of the Empire had not been able to meet. The Dominions had been fully informed at every stage, their freedom had been safeguarded in the treaty, and it was hoped to discuss the matter fully at the next Imperial Conference.[68] The motion approving ratification of the treaty was adopted by 375 votes to 13.

68. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 188, cols. 441-2, 519-29. None of the Dominions acceded to the Rhine pact. The New Zealand Government were prepared to do so, probably also the Australian Government. The Canadian Government refused, and the South African Government would probably have done so if asked to declare themselves. Discussion was postponed until the Imperial Conference in the autumn of 1926: it was then agreed that since not all were willing to adhere it was better that none should. C.P. 473(25), CAB 24/175; C. 53(25), CAB 23/51; C 15936/459/18, FO 371/10747; C 16390/459/18, FO 371/10748; C 696, 4881/1/18, FO 371/11247; C.O. 57668/25, CO 532/311; D. 632/26, DO 35/1; D. 7259/26, DO 35/4; E.(I.R.26), 7th meeting; E.129, CAB 32/56.

In France and Belgium there were no parliamentary debates on the treaties between the conference and the date of signature: the ratification debates took place later. In Czechoslovakia the Permanent Parliamentary Committee approved signature of the treaties in advance and so, with misgivings, did the Polish parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs.(69)

The Germans were not alone in considering the possibility that Locarno might open the way to revision of the frontier with Poland. Just before the conference met it was reported from the Vatican that Poland might under gradual Anglo-French pressure be willing to give up the Corridor and that Germany might be willing to neutralise the waterways and railways.(70) Asked to comment on this information, the British Legation in Warsaw replied that the Polish Ambassador to the Holy See must be entirely out of touch with opinion at home to make such a forecast; and they proposed not to comment further since Chamberlain had said that it would be most imprudent to raise the frontier question at present.(71) D'Abernon, after consulting Schubert, replied that whereas neutralisation of East Prussia would arouse strong opposition in Germany, neutralisation of the Corridor would be likely to be more acceptable.(72)

D'Abernon discussed German-Polish relations again with Schubert

69. The Polish Diet approved ratification, by a large majority, on 2 March 1926; the Belgian Chamber of Deputies did so on 21 January; the French Chamber of Deputies on 3 March and the Senate on 4 June.

70. Vatican desp. 128, 30 Sep. 1925, N 5634/43/55, FO 371/10997.

71. Warsaw Chancery letter, 19 Oct. 1925, N 5971/43/55, FO 371/10997; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 34, n. 4.

72. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, ~~op. cit.~~ No. 34. Schubert's version of the conversation is less optimistic: 4569/E168390-91; also 4569/E168392-94.

on 20 November, and suggested that an improvement in them would be a natural consequence of Locarno. Schubert replied that the frontier presented an almost insuperable obstacle, but D'Abernon retorted that it was surely the better policy to initiate an improvement in the hope that when it was better appreciated on both sides some arrangement about the frontier might become possible.(73) D'Abernon thought that he had persuaded Schubert and that some effort might be made on the German side; but he was mistaken. Stresemann, in his speeches of 22 November and 14 December, looked forward to obtaining Germany's political demands in the east as a price for co-operating in financial help to Poland; and by the end of the year the Auswärtiges Amt were working out exactly what those demands would be.(74)

The desirability, voiced by Opposition speakers in the Commons debate, of further settlements in central and south-east Europe, was very much present in Chamberlain's mind. He had written and spoken earlier in the year of his hope that although Britain could not undertake direct obligations beyond the Rhine frontier, the pacification which was expected to result from the western pact would spread to other sensitive parts of Europe. The chief obstacle to such settlements was the fact, pointed out by Nicolson in his January memorandum, that the lesser peace treaties were secured by a preponderance of manpower on the side of the victors. They therefore had no incentive to offer concessions and the smaller defeated countries, being unable to create serious disturbance by themselves, had nothing to offer directly in return for arbitration treaties, non-aggression pacts or mutual

73. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 118.

74. See pp. 398-9.

guarantees, but possibly had much to gain from fomenting causes of insecurity such as minority grievances and from seeking outside patronage. Much therefore depended on the attitude of the major powers. Germany was not at present in a position to offer patronage for revisionist aims; Britain was unwilling to take any responsibility. Italian policy in the Balkans and the Danubian area, and Italian relations with France, were the most important factors.(75)

At Geneva in June Chamberlain and Briand agreed that something ought to be done about the recurrent troubles in the Balkans, and that Italian co-operation should be enlisted. They addressed a telegram to Mussolini saying that they believed that the Great Powers ought to be vigilant. They were not thinking of collective action, but proposed more frequent exchanges of views and hoped that Mussolini would lend his personal support. The telegram was given to Scialoja for transmission to Mussolini, but for some reason never explained it was said never to have reached him. Chamberlain gave a copy to Torretta in August, but Mussolini was still in no hurry to answer.(76) Chamberlain referred to the telegram in his one conversation with Mussolini at Locarno and again suggested that France, Britain and Italy should exchange views if they thought that a dangerous situation was arising or that united action might be salutary. Mussolini was non-committal and in discussing the frictions between the various Balkan countries was, Chamberlain noticed, almost silent about Albania.

75. See D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 84. Italian policy at this time is discussed by Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, pp. 321-2, 338-44.

76. Memorandum by Nicolson, 4 Jun. 1925; Geneva tel. 237, 10 Jun.; Chamberlain to Torretta, 12 Aug., C 8327, 7815, 7915/251/62, FO 371/10695; A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 76(9 Jun.).

Mussolini's answer to the June telegram, delivered in London in the last week of October, was equally non-committal; but Torretta told the Foreign Office that his Government were anxious to co-operate over the serious Greek-Bulgarian frontier incident on 19 October, which involved the Council of the League of Nations.(77)

In his conversation with Mussolini Chamberlain also suggested that a pact of mutual guarantee might be more possible in central Europe than in the Balkans, and he recommended Beneš to consider such a pact between the Little Entente countries and Austria and Hungary; but here too the Italian attitude seemed likely to be doubtful.(78) Chamberlain, however, while agreeing about the difficulties, was anxious that all concerned should at least be made aware that the British Government would welcome and support any proposal aiming to extend to central Europe the principle of agreements between former victors and former enemies. He caused to be sent to the British representatives in the central Europeans capitals, and in Rome, a despatch setting out his views. The Great Powers, he stated, could not impose settlements without the consent of the countries concerned; their governments in turn could not go far ahead of public opinion. But even if concrete proposals for a pact were premature the governments ought to work towards conciliation.(79)

77. Locarno desp. 43, 17 Oct. 1925, C 13128/459/18, FO 371/10743; message from Mussolini, 7 Oct.; minute by Lampson, 24 Oct., C 13838, 13711/251/62, FO 371/10695; D.D.I., Vol. IV, No. 166.

78. Kennard (Belgrade) to Nicolson, 19 Jun. 1925, C 8497/251/62, FO 371/10695; Locarno desp. 49, 17 Oct.; Belgrade tels. 134, 135, 136, 22 Oct., C 13131, 13384, 13385, 13386/13131/62, FO 371/10701; D.D.I., Vol. IV, No. 164.

79. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 39.

The initial reactions were not encouraging. Mussolini was again non-committal. The Hungarians said that Hungary's grievances must be met before relations with her neighbours could improve, but the Foreign Minister, Count Bethlen, indicated at Geneva in December that he might not be unwilling to discuss an arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia. The British Minister in Vienna thought that Austria would not be interested in a security pact because it might prejudice union with Germany, and on account of the South Tyrol. The Roumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs was reported as being rather more hopeful about the Balkans than about central Europe; but the proposal for a Balkan pact without Bulgaria, which was being talked about in November, was generally disliked and came to nothing.(80)

Graham was convinced that Mussolini did not have aggressive designs, but across the Adriatic Kennard in Belgrade was inclined to take Yugoslav anxieties about Italian policy seriously. Early in 1926, however, Kennard thought that it might be possible to get a pact in the Balkans committing the countries to a pacific policy.(81) On 22 January instructions were sent to Crewe and Graham to consult the French and Italian Governments on the possibility of encouraging a

80. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, [illegible] Nos. 119, 137; Rome desp. 936, 6 Nov. 1925; Budapest desp. 233, 6 Nov.; Bucharest desp. 501, 7 Nov.; minute by Lampson, 11 Nov.; desp. 370 to Budapest, 3 Dec.; minute by Lampson, 7 Dec.; Lampson to Howard Smith, 12 Dec.; minute by Lampson, 13 Dec., C 14262, 14270, 14474, 14615, 15697, 15814, 15962, 16057/13131/62, FO 371/10701.

81. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 166; Belgrade desp. 467, 16 Dec. 1925; Kennard to Howard Smith, 17 Dec.; Belgrade desp. 474, 23 Dec.; Lampson to Graham, 30 Dec., C 16338, 16372, 16607/276/92, FO 371/10794; minute by Lampson, 22 Dec., C 16521/251/62, FO 371/10695; Kennard to Lampson, 4 Dec., C 16693/13131/62, FO 371/10701; Kennard to Lampson, 7 Jan. 1926, C 420/308/62, FO 371/11239.

system of comprehensive arbitration treaties between the countries of central and south-east Europe. The first concrete subject to be tackled, it was suggested, was the Yugoslav-Greek dispute over the administration of the Gevgeli-Salonika railway. But when news came that the two countries were about to reach agreement on the railway the instructions were withdrawn; and the next stage of Balkan negotiations involved France more than Britain.(82)

Meanwhile nearer home the German Government continued to announce expectation of more concessions even after the Ambassadors' Conference notes of 14 and 16 November. At a dinner on 20 November Dufour Feronce told Chamberlain that his Government recognised that the promises made at Locarno had been fulfilled but that there still remained many hopes and wishes, especially shortening the period of occupation, reduction of occupation forces, and relaxation of restrictions on air traffic. Chamberlain replied, smilingly but with serious intent, that the trouble about negotiating with Germans was that as soon as they got something they appeared to forget it. There really could not be more concessions now. He and Briand would be willing to talk, but if questions of this kind were raised officially, the answer would be no.(83) Then some passages in Luther's Reichstag speech on 23 November, as reported in the British press, caused representations to be made to Dufour. Luther was reported to have said that negotiations on air traffic had begun: this was not true, nor had the Allies made any promises about the existing restrictions. He was also reported to have

82. Desps. 238 to Paris, 112 to Rome, 22 Jan. 1926; Paris tel. 42, 28 Jan.; Rome tel. 17, 29 Jan., C 840, 1114, 1170/308/62, FO 371/11239. For the next stage see pp. 621-3.

83. Dufour desp., 21 Nov., 1925, 3123/D646558-63.

said that an assurance had been received at Locarno not only that Germany had an equal right to colonial mandates but that the right would be given practical effect. Luther was in fact misreported on this point: what he said was that Germany's right to mandates had been acknowledged and that it was expected that her claim would receive practical recognition. Even so there was reason to warn Dufour again that the Western Governments must not be faced with demands which could not be met at present.(84)

The death of Queen Alexandra and a change of government in France reduced the opportunities for festivities and for long discussions at the time of the signature of the treaties in London on 1 December. But the reported size of the German delegation suggested that they thought they were coming for serious negotiations. Chamberlain telegraphed to Berlin that this would not be possible, and that it was not the moment for the Germans to ask for more; and Schubert assured Addison that new demands and contentious questions would not be raised.(85)

However after the signature of the treaties and agreements on the morning of 1 December Stresemann at once raised the question of reducing the number of troops in the occupied territory. Apart from such problems as the requisitioning of billets, which it was hoped

84. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 116.

85. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, op. cit., No. 120 and n. 4. A similar warning was sent to Berlin by Briand on 29 November, after Stresemann had expounded to the French Chargé d'Affaires his diplomatic programme for the next two years. This consisted of the earliest possible evacuation of the second and third Rhineland zones, the recovery of European and Malmédy, the acquisition of mandates over New Guinea, Samoa, Togo and the Cameroons; and in the longer term revision of the Polish frontier: A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 87.

could be dealt with locally, the Germans were above all anxious to get the occupying powers to undertake to reduce the number of troops in the second and third zones to what they regarded as the "chiffres normaux" referred to in the Ambassadors' Conference note of 14 November, namely the number of German troops garrisoned in the same area before the war - 43,000. Briand said that his Government were working from that point of view, but he had pointed out at Locarno that there were military problems and the position was not strictly comparable with that before 1914 when the German army had a larger garrison farther west in Alsace-Lorraine. Vandervelde said that the Belgian Government intended to reduce the number of their troops by about two-thirds. Chamberlain said that the British forces were being reduced as well as being moved from the Cologne zone to Wiesbaden, but since the British contingent was the smallest of the three the reduction would be proportionately less than the French or Belgian.

Luther then turned to disarmament and complained that the Control Commission were not following the principles agreed in the negotiations in Paris. Briand promised to look into the matter, and Chamberlain begged the Germans to do all on their side to settle the outstanding points and not always to be asking for new concessions. Schubert then said that the German side had put forward proposals in Paris about air control and he hoped that the British representatives would be sent instructions.

Finally Chamberlain raised the question of Luther's reference to mandates and said that to avoid misunderstanding he must make it clear that the idea of Britain or any of the Dominions giving up a mandate was out of the question. Luther replied that the German Government would not raise the matter now, but he could not say that it would

never be raised in the future. Chamberlain answered that a request on mandates would certainly be refused, so that it had better not be put. Briand added that the Italians were disturbed by the German claim: they felt that if any new country were going to have mandates theirs had first claim.(86)

While in London Schubert discussed the questions of air control and the size of the occupation forces further with Tyrell and Lampson. Tyrell repeated advice which Chamberlain had already given to Dufour, that in future the Germans should sound out the ground before asking for further alieviations, to minimise the risk of refusals. Lampson recommended that the German application for entry into the League should be sent soon: otherwise the impression would be created that more concessions were awaited, and this would cause great difficulties for Briand. Schubert said that the Government would have to wait for a favourable moment in relation to domestic difficulties; but he denied that there was any intention of postponing the application in the hope of further concessions.(87)

The situation in Germany after the signature of the Locarno treaties and the outlook for the future were discussed by the British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin in a despatch of 10 December. Addison believed that the great majority of the German people approved Locarno,

86. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 122; A.D.A.P., Vol I.1, No. 1. After Luther's speech the Italian Ambassadors in Paris and London protested against any possible grant of a mandate to Germany unless Italy got one too: D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 121 and n. 3; D.D.I., Vol. IV, No. 186, n. 2.

87. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 123; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos. 3-5. See also op. cit., No. 9 for a note by Stresemann of a conversation with Chamberlain on 3 December. Stresemann's journal of the visit to London and his speech at the signature ceremony are printed in Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 248-54.

and particularly a majority of those with influence in the political, official, business and organised labour fields. The fact that there was opposition was less surprising than its small size. For the future, however, the success of the policy which went under the name of Locarno depended on the manner in which the German Government and people would conform to its spirit and carry out its underlying principles. It was not to be expected that the desire to live in peace and amity with neighbouring countries should suddenly become universal in Germany, especially since a majority of the people believed that Germany had not been responsible for the war, that she had lost it largely as a result of treachery at home, and that the Treaty of Versailles imposed on her iniquitous conditions without precedent in history. Whether Germany would now enter whole-heartedly on the path which had been opened up was a question which Addison confessed himself unable to answer; but his examination of certain German attitudes and ways of thought, and of some of the problems standing in the way, revealed doubts.

The predominant feature of the German character, Addison wrote, which struck any foreign observer, was ungraciousness, an absence of a sense of compromise, a suspicious and irritable concern for dignity. This went with a tendency to form an imaginary conception of the world and other peoples and a lack of respect for weakness, and the whole led to a preference for pressure rather than negotiation to get what was wanted. These characteristics, Addison suggested, had a bearing on the future in so far as it was to be expected that in their relations with their former enemies and their behaviour in the League of Nations, the Germans would continue to think and behave in the same way as in the past. It would be a task for diplomacy to counter German opposition

and engage German co-operation. Addison believed that one of the chief assets in the conversion of Germany to a new mentality was the absence of compulsory military service, and that therefore one of the chief tasks of the western powers would be to prevent a revival of the militarist spirit. This would admittedly be most difficutl: the only thing that seemed possible was to watch closely the main associations, to take steps against activities assuming the character or organised military effort, and to trust that such measures, combined with the absence of conscription, would ensure peace for a long period of time, if possible through a change of heart but at any rate because it would be impossible to wage war.

The problems likely to stand in the way of whole-hearted German entry into the path of peace were those which to the Germans were hardships not to be supported for any great length of time. Questions such as air development, the occupation of the Rhineland and the status of the Saar would probably be solved in Germany's favour in a fairly short time. The three problems which, whatever the facts of the cases or the justice of the decisions taken, were regarded in Germany as insupportable were Danzig and the Corridor, Upper Silisia, and Austria. Addison considered that all three were likely to come alive when Germany entered the League. Fortunately for him, it was beyond his province to suggest how they might be solved in a manner conducive to the peace of Europe.(88)

88. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 141.

Chapter 7

Defence Policy 1922-1926

During the years 1922 to 1926 some changes were made in British defence organisation and others were proposed but rejected. After the Washington Conference, as before, defence policy and planning were dominated by naval problems; hence the closest connexion between defence policy and foreign policy continued to be seen in relation to Japan and to a lesser extent in relation to the United States. Changes in the European situation affected defence planning little: in 1923, when relations with France were strained by the occupation of the Ruhr, the programme of home air defence was enlarged; at the end of 1925, after the conclusion of the Locarno treaties, the programme was slowed down. As has already been indicated in Chapter 5, no detailed consideration was given to the military implications of the western security treaty, but some studies conducted at the time when the treaty was being negotiated reinforced the political arguments for British participation. The question of further limitation of naval armaments was discussed from time to time but no further conference was called before the League of Nations embarked in 1926 on the preparations for a general disarmament conference. Most of the discussion for and in the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference falls outside the scope of this study; but some early features will be discussed in this and in the following chapter. At the same time, however, the Chiefs of Staff were concluding in the first of their annual reviews of defence policy that the size of the armed forces maintained by Great Britain in peacetime was not and could not be determined by the requirements of foreign policy.

Naval and air policy 1922-23

Since the navy took the largest of the three services' share of defence expenditure it was invariably the main target for proposals for

economy. The outcome of the Washington Conference was satisfactory from this point of view, but in the climate of 1922 it was considered necessary to search for further reductions. The end of the conference almost coincided with the publication of the first reports of the Geddes Committee on National Expenditure, which had been set up in August 1921 to examine the provisional estimates for the following year and which recommended savings of £46½ million on the services. The Admiralty objected at once, and a Cabinet committee was set up under Churchill's chairmanship to examine the defence spending part of the report.(1) This committee recommended maintenance of the one-power naval standard and cautious continuation of the development of Singapore and of oil fuel reserves, subject to an examination by the Committee of Imperial Defence.(2)

The decision in principle to construct a base at Singapore was not in fact re-examined by the Coalition Government, but the programme of building up oil fuel reserves was curtailed. The Admiralty offered a cut in the total reserves suggested in the previous year, and proposed to concentrate on the route to the east. At a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence on 28 July 1922 Churchill said that there seemed to be no reason why the fuel reserve should be established by 1929 or 1931 (the alternative dates suggested by the Admiralty). His experience at Washington had made Balfour sceptical about Japanese expansionist aims, and he argued also that if Japan did decide to secure control of the Pacific the United States would necessarily be involved as well as Britain. Lee and Beatty explained that as a result of the Washington Conference the United States could no longer defend her interests in the western Pacific, but that Britain would have to try to defend them since she could not

1. Cmd 1581 of 1922, First Interim Report of Committee on National Expenditure; Cmd 1587 of 1922, Remarks of the Admiralty on the Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure; C. 11(22), CAB 23/29.

2. Proceedings and memoranda, CAB 27/164; reports in C.P. 3692, 3692A, CAB 24/132; C.P.3706, CAB 24/133. See also Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 336-40.

afford to let Japan seize the Philippines. This could only be prevented by the fleet; but at present there was no base east of Malta that could take the fleet and although under the present fuel programme it would be able to go to Singapore in 1925 it would not be able to operate freely when it got there. Balfour asked for further figures about Japanese strength and oil reserves, but said that meanwhile the naval estimates should be based on completing the fuel reserve by 1931.(3)

In due course the Admiralty provided such figures as they could obtain of Japanese oil reserves and tanker strength, which, although admittedly not a good guide to future developments, suggested that Japan already had a larger storage capacity than Britain was contemplating for the route to the east. The Admiralty said that they would view with apprehension any proposal to postpone the date by which the fleet could have freedom of action in the Far East.(4) The question was not discussed again before the end of the Coalition Government. At the next following meeting, on 14 December, the Committee of Imperial Defence agreed to recommend that the Cabinet should reaffirm the decision to develop the base at Singapore on the understanding that no considerable expenditure would be involved for the next two years. They also recommended that completion of the fuel reserve on the route to the east could not prudently be delayed beyond 1931. A Treasury representative, Sir George Barstow, questioned the argument against a later date, saying that he could not understand why the Admiralty were content to be weak in the Pacific up to 1931 but considered that it would be dangerous thereafter. Crowe replied that the question was being put in the wrong way. It was possible to say with confidence that there was no danger of war in the Pacific in 1925,

3. C.I.D. Paper 175-C, CAB 5/4; C.I.D. 161st meeting, CAB 2/3.

4. C.I.D. Paper 180-C, CAB 5/4.

or perhaps in 1931. But the farther ahead one attempted to forecast that there would not be a war the more difficult it became. Some date must be fixed for completing the oil reserve, beyond which it would be rash to assume that there would be no possibility of attack. The Cabinet approved the Committee's recommendations on 21 February 1923.(5)

Meanwhile the Admiralty resuscitated the problem of Empire naval policy and co-operation, which the Imperial Conference of 1921 had decided to shelve until after the Washington Conference. In the summer of 1922 they produced a draft paper for the Dominions, pointing out that the Washington treaties affected capital ships only and while reducing the possibility of sudden war had worsened the position in the western Pacific. Co-operation by the Dominions and colonies was still neded, and they should be urged to build up a nucleus of sea-going vessels, particularly light cruisers and submarines, to help provide oil supplies, and, most urgently, to help in developing Singapore. This question also was not discussed until after the change of government. On 30 November Beatty warned new Ministers attending the Committee of Imperial Defence about the risks being run in the Pacific, and used the recent Chanak crisis to point his case. The Committee agreed to send the paper on co-operation to the Dominions.(6)

The fact that the decision to develop Singapore was reaffirmed before the next Imperial Conference, due later in 1923, did not please Smuts, who wanted a discussion on Empire foreign and naval policy in the light of the situation created by the Washington naval treaties.(7) The treaties themselves had not been fully ratified over a year after their signature, á fact which began to cause concern both in London and in Tokyo. In the middle of June 1923 the Admiralty asked the Foreign Office whether pressure

5. C.I.D. 168th meeting, CAB 2/3; C. 11(23), CAB 23/45.

6. C.I.D. Paper 176-C, CAB 5/4; C.I.D. 165th meeting, CAB 2/3.

7. C.O. 21865/23, CO 532/238; C.I.D. Papers 189-C, 192-C, CAB 5/5.

could be put on the French Government. They pointed out that whereas they had already taken action on the treaty and had rendered unserviceable all but one of the ships due for scrapping, the United States and Japan had done no more than hold up their construction programmes.(8) A couple of months earlier there had been a considerable fuss in Washington when the Navy Department asked Congress for funds to modify the main armament of ships on the ground that Britain had already done so. This was not the case; the Admiralty had told the United States Embassy in London so officially; and Geddes believed that a considerable number of American naval officers, regretting the limitations of the naval treaty, were determined to pursue expansion in directions that were still open.(9)

The Japanese Government, however, were anxious to see the naval treaty come into force, and early in July they proposed joint representations to the French and hinted that the three major naval powers should agree to apply it as between themselves independently of France and Italy. The United States Embassy in Paris were pressing the French Government to complete ratification, but the Foreign Office were inclined to hold back in view of the other matters of disagreement with the French at that time.(10) The naval treaty and the Pacific treaty received the approval of the French Senate and Chamber of Deputies during July and all the ratifications were finally deposited in Washington on 17 August. At the same time the Japanese press was showing interest in Singapore and was suggesting that its development was directed against Japan. Much of the material for the

8. Admiralty to Foreign Office, 16 June 1923, A 3554/24/45, FO 371/8482.

9. Washington desp. 325, 17 Mar. 1923, A 1890/24/45, FO 371/8481. There was another press campaign in May, again based on false information and again originating in the Navy Department: Washington desp. 607, 11 May, A 2995/24/45, FO 371/8482.

10. Paris tel. 609, 24 Jun. 1923; Tokyo tels. 103, 104, 2 Jul.; Paris tel. 643, 4 Jul.; desp. 271 to Tokyo, 11 Jul., A 3713, 3950, 3993, 4023/24/45, FO 371/8482.

discussion in fact came from Britain, and the Embassy in Tokyo reported that without the stimulus of articles or speeches in Britain justifying Singapore on grounds of the present and possible future state of Anglo-Japanese relations very little interest would be taken.(11)

Singapore was the subject of a paper produced by the Admiralty in the summer of 1923 in preparation for the Imperial Conference to be held in October, along with one on naval policy in the post-Washington situation and recommendations on the type of naval forces considered most suitable for the individual Dominions. The papers for Australia and New Zealand stressed that as a result of the Washington Conference the United States Navy could not operate effectively in the western Pacific, and that the British superiority over Japan in capital ships was offset by the great distance from home. Fleet mobility was therefore essential, and the development of Singapore as a repair and fuelling base was the keystone of preparations to enable the fleet to be concentrated in the Far East. An enemy would aim to seize Singapore in the interval before the main fleet could arrive, and so the task of the Empire's naval forces already in the Pacific would be to delay and harass such an expedition. The Australian and New Zealand Governments were therefore advised to concentrate on cruisers and submarines.(12)

The Imperial Conference did not devote much time to defence. As in 1921 the Australian and New Zealand Prime Ministers were conscious of naval problems and expressed willingness to co-operate. Smuts was doubtful about the usefulness and defensibility of Singapore. Mackenzie King, who was representing Canada for the first time, was chiefly concerned to

11. Tokyo tel. 104; Tokyo desp. 378, 2 Jul. 1923; Tokyo desp. 416, 1 Aug.; Tokyo tel. 239, 5 Dec., F 1998, 2364, 2632, 3491/1889/61, FO 371/9225; Tokyo desp. 582, 24 Dec., F 279/123/61, FO 371/10299.

12. C.I.D. Papers, 194-C, 195-C, 196-C, 201-C, 202-C, 204-C, CAB 5/5.

emphasise the independence of the Dominions. At the end the conference adopted some fairly platitudinous resolutions on defence, committing none of the governments and stressing the responsibility of the individual Parliaments for deciding the nature and extent of their countries' defence effort. Subject to this proviso the resolution suggested that each part of the Empire should be responsible for its local defence, that provision be made to safeguard maritime communications and trade, that facilities be provided to ensure fleet mobility, and that naval strength equal to that of any other power should be maintained in accordance with the Washington naval treaty. The conference noted the interest of Australia, New Zealand and India in the development of Singapore and the necessity of maintaining a safe passage to the east, and recorded an earnest desire for the further limitation of armaments.(13)

The Imperial Conference also took note of the necessity for Britain to maintain a home defence air force strong enough to give protection against attack by the strongest air force within striking distance, and were duly alarmed by Hoare's statement on the French air force.(14) A decision to build up the home defence air force to 600 aircraft instead of the 500 projected in 1922 was one outcome of the enquiry carried out by the Salisbury Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

An enquiry into naval and air co-operation had been decided upon in March 1922, but the decision was not implemented until a year later when

13. E. 9th, 10th, 15th meetings, CAB 32/9; Cmd 1987 of 1923, Imperial Conference, 1923, Summary of Proceedings; Cmd 1988 of 1923, Imperial Conference, 1923, Appendices to the Summary of Proceedings. Mackenzie King's position is discussed in R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, a Political Biography, Vol. I, Toronto 1958, pp. 455-80; Ramsay Cook, "J. W. Dafoe at the Imperial Conference, 1923," in Canadian Historical Review, XLI (1960), pp.19-40. Canadian naval policy in this period is discussed in Gilbert Norman Tucker, The Naval Service of Canada, Ottawa 1952, Vol. I, pp. 304-32; James G. Eayrs, In Defence of Canada, Vol. I, Toronto 1964, pp. 149-84.

14. E. 10th and 11th meetings, CAB 32/9.

a committee under Lord Salisbury was appointed to examine the co-operation and correlation of the three Services from the point of view of national and imperial defence.(15) In addition to examining, in a further sub-committee, the controversy between the Admiralty and the Air Staff over naval aviation, the Salisbury Sub-Committee considered the assumptions on which defence planning should be based and the machinery required. At their first meeting on 15 March 1923 the following preliminary assumptions were adopted: (a) home defence should be considered in relation to imperial defence; (b) in the oceans the primary responsibility rested on the navy; (c) in the narrow seas, however, the navy was no longer solely responsible; (d) while war with a Great Power was a remote contingency an adequate air force was essential to supportBritish diplomacy. Three alternative hypotheses for war were to be considered: war with an enemy in western Europe, war with a transoceanic enemy, and war with an enemy in the Near and Middle East.(16)

In reply to questionnaires sent to the Service Departments the Air Staff produced an alarming and exaggerated estimate of French air strength and of the weight of bombs that could be dropped on England. France was credited with a metropolitan air force of 946 aircraft, of which 600 were said to be capable of delivering 160 tons of bombs every twenty-four hours. In fact France had a first-line bomber strenth of 320, and approximately the same number of fighters, the remainder being observation machines which the French did not regard as combat aircraft; and the calculation of the weight of bombs was based on an assumption that each aircraft could make two sorties in twenty-four hours, that all reached their objectives, and that none was lost.(17) In addition, as the General Staff were quick

15. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 161, col. 35. See Chapter 2, p. 194.

16. C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Defence, 1923, 1st meeting, CAB 21/260.

17. N.D. 4, N.D.10, CAB 21/260; Roskill, Naval Policy, Vol. I, p. 383, n. gives figures from the Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air.

to point out, the Air Staff ignored such considerations as French preoccupation with Germany.[18] The civilian Ministers on the sub-committee were, however, impressed by the Air Staff's figures and agreed to recommend that the home defence air force should be built up to 600 first-line aircraft. Inevitably the fact that the French air force was being used as the yardstick became publicly known, and before the decision on numbers was taken the Cabinet agreed that Salisbury should state in the House of Lords that talk of attack by France was deprecated and the Government could not conceive of anything worse than competition with her; but that they would make whatever provision for defence was necessary and the strength of the R.A.F. would probably be increased.[19]

The sub-committee on relations between the navy and the R.A.F. proposed a compromise on naval aviation by which the Fleet Air Arm was to remain under naval control while at sea but was to be manned and trained by the R.A.F. The compromise was accepted by the Cabinet at the end of July, but the question continued to cause difficulty and ill feeling between the two Services for some time.[20] On the question of the machinery for defence planning, the Salisbury Sub-Committee decided against the creation of a Ministry of Defence but also against the abolition of the Air Ministry. Instead they recommended strengthening the Committee of Imperial Defence and making the Chiefs of Staff collectively responsible for tendering joint advice on defence. The Chiefs of Staff did not find

18. N.D. 31, CAB 21/261.

19. C.25(23), CAB 23/45; H.L. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 54, cols. 83-8; Sub-Committee on Defence, 10th and 11th meetings, CAB 21/262; C.32(23), CAB 23/46; Cmd 2029 of 1924, Report of the Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on National and Imperial Defence. The Air Staff continued to use France as the hypothetical enemy for the home defence air force.

20. C.P. 349(23), CAB 24/161; C. 42(23), 43(23), CAB 23/46; Cmd 1938 of 1923, Recommendations of the National and Imperial Defence Committee on Relations of the Navy and Air Force.

this easy at first, or indeed always later. The difficulty was partly due to the differences between the bases on which the three services calculated their requirements, as well as to initial lack of familiarity with each other's problems and lack of the habit of working together. Nevertheless the inauguration of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was a considerable step forward in providing for defence planning.(21)

Singapore and the Navy 1924-25

Soon after taking office the Labour Government decided to reconsider the base at Singapore. A committee under Clynes, the Lord Privy Seal, accepted the strategic case for the base but recommended that its construction should be abandoned in the interests of the Government's policy of international understanding and disarmament.(22) When the Dominions were consulted Smuts applauded the Labour Government's intention but the Governments of Australia and New Zealand (both of which had agreed to contribute to the cost) and of Newfoundland expressed disapproval: the Canadian Government declined to comment. MacDonald announced the decision in the House of Commons on 18 March.(23)

The news that Singapore was being reconsidered was welcomed in Japan, and after the decision was announced Eliot wrote to MacDonald that it had

21. Cmd 2029 of 1924; C. 35(23), CAB 23/46; C.P. 346(23), CAB 24/161. On the Salisbury Sub-Committee in general see Franklin B. Johnson, Defence by Committee, London 1960, pp. 193-8; Andrew Boyle, Trenchard, London 1962, pp. 467-91; Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 372-82; Roskill, Hankey, Vol. II, pp. 336-41.

22. C. 14(24), C. 15(24), CAB 23/47; R.S.(24), 1st and 2nd meetings, CAB 27/236. The committee was also meant to examine the question of ship replacements but did not do so thoroughly. The Committee of Imperial Defence on 11 February agreed that the oil fuel reserve should be treated as a whole, its distribution being a matter for the Admiralty, and that the 12 months reserve should be completed by 1937: C.I.D. Papers 476-B, 477-B, 479-B, CAB 4/10; C.I.D. 180th and 181st meetings, CAB 2/4.

23. C. 21(24), CAB 23/47; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 171, cols. 317-25. The correspondence with the Dominion and Indian Governments was published in Cmd 2083 of 1924, Singapore Naval Base. Correspondence with the Self-Governing Dominions and India regarding the Development of Singapore Naval Base.

had an excellent effect on Japanese feeling. Well-informed Japanese, he wrote, had not regarded Singapore as a threat but they had been hurt that their former ally had taken the first opportunity to create fortifications as near to Japan as the Washington treaty allowed, and had been angry at British statements that the base was needed on account of possible Japanese activity in the Pacific. Eliot could see no sign of an aggressive Japanese policy to the south: even on the mainland Japanese intentions were, he thought, limited. The Japanese wanted a special position in north China and were anxious to extend their influence in Manchuria, but without quarrelling with Russia. In China proper they were chiefly interested in a preferential commercial position: they would prefer China to remain weak, but not so weak as to fall a prey to foreign powers. Eliot believed that in general the Japanese would for some time to come make considerable concessions rather than break away from the other powers.(24)

British naval opinion was not uniformly hostile to the decision to abandon the development of Singapore. Admiral Richmond wrote from the East Indies Station to Haldane that although he agreed that the base was needed, he thought that the Services had not begun to work out how it would be used nor what form a war with Japan would take. Haldane replied that he had never denied the desirability and usefulness of the base, but at present strengthening the R.A.F. must have higher priority. Air weakness hampered the Government's diplomacy in Europe where its most urgent tasks lay, and he was not satisfied with the state of co-ordination of the individual Services' proposals.(25) Haldane in fact devoted some part of his short tenure of the chairmanship of the Committee of Imperial

24. Tokyo tel. 59, 4 Mar. 1924, F 664/123/61, FO 371/10299; Eliot to MacDonald, 3 May, FO 800/219.

25. Richmond to Haldane, 16 Apr. and 24 Jun. 1924, National Library of Scotland, Haldane Papers, 5916; Maurice, Haldane, Vol. II, pp. 158-60.

Defence to encouraging co-ordination of defence thinking. At a meeting of the Committee in the summer he pointed out that the different Departments were working on different political assumptions as the bases for their preparations, and suggested that they should be re-examined.(26) No new basis was arrived at before the Labour Government fell, but Haldane's interest was welcomed by Hankey, who wrote to him that previous Governments had neglected the Services. As regards Britain's commitments Hankey thought that the situation in the Near and Middle East and in India was now fairly clear, but the situation in Europe was still obscure and would remain so until the League of Nations had cleared up the position in respect of security and disarmament.(27)

The decision on Singapore also had some effect on the Admiralty's attitude to the question of further limitation of naval armaments, a subject raised from time to time during 1924 in the United States. Early in this election year there was talk in Congress and in the press of calling a new conference. In March Senator Borah introduced in the Senate a resolution calling for another disarmament conference and an economic conference, and the naval appropriations bills passed by the House of Representatives included a request to the President that he should summon another conference. Again in April Senator Pepper introduced a resolution calling for a world conference on disarmament and on a world court. But the Administration were extremely cautious. Hughes let it be known that he did not think the idea of a conference practicable, and told Howard that the Administration had had nothing to do with Senator Pepper's resolution. Both Hughes and President Coolidge indicated in speeches in April

26. C.I.D. 187th meeting, CAB 2/4.

27. Hankey to Haldane, 9 Sep. 1924, Haldane Papers, 5916.

that the present moment was not thought propitious for a conference.[28]

The Admiralty were discussing the lines which further limitation of naval armaments might take, and were disposed to have it suggested to the Japanese Government that since Singapore had been abandoned they should give up their battle fleet. This suggestion can hardly have been intended to be taken seriously, and sounds more like a hit at MacDonald and Clynes.[29] MacDonald was not inclined to favour another conference at present as he was concentrating on the reparation question; but since at the end of May the American press was again saying that the President intended to call a conference on disarmament at an early date an enquiry was sent to Washington.[30] Howard replied that it was now very unlikely that Coolidge would call a conference before the spring. It was said that he would do so if he were re-elected in November, but all that he had stated publicly was that he would do so when conditions in Europe warranted it.[31] The matter rested there until the end of the year.

During the summer of 1924 Japanese-American relations were strained by the new United States immigration bill, and the Japanese became, in Eliot's view, more assertive and more suspicious about reports of Anglo-American consultation over China. No such consultation had taken place and the Foreign Office tried to soothe the Japanese suspicions; but they

28. Letter from Hughes to Hamilton Fish, The Times, 20 Feb. 1924; Washington tel. 100, 24 Mar., A 1947/435/45, FO 371/9616; Washington desp. 584, 8 Apr., A 2464/435/45, FO 371/9617; Washington desp. 654, 18 Apr., A 2648/218/45, FO 371/9610; Washington tel. 133, 22 Apr., A 2525/435/45, FO 371/9617.

29. Minutes on A 2681, 3517/435/45, FO 371/9617: see also Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 423-5, 428-9. The Clynes Committee did not meet between 11 April (when Snowden, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urged economy in replacements and an attempt to reach agreement with Japan) and 24 June, and did not meet again thereafter: CAB 27/236.

30. Washington tel. 173, 26 May 1924; desp. 959 to Washington, 14 Jun., A 3214, 3512/435/45, FO 371/9617.

31. Washington desp. 1182, 18 Jul. 1924; minute by Sir A. Willert, 15 Aug., A 4541, 4951/435/18, FO 371/9618. See Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 431, 433-4.

acknowledged that co-operation with Japan, difficult for a long time, had become very difficult owing to the wide divergence between the two countries' interests in China.(32) It was suggested that MacDonald should speak to the Japanese Ambassador, but Parliament was dissolved before an opportunity arose. On entering office Chamberlain took up the suggestion and also proposed to speak to the United States Ambassador. He did so on 14 November and later wrote to Howard that consultations about China were needed and it would be much better if the initiative would come from Washington. He feared that Japan might be drawn into an agreement with the Soviet Union and that the days of spheres of influence might return unless the United States and Britain gave Japan a lead in practical consultation.(33) The State Department were not indisposed for discussions, but in fact little was done until the situation in China became more threatening again in the summer of 1925.(34)

Chamberlain also told the Japanese Ambassador that he desired close co-operation with Japan in Chinese affairs and would welcome Japanese views on a constructive policy in China. The Ambassador asked about the new Government's intentions on Singapore and said that there would be anxiety in Japan if the project were taken up again. Chamberlain replied that Singapore had not yet been discussed, but if it were decided to resume construction the Japanese must not think that it was with any unfriendly intention. Singapore was an essential link in the communications between

32. Tokyo tel. 224, 12 Sep. 1924, F 3099/19/10, FO 371/10244; Eliot to MacDonald, 19 Sep., FO 800/219; desp. 424 to Tokyo, 22 Sep.; minute by Wellesley, 26 Sep.; Tokyo tel. 235, 28 Sep., F 3099, 3281, 3245/19/10, FO 371/10244; Tokyo desp. 376, 3 Oct.; Tokyo tel. 258, 30 Oct., F 3582, 3638/19/10, FO 371/10245.

33. Desp. 1737 to Washington, 14 Nov. 1924, F 3871/19/10, FO 371/10246; Chamberlain to Howard, 19 Nov., F 3701/19/10, FO 371/10245; desp. 1774 to Washington, 25 Nov., F 3945/19/10, FO 371/10247.

34. Desp. 1813 to Washington, 2 Dec. 1924; Washington tel. unnum., 3 Dec., F 3983, 4085/19/10, FO 371/10247.

Britain and Australia and New Zealand, and no British Government of any party could ever plan a deliberate attack on another country. Eliot's first letter to Chamberlain also referred to Japanese anxiety about Singapore, and repeated his conviction that the present Japanese Government regarded all ideas of expansion in the south as chimerical.(35)

The new Government in fact decided at an early date to resume construction of the Singapore base. The Admiralty urged that the late Government's statement that construction was only suspended until it was seen whether a disarmament agreement were possible took no account of their repeated representations that reduction of armaments made the base more rather than less necessary. The decision was announced in Parliament on 9 December.(36)

However the naval programme came under attack from the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Churchill, within a few days of the Government taking office. He proposed that the Committee of Imperial Defence should be asked to make a fresh appraisal of the dangers to which the Empire was exposed, to consider whether the Ten-Year Rule ought to be extended or renewed, and to review the Admiralty's building programme for cruisers. He wrote to Baldwin and Chamberlain that the naval programme was based on the idea of war with Japan, of which he saw not the slightest chance "in our lifetime." Chamberlain, he considered, should be asked to advise the Cabinet and the Committee of Imperial Defence whether war with Japan was a reasonable possibility, and if he advised that it was not the Admiralty should be told not to prepare for it. "They should be made to recast all their plans and scales and standards on the basis that no naval war against a first-class

35. Desp. 494 to Tokyo, 14 Nov. 1924; tel. 176 to Tokyo, 21 Nov., F 3852, 3833/19/10, FO 371/10246; Eliot to Chamberlain, 14 Nov., Chamberlain Papers, AC 51/110, FO 800/256.

36. C.P. 502(24); C.P. 534(24), CAB 24/169; C. 67(24), CAB 23/49; C.I.D. 191st meeting, CAB 2/4; H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 179, col. 49.

Navy is likely to take place in the next twenty years."[37]

For the Committee of Imperial Defence's re-examination of Singapore and the concurrent discussion of the naval programme the Foreign Office produced two memoranda. On Singapore Wellesley argued that it was bound up with the problem of Japanese policy in China. It could not be denied, he wrote, that this policy was to keep China weak and to diminish the prestige and influence of other powers. British and United States influence was the chief restraint on Japan, and it ought to be made effective. But one of the results of the Washington Conference had been to eliminate American naval power from the western Pacific and to strengthen the Japanese position. If Singapore were abandoned China would be left entirely at Japan's mercy. The Japanese did not like the idea of the Singapore base, but recognised that Britain had a right to build it. There was therefore a good deal to be said for undertaking the construction now when it did not represent a threat to Japan rather than later then the political situation might not be so good. On the other hand Wellesley regarded the chance of war in the Pacific as remote. Japan did not want to be politically isolated and at present had no alternative to some degree of co-operation with Britain and the United States: a combination with Russia and Germany was not inconceivable but was not at present even on the horizon. Japan was not now in a position to make war on Britain, and it seemed almost inconceivable that she should wish to do so. The two countries' interests did conflict in China, but rivalry of that kind was unlikely to lead to war. It would be unreasonable to regard Japan as an active enemy and to start building against her, but it was important to British interests that Japan should not be the only power with armed strength

37. Churchill to Baldwin, 15 Dec. 1924, Baldwin Papers, D.I.3, Navy 2 (Vol. 2); Churchill to Chamberlain, 15 Dec., Chamberlain Papers, AC 51/66; Roskill, Naval Policy, p. 445. Churchill also sent to the C.I.D. a memorandum on the economic power of Japan, which he regarded as limited: C.I.D. Paper 553-B, CAB 4/12.

in the Pacific.[38]

Early in the life of the new Government Hankey mentioned to Chamberlain the question raised by Haldane in the summer, of the assumptions as to the possible enemy on which the Service Departments were making their calculations. He suggested that Japan and France provided the best yardsticks for naval and air measures. Chamberlain did not disagree but said that the less the Foreign Secretary knew about such assumptions the better. He did not think that the Committee of Imperial Defence need discuss the question, but suggested that Hankey should consult Curzon, the new chairman. Curzon agreed with Hankey's view but suggested that Germany should be added to the list because she could become formidable again.[39] Now at Churchill's instance the possibility of war with Japan had to be discussed in the Committee of Imperial Defence.

The meeting took place on 5 January 1925. Chamberlain opened it by stating that he regarded the prospect of war in the Far East as very remote. Japan was restless; she had ambitions in China; she was unhappy about the ending of the alliance with Britain and sore about the recent American legislation on immigration. But there was no danger of war unless ~~there~~ a regrouping of the European powers took place and unless there were a political shift in Japan towards a purely eastern policy; and both of these trends would take a long time to mature. Chamberlain said that he would strongly deprecate anything that could be regarded as competitive naval building or anything that would make the Japanese more nervous. On the other hand he welcomed the decision to proceed with Singapore as a necessary link in imperial communications and as something of a guarantee for peace - which was never assured by leaving large territories without defence.

38. Memoranda by Wellesley, 1 Jan. 1925, F 26, 27/9/61, FO 371/10958.

39. Note by Hankey, 20 Nov. 1924, annexed to C.I.D. 187th meeting, CAB 2/4.

Churchill said that the Services had a right to expect from the Government of the day a statement of the dangers against which they were to prepare: it was then their duty to work out the best means of meeting those dangers. He regarded the present position as in no way comparable to that which existed in regard to Germany in the years before 1914. There were now three great naval powers, but they were far apart and none had the means to meet either of the others in its home central decisive theatre. The whole question of defence preparations ought to be considered in an entirely different atmosphere from that prevailing before 1914. He approved of Singapore as a link in imperial communications but not at all as a base from which to attack Japan. He was very anxious not to wound Japanese feelings, and he suggested that the development of Singapore might be followed by a reduction in the military status of Hong Kong, which was indefensible anyway.

The First Lord of the Admiralty, Bridgeman, did not disagree about the improbability of war with Japan, but he disliked the proposition that it was for the Government to decide when there was going to be another war and then for the Services to prepare for it. Governments, he said, had not been very successful in forecasting wars in the past and it was much better to approach the question from the point of view of insuring against reasonable risks. Beatty welcomed Chamberlain's statement as giving a breathing space in which to get out of an intolerable situation of defence-lessness in the Far East. Unlike Churchill, he regarded the present naval situation as much more difficult than that of 1914.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Lord Cavan, rather welcomed the idea that the Cabinet should define the dangers which the staffs were to examine, but said that the latter must be able to raise other questions. Hoare had little to say from the air point of view. He favoured going on with Singapore but was doubtful about public opinion at home and abroad. Chamberlain then came back to the question of Japanese uneasiness and told

the Committee about recent conversations in which Baron Shidehara, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, had told Eliot that to ordinary Japanese it seemed that Britain was combining with the United States against Japan. Eliot had asked what, without giving up Singapore, Britain could do to counter this impression. Shidehara suggested statements in Parliament that the base was not directed against Japan and that the two countries were still friends, and perhaps some special facilities with the Royal Navy for Japanese officers.[40] Chamberlain said that the Foreign Office recommended that the base should be developed without undue haste, that statements coupling Singapore with reflections on Japan should be avoided, that a statement should be made on the lines suggested by Shidehara, and that it should be supplemented by a special message to the Japanese Government.

Curzon agreed that Japanese public opinion ought to be considered, but he thought that the agitation was mainly a matter of domestic politics and he was therefore not inclined to take it too seriously. He was also nervous of any suggestion of making a gesture such as dismantling Hong Kong. Gestures of this kind never brought any benefit: no other country ever made them; those made by Britain were always interpreted as signs of weakness; and they were always regretted afterwards. Also weakening Hong Kong would weaken Britain's position in China and hence in the whole of the Far East.

The Committee then decided to re-examine the proposed sites for the naval base at Singapore and to consider the programme of construction and the defences of the base.[41] On 2 March the Cabinet approved the first report of the sub-committee concerned, recommending expenditure of

40. These conversations were reported in Tokyo tel. 311, 30 Dec. 1924, F 4441/123/61, FO 371/10299, and Tokyo desp. 6, 12 Jan. 1925, F 603/9/61, FO 371/10958. Bridgeman had already made a speech of the kind suggested: The Times, 17 Dec. 1924.

41. C.I.D. 193rd meeting, CAB 2/4.

£787,000 over the next three years on preparations for the floating deck.[42] Since no work had actually been done as yet, despite the decision in principle of 1921 in favour of the base, this was authority for starting construction. At the same time Chamberlain set out in despatches to Eliot the Government's policy on Singapore and towards Japan. It was, he wrote, necessary that the fleet should be able to go to the East, and for this purpose there must be a repair base there. Singapore was at the centre of a vast area of British possessions and British trade, and it was 2,300 miles from Japan. Chamberlain desired to continue close friendship and co-operation with Japan, and the difficulty over Singapore was the more regrettable because it was accidental. To the Japanese the decision to construct the base seemed to be connected with the end of the alliance; to the British it was connected with the limitation of naval armaments. Chamberlain could not believe that Shidehara really meant that friendship with Japan must mean the disarmament of British naval power from Suez eastwards, and he thought that what really rankled with the Japanese might be the waning of a dream of hegemony in the western Pacific. He hoped that the feeling would pass: he would do anything that he could to give expression to a sense of special friendliness.[43]

Churchill's campaign against the naval building programme was, however, only just starting. As has been remarked, it was strongly reminiscent of Lloyd George's attack on the naval estimates in 1913. In a memorandum of 29 January Churchill asserted again that there was no ground for anxiety

42. C.P. 124(25), CAB 24/171; C 12(25), CAB 23/49.

43. Desp. 88 to Tokyo, 27 Feb. 1925; desp. 96 to Tokyo, 5 Mar., F 652, 595/9/61, FO 371/10958. Baldwin spoke of "special bonds of an historic and valued friendship" between Britain and Japan in the House of Commons on 23 February; Bridgeman, in two speeches on the naval estimates on 19 and 23 March, spoke of Japan's valued friendship and stressed that Singapore was not a provocation or offence to any country: H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 180, col. 1590; Vol. 181, cols. 2525-9; Vol. 182, col. 136.

about Japan. The real problem for the Admiralty was to keep in being a navy which over a long period of profound peace would, taken as a whole, not be inferior to those of Japan or the United States. The present effort was being kept at a higher pitch than had been thought possible in 1914: this was both unreasonable and injurious to the main interests of the country. Bridgeman replied a week later that the fleet was weaker than in 1914 and the programme was to cover a period of ten years. After a further reply by Churchill, maintaining that short of mortal peril the most important consideration was economy, naval estimates were presented to Parliament on 9 March containing nothing for new construction: this was to be examined by another Cabinet committee.(44)

In order to provide the basis for its work the Committee of Imperial Defence again considered naval policy with especial reference to the possibility of war with Japan and the rate at which the Singapore base should be developed. The Foreign Office again advised that aggressive action by Japan such as might involve Britain in war in the Pacific was not seriously to be apprehended in the next ten years. The problem of a regular review of the situation was more difficult. Churchill proposed that it should be made every three years, with the ten-year period being automatically renewed so that it always dated from the last review. Beatty wanted the position reviewed every year, and said that the Admiralty thought it neither wise nor politic to lay it down definitely now that there was no need to make, for the next ten years, preparations involving additional expenditure. The docking and fuel facilities, which had already been agreed, were all that the Admiralty were asking for now, but circumstances might arise in which it would become necessary to develop the base

44. C.P. 39, 67, 71(25), CAB 24/171; Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 445-9.

more quickly. Chamberlain observed that in giving their advice the Foreign Office were taking a great responsibility. He wished to make it quite clear that the advice was confined to the question of whether there was a danger of war in the next ten years: they were not saying that there was no need to make in the next ten years any preparations for war later. He hoped that he would be able to repeat the same advice in three years' time, but he might then have to say that it would be advisable to be ready for war at the end of ten years.

Finally the Committee agreed to the following recommendations to the Cabinet: (1) The policy of leaving to the Admiralty the responsibility for the naval defence of the Empire on the basis of the one-power standard should not be reversed or modified. To meet this standard it was sufficient if the fleet, wherever situated, were equal to the fleet of any other nation, wherever situated, provided that arrangements were made for local forces to maintain the situation against vital damage until the main fleet arrived and to give it sufficient mobility on arrival. (2) Aggressive action by Japan against the British Empire in the next ten years was not seriously to be apprehended. The Foreign Office should be responsible for giving warning of any change in the international situation in the Far East which would make a fresh review necessary. (3) Preliminary arrangements to establish docking facilities at Singapore for the largest ships and to develop gradually the necessary oil fuel installations on the route to the east should proceed, but there was no need to make preparations involving additional expenditure for placing at Singapore a British battle fleet superior or at least equal to the Japanese sea-going navy. This decision should be reviewed automatically each year in the light of the international situation, and enquiry should be made as to the preparations that would be necessary if it had to be reversed. (4) Meanwhile the Admiralty should consider what facilities could be made available should war

occur before Singapore was able to sustain a battle fleet.[45]

The Cabinet approved these recommendations on 6 May.[46] Thus so far as the navy was concerned the ten-year rule, at Churchill's insistence, was not only extended from its original terminal date of 1929 but was transformed into a rolling rule under which it would at any time be necessary to predict war at least ten years ahead. The rule was maintained until March 1932, when the Shanghai incident had proved that action to defend British interests in the Far East was impossible without incurring a risk of war which the country could not face. When the rule was abandoned, the depression and the approach of the Disarmament Conference together prevented any increase in defence expenditure. But although the forecast of 1925 proved over optimistic, the estimate of Japanese policy was not wrong for its date.

The Cabinet committee on the naval programme, under Birkenhead, met from March to June 1925, most of the meetings being taken up by a ding-dong argument between Churchill and Beatty. Their views could not be reconciled, so the committee's report was signed only by the other members. When it was presented to the Cabinet Chamberlain was again asked whether he held that war with Japan was unlikely in the next ten years. He replied that he did, but could give no guarantee. A final attempt by Baldwin to get Churchill and the Admiralty to agree failed, and the Cabinet then accepted the committee's report with minor amendments. The outcome was a building programme for five years, consisting of seven cruisers, three flotillas of destroyers, and eighteen submarines. The appointment of a

45. C.I.D. 198th meeting, 30 Mar. 1925; 199th meeting, 2 Apr., CAB 2/4; C.I.D. Paper 244-C, CAB 5/5; C.I.D. Paper 599-B, CAB 4/12.

46. C. 24(25), CAB 23/50; C.I.D. Paper 246-C, CAB 5/5; C.I.D. 200th meeting, CAB 2/4.

Treasury committee on economies in the fighting Services was announced at the same time.(47)

Disarmament and the basis of defence policy, 1925-26

Discussion of the further limitation of naval armaments was resumed in the winter of 1924-25. In November and December there was another press campaign in the United States, fomented by the navy lobby, in which other signatories of the Washington treaty were accused of not having carried out its provisions. Howard found Hughes reluctant to deny the charges in public, but Coolidge did so semi-publicly and British newspapers reported that the agitation was directed primarily against Japan.(48) Shortly afterwards Howard reported that Hughes was anxious to see naval expenditure reduced and might call for a new conference soon. One of the chief difficulties was the present temper in Japan. Cecil visited the United States at about the same time, and reported similar language from Coolidge and Hughes; but Hughes also foresaw difficulty with France.(49) Informal American enquiries in Tokyo revealed a certain scepticism on the Japanese part as to whether views on smaller vessels had changed since the Washington Conference.(50) The British Government were ready to welcome a new conference in the hope that it might lead to further economy, and on 18 February the Cabinet approved, subject to Dominion concurrence, a despatch to Howard instructing him so to inform Hughes.(51)

47. N.P.(25), proceedings, CAB 27/273; report, C.P. 342, 357(25), CAB 24/174; C. 37(25), 15 Jul.; C. 38(25), 16 Jul.; C.39(25), 22 Jul., CAB 23/50; H.C.Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 186, cols. 2421-3; Cmd 2476 of 1925, Navy. Programme of New Construction. See Roskill, Naval Policy, pp. 450-3.

48. Washington desp. 1749, 24 Nov. 1924, A 6781/435/45, FO 371/9619; The Times, 11 and 17 Dec. 1924.

49. Howard to Chamberlain, 22 Dec. 1924. A 77/49/45, FO 371/10636; C.P. 14(25), CAB 24/171.

50. Tokyo tel. 25, 3 Feb. 1925, A 589/49/45, FO 371/10636.

51. C.P. 87, 96(25), CAB 24/171; C. 9(25), CAB 23/49; A 895, 1023, 1189, 1362/49/45, FO 371/10636.

However by the time the Dominion replies (generally welcoming the idea of a conference) were received the steam appeared to have gone out of the project in Washington and the French had revealed dislike of it. The United States Ambassador, who was returning to Washington to become Secretary of State, remarked to Chamberlain that he saw no prospect of success in another conference: he was particularly doubtful about the French attitude, but Chamberlain was at this stage optimistic. Chamberlain soon found that he had been mistaken, for when he met Herriot in Paris on 16 March he learned that the French Government would find the prospect of another conference outside the League of Nations very distasteful.(52) He wrote to Howard that in view of this, and of the fact that it was now being said in Washington that the President was not thinking of a conference, it was doubtful whether the despatch would be sent. In case, however, Kellogg raised the matter the Government's view was that they would be ready to discuss the size and armament of cruisers and destroyers, the armament of aircraft carriers, and the number, size and armament of submarines; and they thought agreement possible. If the Americans made an approach the British reply would certainly be favourable.(53) Kellogg was also aware of the French alarm and found the Italian Government nervous too, so the whole question was dropped. There were occasional references to it in Washington in the summer and autumn of 1925, but it then became swallowed up for the time being in the preparations for the League of Nations Preparatory Commission on the Disarmament Conference.(54)

52. Desp. 268 to Washington, 17 Feb. 1925, A 885/49/45, FO 371/10636; memorandum by Chamberlain, 16 Mar., C 3921/459/18, FO 371/10729.

53. Chamberlain to Howard, 18 Mar. 1925, A 1478/49/45, FO 371/10637; Chamberlain to Howard, 30 Mar., A 1462/49/45, FO 371/10636.

54. Washington desp. 549, 2 Apr. 1925; Washington desp. 1252, 29 Jul.; Washington tel. 278, 21 Oct.; Washington desp. 1836, 3 Dec., A 1920, 4067, 5284, 6292/49/45, FO 371/10637.

The early preparations for the disarmament conference which was to have been held under Article 17 of the Geneva Protocol were dropped when it became clear that the British Government were not likely to accept the Protocol. But the desire for general disarmament was by no means stifled, and in the summer of 1925 it was evident that the question would be raised again at the next meeting of the League Assembly. Although Chamberlain agreed with Briand's view that disarmament should not be treated independently of the question of security, the Cabinet decided to begin an enquiry into the whole problem of the general limitation of armaments.(55) The enquiry had not actually started before the Sixth Assembly, on 25 September, adopted a resolution asking the Council to make a preliminary study with a view to a conference for the reduction and limitation of armaments to be convened as soon as satisfactory conditions had been assured from the point of view of general security. The December meeting of the Council adopted proposals for a Preparatory Commission to meet in February 1926, and a list of questions to be studied.(56)

The views of the Service Departments - all somewhat sceptical - were sent to the Committee of Imperial Defence in October and early November. It was then decided to set up a sub-committee under Cecil to consider the approach to the Council's questions and later to draw up instructions for the British members of the Preparatory Commission.(57) The instructions eventually drawn up in the spring of 1926 (the first meeting of the Preparatory Commission having been postponed until May) set out the attitude of

55. Briand to Chamberlain, 13 Jul. 1925; Chamberlain to Briand, 24 Jul., W 6867/9/98, FO 371/11066; C.P. 365(25), CAB 24/174; C. 41(25), 29 Jul., CAB 23/50.

56. League of Nations, Resolutions adopted by the Assembly during its Sixth Session, Geneva 1925, p.19; Monthly Summary, Dec. 1925, pp. 308-11; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol.I, Nos. 127, 128, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139, 148.

57. C.I.D. Papers 628-B, 634-B, 641-B, 644-B, 647-B, CAB 4/13; C.P. 454(25), CAB 24/175; C. 52(25), CAB 23/51; C.I.D. 205th meeting, CAB 2/4.

the Government and described the state of British armaments. The navy had been reduced as a result of the Washington treaties; further efforts to restrict submarines were desirable; but in view of the length and vulnerability of Britain's trade routes it was considered that the British Empire must have special treatment with regard to numbers of cruisers. The British army was notoriously small both in regard to its commitments and in comparison with those of many other countries: it did not seem capable of reduction. The air force had been reduced to almost nothing immediately after the war. It was now being built up again with the aim of reaching comparability with that of the nearest neighbour by 1935. The Government would welcome any scheme which would give equality with other countries, and were ready to consider specific agreements with one or more European powers. On the questions to be discussed by the Preparatory Commission the Government thought that different kinds of armament should be considered separately, that armaments should be defined as forces and material available on the outbreak of war and no attempt should be made to limit ultimate war strength, and that permament or compulsory supervision was neither practicable nor desirable.(58)

In the summer of 1925 various studies, originally set in motion by the Salisbury Sub-Committee in the winter of 1923, led the Chiefs of Staff and the Committee of Imperial Defence to some important conclusions on defence and foreign policy at the same time as the western security pact was under discussion. Examination of the problems of diverting shipping from the Channel and the Mediterranean in time of war showed that diversion would affect the trade and communications of the whole Empire and that preparations for it would be costly. The Chiefs of Staff concluded that the necessity

58. C.I.D. Paper 682-B, CAB 4/14; C.I.D. 212th meeting, CAB 2/4; C. 19(26), CAB 23/52. See D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 2, n.2. The early stages of the Preparatory Commission are discussed in Chapter 8.

would only arise in case of war with France, and this was so unlikely to happen suddenly that expenditure on preparations would not be justified now.(59) When the Committee of Imperial Defence discussed their paper on 22 June Chamberlain said that he agreed that war with France was inconceivable. It was his considered opinion that France would never risk war with Britain, or at any rate not until her population was as great as Germany's. France needed a strong friend on one side or the other, and Britain was really her sheet anchor notwithstanding her continental alliances. Hankey pointed out that the shipping problem might also arise in case of war with Germany, and that it would take about five years to organise Britain's defences against either France or Germany. Chamberlain said that he thought that the moral of the report was that any future war should be kept as far from the Channel as possible. There had been much ill-informed criticism of the proposed security pact, but it was aimed at ensuring as far as possible that disaster did not occur. The Chiefs of Staff were then asked to prepare another paper suitable for the Dominions, showing the importance to the Empire of keeping war away from the Channel.(60)

This second study took into account the problem of air attack as well as that of shipping. In the event of war with a nation occupying the continental coasts of the Channel, it stated, Britain would be exposed to attacks on her sea communications and to serious danger from the air. If France were the enemy, or an enemy power had control of France, shipping might have to be diverted from the Mediterranean as well. The immediate effects would be borne by the British people but the indirect effects would spread to every part of the Empire. Provided that the armed forces were

59. C.I.D. Paper 610-B, CAB 4/13.

60. C.I.D. 200th meeting, CAB 2/4.

maintained at proper strength, the Chiefs of Staff had no doubt that the nation would come through the ordeal successfully, but the loss would be incalculable. Even in the late war the effects of air attack on London had not been negligible: a future attack by a power in possession of the Channel coast would certainly be very formidable. From the defence point of view, therefore, the Chiefs of Staff considered that foreign policy should be directed towards averting this possibility. It was agreed that the contingency of war with France was remote: the danger might, however, arise,

> "if Germany (either with or without the support of Russia or other nations) were to gain successes commensurate with those obtained at the outset of the late war, and, as a result, occupy the coasts of North France, Belgium or Holland .... An advance which did not bring Germany so far as the coastline would be less dangerous since, in that event, whatever naval menace Germany might at that time be able to exert would not be accentuated and, so far as the aerial menace is concerned, the attacking aircraft would have to run the gauntlet of our own and our allies' air force and defences before approaching this country. ...
>
> From the point of view of defence, therefore, it is important that our foreign policy should provide, inter alia, first, for cordial relations with France and Belgium, and, second, that war shall be kept as far as possible from the English Channel, the Straits of Dover, and the southern shores of the North Sea.
>
> The above remarks are not directed primarily to the proposed Quadruple Pact, which, we are well aware, is based on considerations of wider policy than those with which we are dealing in the present Memorandum. In so much, however, as the proposed Pact fulfils the requirements of a sound national defence mentioned in

the preceding paragraph, we welcome it from the point of view of defence policy. We do so, however, on the general understanding that the conclusion of agreements of this kind will not be regarded as justifying either a reduction of our defence forces below the level essential for the Empire's security or the relinquishment of the continuous study of the problems of Imperial Defence."(61)

Despite the warning in the last sentence of this paper the first result for defence policy of the Locarno treaties was a slowing down in the expansion of the home defence air force. The Air Ministry themselves suggested a re-examination of the programme in the light of the security pact and of the work of the Treasury Fighting Services Economy Committee. A Cabinet committee under Birkenhead recommended that completion of the programme could be postponed from 1928-9 to 1935-6, and the Cabinet approved the proposal.(62)

Studies of defence problems prepared in May 1926 for the Imperial Conference due to be held in the autumn were all on matters of organisation and co-operation rather than policy. The Air Staff's paper simply gave the present strength of the R.A.F. and noted the postponement of the target date for completing the programme for home defence. The Admiralty's paper expressed the intention of asking the Dominions to consider what more they could do to build up their naval forces. The General Staff invited the Dominions to consider the maximum effort which they could make in a major war. After noting that the British Empire had never maintained in peace-time the land forces required to meet all contingencies, and that the

61. C.I.D. Paper 625-B, CAB 4/13; see also C.I.D. Paper 135-A, CAB 3/4, on air raid precautions. The C.I.D. decided on 27 July that the paper should be sent to the Dominions: 202nd meeting, CAB 2/4.

62. C.P. 421(25), 498(25), CAB 24/175; C. 52(25), 11 Nov.; C. 57(25), 3 Dec., CAB 23/51; C.I.D. Paper 145-A, CAB 3/4.

strength of the expeditionary force maintained in Britain bore no relation to any commitment, the General Staff defined the three most likely kinds of war as (a) one that could be dealt with by the expeditionary force alone; (b) one requiring in addition part or all of the Territorial Army; and (c) a war of national effort involving the expansion of the Territorial Army and the introduction of conscription. For case (a) there now existed a first contingent of one cavalry and three infantry divisions with a proportion of non-divisional units capable of being mobilised in two weeks (compared with one cavalry and six infantry divisions in 1914), and a second contingent of two divisions able to follow in four months. Case (b) was more complex. In the case of Great Britain it would be a number of months before more than the expeditionary force would be available. Some of the Territorial Army might be sent overseas three to four months after the outbreak of war, but a steady flow of fully equipped divisions could not be despatched before six months from the date of mobilisation; and it would not be possible to maintain a force of twenty divisions until much later. In case (c) conscription would have to be introduced before the Territorial Army were expanded. In terms of manpower the greatest effort that Britain could make would produce a force of 136 divisions, which could not be in the field until fifteen months after the outbreak of war. The conclusion was that any help that the Dominions could give would be the more valuable if it were available early.(63)

Also in the summer of 1926 the Chiefs of Staff produced their first annual review of defence policy, an innovation which they had proposed six months earlier.(64) Among the papers prepared for their use was one

63. C.I.D. Papers 264-C, 269-C, 270-C, CAB 5/6.

64. C.I.D. Paper 640-B, CAB 4/13; C.I.D. 207th meeting, CAB 2/4.

by the Foreign Office, which is discussed in the next chapter, and one by Hankey on the assumptions upon which defence policy was based, existing commitments, and the state of planning in various fields. The assumptions were those already discussed, namely that war with Japan within the next ten years was not seriously to be apprehended, and that under present circumstances war with France was inconceivable. The report of January 1926 on air force expansion for home defence had stated that there was at present no reason to anticipate a war among the Great Powers of Europe. As regards the United States it had been tacitly assumed that war was so improbable that no preparations need be made.(65)

The Chiefs of Staff began their survey by discussing the problem of Britain's ability to go to war. They pointed out that none of the treaties to which Britain was a party defined her military obligations precisely. They did not contest the view of the Foreign Office, that the more the nations of Europe became convinced of Britain's readiness to fulfil a guarantee the less would be the likelihood that she would be called upon to do so. But there were limits to the application of such a policy. The size of the forces maintained by Great Britain was governed by various conditions peculiar to each Service and was not arrived at by any calculation of the requirements of foreign policy; nor was it possible that it ever should be so calculated. Thus although the expeditionary force and a limited number of R.A.F. squadrons constituted the only force available for immediate use in Europe or outside the Empire, they were so available only when the requirements of imperial defence allowed. The Services could therefore only take note of European commitments: they could not make specific provision to meet them apart from adopting such measures of training, organisation and equipment as would enable them to

65. C.I.D. Paper 700-B, CAB 4/14.

fight on the continent if required. It was most necessary to realise that the military basis on which foreign policy must ultimately rely for the fulfilment of continental commitments was the capacity of Great Britain and eventually (if they adhered to the Locarno treaty) of the nations of the Empire to mobilise all their resources for war. The despatch of the small expeditionary force could never be more than a pledge of Britain's readiness to fulfil her guarantees. The capacity to fulfil them would depend on the completeness of the framework for military expansion and the preparation for the industrial mobilisation needed to keep a national army in the field.

The Chiefs of Staff recommended, on naval policy, that the one-power standards for capital ships and aircraft carrier tonnage laid down in the Washington treaty should be maintained, that all other types of ships should be maintained at such strength as would ensure adequate security for British territory and freedom and security of sea passage to all parts of the Empire; and that Singapore should be placed at the top of the list of defence requirements. On military policy, the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that the size of the regular army bore no relation to the size of foreign armies but was conditioned by the size of the garrisons maintained overseas, about half the army being at home and half abroad, and the expeditionary force being organised from the units at home. The problem of imperial defence, they were happy to note, was immensely simplified by the assurance of a friendly France. This made the Rhine in fact Great Britain's strategic land frontier: it also minimised the danger of air invasion and secured the western Mediterranean. It would therefore be possible to economise on home defence and concentrate on the route to the east. On air policy the Chiefs of Staff recommended keeping up a programme not less than the current one, but they thought that provision of anti-aircraft defences could be postponed.

In order of urgency the Chiefs of Staff recommended concentrating

on Singapore first, then defence of the route to the east and the trade routes, defence of Hong Kong so far as was allowed by the Washington treaty, and home defence. In conclusion they drew "the earnest attention of the Committee of Imperial Defence to a consideration which has constantly impressed itself on our minds in the course of this enquiry, namely, the smallness of our defence forces when compared with the vast extent of our Imperial responsibilities and commitments. We wish to place on record our view that the forces available for Imperial Defence are now reduced to a minimum and are barely capable of dealing with the problems that are liable to arise either singly or simultaneously,"(66)

The Committee of Imperial Defence approved this review subject to a Cabinet decision on how far the country could afford to make provision to meet its responsibilities. Churchill was particularly emphatic on this point, saying that although he had originally approved Singapore he had never meant it to be a peg on which to hang far-reaching schemes of alarmist policy. Balfour said that he was chiefly conscious of the problem whether to spend or husband the nation's resources. Chamberlain said that from this point of view he would put sea communication first. A week later the Cabinet approved the review as a general statement of defence policy, but without discussing problems of cost.(67)

The Imperial Conference of 1926 left defence matters much as before. Discussions on organisation and practical co-operation took place in the Service Departments. At a meeting on 15 November the Dominion Prime Ministers described their countries' present defence organisation. Bruce of Australia stressed the concern of all for imperial defence, especially naval defence since it was doubtful whether any of the Dominions could

66. C.I.D. Paper 701-B, 22 Jun. 1926, CAB 4/15.

67. C.I.D. 215th meeting, CAB 2/4; C. 49(26), 30 Jul., CAB 23/53.

defend itself and therefore all had an interest in seeing that the sea routes were kept open. Britain was primarily responsible for this, but the Dominions should try to ensure that the burden was shared a little more equally: equality of status (as it had just been defined in Balfour's famous formula) carried with it, Bruce suggested, some responsibility for sharing the common burden. Both Bruce and Coates of New Zealand undertook to see what their countries could contribute to the cost of Singapore. The other Prime Ministers made no offers.(68) The conference reaffirmed the resolutions on defence of 1923, expressed hopes for further measures for limitation of armaments, and commended the progress made on co-operation.(69) Meagre though these results may seem, it is worth stressing that at the moment when the chimera of a common imperial foreign policy was at last being abandoned, co-ordination of defence was improving at the practical level of training and staff interchange, such as would make it easier for the forces of the Commonwealth to fight together should they ever again be called upon to do so.(70)

68. E. 9th, 9A, 9B, 9C, 12th meetings, CAB 32/46. Bruce quoted the following figures of defence expenditure per capita to reinforce his point: Great Britain, 1924-5, £8s. 10d.; 1925-6, 51s. 1d. Canada, 1924-5, 5s. 8d.; 1925-6, 5s. 10d. Australia, 1924-5, 25s. 8d.; 1925-6, 27s. 2d. New Zealand, 1924-5, 11s. 5d.; 1925-6, 12s. 11d. South Africa, 1924-5, 2s. 9d.; 1925-6, 2s. 6d. The contributions to the cost of the Singapore base originally offered by New Zealand and Australia had been diverted to naval vessels when the Labour Government announced their intention of abandoning the base: New Zealand later contributed £1 million.

69. Cmd 2768 of 1926, Imperial Conference, 1926, Summary of Proceedings.

70. This point is made by D. C. Watt, "Imperial defence policy and imperial foreign policy, 1911-1939: a neglected paradox?" in Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies, I (1961-63), pp. 266-81; reprinted in D. C. Watt, Personalities and Politics, London 1965, pp. 139-58.

Chapter 8

The Consequences of Locarno

In a number of statements on British foreign policy made during 1926 Locarno was treated as, above all, a contribution to a new era in Europe with the return of Germany to the comity of nations. Thus speaking to the Imperial Conference on 20 October 1926, just over a year after the initialling of the treaties, Chamberlain said: "The Locarno settlement is at once the sign and the cause of a new spirit in Europe. We hope that it marks the end, or the beginning of the end, of the fear and distrust which found expression for so long in a policy of threats and sanctions on one side and sullen resentment on the other." (1) A supplementary memorandum circulated to the Empire representatives stated that the policies of both France and Germany had taken a new direction: no one in either country believed it possible to return to the old unhappy days, and few in their hearts desired to do so. The effect of Locarno was spreading among the smaller powers of Europe: arbitration treaties had become the fashion and it was not fantastic to hope that in the next few years the present alliances might be replaced by mutual agreements for non-aggression uniting former enemies in common pacts of guarantee. Locarno was in large measure a British

1. E. 118, CAB 32/47; E. 2nd and 3rd meetings, CAB 32/46; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Appendix.

achievement and was recognised as such by the other parties. As a result British prestige and influence had been greatly enhanced: "British friendship is cultivated, British counsel asked, British aid sought, and as in the days of Castlereagh, Great Britain stands forth again as the moderator and peacemaker of the new Europe created by the Great War." (2)

A rather different picture of the position of Great Britain was given in a memorandum produced by the Foreign Office early in April 1926 for the use of the Chiefs of Staff in preparing their first annual review of defence policy. (3) The differences of tone are attributable to the facts, first that the paper was intended not for quasi-public consumption but for use in Whitehall, and second that it was directed towards the question of British commitments.

"Broadly speaking," the memorandum began, "the foreign policy of His Majesty's Government remains what it has been for many years, i.e., (1) to seek peace and ensue it; (2) to preserve the status quo and the balance of power; (3) to protect and develop British interests in foreign countries." Unlike countries whose ultimate objective was to recover lost territory or to expand, Britain had no

2. E. 117, CAB 32/47. An earlier version, of which only the final paragraphs were substantially revised and brought up to date, is printed in D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 1.

3. See pp. 544-7.

territorial ambitions or desire for aggrandisement: "Our sole object is to keep what we have and live in peace." The desire for peace was not particularly altruistic: wars, quarrels and friction in any part of the world spelt loss to British commercial and financial interests. In one sense disputes over the frontier between Greece and Yugoslavia or over the ownership of the Aland Islands concerned Britain no more than Spain or Argentina; but war in the Balkans or the Baltic concerned Britain as much as Roumania or Norway. This was the reason why Britain intervened in almost every dispute, and was one justification for the maintenance of the armed forces which enabled her to intervene with authority. Turning to British commitments, the memorandum stated the principles on which the Locarno settlement was based: (1) The arrangements were purely defensive and were supplementary to the Covenant; (2) The arrangements were mutual in character and did not constitute an alliance between some powers directed against others; (3) The British obligation was limited to the maintenance of the existing territorial arrangements in that area with which British interests were most closely bound up, the frontier between Germany and her western neighbours. No fresh obligations had been assumed elsewhere. In conclusion of this section Headlam-Morley's words of Marsh 1923 were quoted: "If any British Government, after full and mature consideration ... feel themselves authorised to become parties to a treaty of guarantee and to make the maintenance of it a permanent

part of British policy; if this is publicly proclaimed; if in presenting the estimates for naval and military defence, the importance of providing for liabilities under this treaty is shown; then I believe that in the long run the treaty will become effective." (4)

British commitments so far as Germany was concerned were determined by the Locarno treaty and by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles regarding the occupation of the Rhineland. As regards the general political situation, relations after the war were governed by the fact of British membership of an alliance, the raison d'être of which had become the exaction from Germany of the execution of the peace treaty. Up to 1924 the position as between the Allies and Germany, and as between the Allies themselves, was one of continual strife. The policy of appeasement, begun in 1924 with the reparation settlement, had culminated in the Locarno conference. "Looked at from one point of view, the Locarno treaty may be regarded as the triumph of the British idea of compromise and conciliation over the continental idea of compulsion. But it was more than that; its greatest significance was that Germany was now brought into the Concert of Europe as an equal with the other Powers; the old war alliance was broken, and the terms 'victor' and 'vanquished' became things of the past."

4. See p. 202. See also p. 545 for the limitations on such a policy pointed out by the Chiefs of Staff.

The question for the future was what use Germany would make of her new position. The ephemeral questions of military control, the Rhineland régime, etc., would certainly be solved with no more than normal friction. Bigger questions were Danzig, Upper Silesia, Austria, and general disarmament. On the first two, it seemed clear that Germany would never rest until her grievances had been satisfied. What would the British attitude be if they arose in an acute form? Britain was bound as a member of the League to do her part in resisting any forcible solution: what she might do in practice might well be decided in terms of interest rather than of law. It was hardly possible to forecast now what line would prove to be in Britain's interest, but as a matter of history it might be recalled that in the past Britain had never taken up arms to resist the dismemberment of Poland, even in days when she was not crippled by a colossal war debt.

The Austrian problem was at present probably remote; but if a crisis arose over it Britain would be affected as a signatory of the Treaty of St-Germain and a member of the League. As for general disarmament, it would clearly hold a foremost place in the diplomatic programme of any Germany Government. If a definite attempt to bring about general disarmament failed, Germany might be tempted to repudiate or evade her obligations under the Treaty of Versailles. Britain would presumably regard as a threat any attempt to recreate a Germany navy, and

could not acquiesce in a violent repudiation of Germany's obligations on land armaments, particularly if the aim clearly were to recover pre-war strength. The British attitude to a moderate or gradual increase in the German army, on the other hand, would largely depend on circumstances and especially on the attitude of France. (5)

It is not the intention in this chapter to trace in detail the negotiations of the year or eighteen months after Locarno on what the above memorandum described as the ephemeral questions regarding Germany's position. Nor is it the intention to look far beyond 1926 and examine the justification in the longer term for the claims on the results of Locarno made by Chamberlain and the Foreign Office. The minor questions will be considered as aspects of the immediate effects of the Locarno settlement on the position of Germany and her relations with the former Allies. Germany's position in eastern Europe will be discussed both in this connexion and as part of the problem of the position of the Soviet Union. Further sections will be devoted to other aspects of the security question, namely the pursuit of settlement in other European troubled areas and the general limitation of armaments.

5. C.I.D. Paper 700-B, CAB 4/14; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Appendix.

Germany and the Western powers: disarmament and the Rhineland

The Ambassadors' Conference note of 16 November 1925 stated that agreement had been reached on the points of German disarmament still outstanding and that the Military Control Commission would be withdrawn as soon as it had completed the tasks still remaining. (6) The actual execution of the remaining points was, however, delayed. In the early months of 1926 the Germans were anxious to see the Control Commission wound up, and they suggested at the beginning of February that it should be withdrawn in return for the Reichstag's approval of the application for membership of the League. (7) This pressure, although not accompanied by the legislation necessary to fulfil some of the remaining disarmament demands, was based on the assumption that Germany would shortly be a member of the League Council and so would be in a position to state her views about future supervision. After some hesitation the German Government had addressed to the Secretary-General on 12 January a letter saying that they had certain objections to the scheme for League control approved by the Council in 1924, that they would wish to discuss the matter, and that they would make

6. See pp. 499-500.

7. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 243, 250. The German position is described in Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp. 329-32.

proposals at a later date. (8) The French Government were concerned lest there might be a gap between the withdrawal of the Control Commission and the introduction of the League scheme. The Foreign Office were doubtful whether League investigation could ever be applied effectively, but took the view that technically the existing scheme could be applied so long as Germany had not entered the League and even thereafter so long as any modifications proposed by her had not been accepted. In order to meet the French anxiety about the demilitarised zone Chamberlain suggested to Briand that in due course the Germans might be asked whether they would accept some permanent organ in the Rhineland as part of a large agreement. (9)

The position about the Control Commission was changed by the fiasco in March over Germany's entry into the League. Now, although they could not say so, the Germans no longer desired the Commission's withdrawal before the autumn lest they be confronted with the existing League scheme. There was in fact little prospect of early withdrawal since two questions in particular, police effectives and the definition of war material in draft legislation on import and export, were still not settled

8. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.185; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.13, 34, 40.

9. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.174, 199, 201, n. 2, 236, 247. D'Abernon thought that the Germans might accept in return for a reduction in the period of occupation.

in the summer; and the presentation to the Reichstag of military and naval estimates showing considerable increases in expenditure did not help the atmosphere. (10) However by the end of July a fresh effort to speed up the remaining points was being contemplated. On 17 August the Ambassadors' Conference sent Hoesch a note calling for the early execution of the matters still delayed. The British refused to agree to the inclusion in the note of a statement that if results were not obtained the Control Commission would remain: Lampson would have liked to inform the Ambassadors' Conference that Britain was unwilling to continue control after September in any case. (11)

Once Germany entered the League in September and the Locarno treaties came into force, both the British and the Germans were anxious to see the work of the Control Commission terminated by the end of the year. The remaining points of difficulty were still the police and the definition of war materials, and also the condition of the German fortifications on the eastern frontier and legislation forbidding military activities by the nationalist associations. Final negotiations began in

10. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.322, 339, 365, 375, 393, 395, 402, 419, 427, 440, 448; Vol. II, Nos.11, 42, 76, 85; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos. 142, 170, 182, 184, 192, 198.

11. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.115, 120, 121, 124, 127, 130, 139, 178; minute by Lampson, 5 Aug, 1926, C 8689/436/18, FO 371/11289.

Paris and Berlin on 20 November, but settlement had not been reached by the time that Chamberlain, Briand, Vandarvelde, Scialoja and Stresemann met at Geneva on 6 December. After seeing Briand on his way through Paris, Chamberlain was hopeful of agreement; and from his first conversation with Stresemann he concluded that they would be "very clumsy" if they could not arrange for the early withdrawal of control and the entry into force of the League scheme of supervision as it had been approved. (12) While the representatives in Paris continued to wrestle with the fortifications and war material, the Ministers at Geneva discussed League control and supervision in the demilitarised zone. Certain German doubts about the League scheme were discussed, but no one showed any wish to examine it de novo: Stresemann now preferred to avoid discussion, believing that time would work in Germany's favour on it. (13)

On supervision in the Rhineland Briand admitted that Article 213 of the Treaty of Versailles did not provide for permanent or special organs, but he suggested that German agreement to a special form of investigation might facilitate the earlier end of the occupation. He stressed that all that he wanted was an unobtrusive organisation which could observe any infraction of the demilitarisation

12. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.318, 326; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.235, 236.

13. Op. cit., No.198.

and communicate the facts quickly. But something of the kind was needed to calm the anxieties felt in France about the Rhineland. Chamberlain suggested that since, after Locarno, there were now obligations on both sides any organ set up should have the task of watching the French and the Belgians as well. Stresemann did not commit himself, and left it to Schubert to raise objections in conversation with Chamberlain. (14) After further discussion on the disarmament questions it was agreed that the Control Commission would be withdrawn on 31 January 1927, leaving experts in Berlin to see to the execution of certain points. The League scheme would then come into force, and if by that date the fortifications and war material questions had not been settled by negotiation they would be referred to the Council of the League. (15)

Agreement on the definition of war material was reached quite quickly when negotiations started again in January, but on the fortifications not until the last minute. The final stages were not held up by the revelations about Soviet-German military collaboration, made in the Manchester Guardian and taken up by the Social Democratic press in Germany. These revelations seem to have caused no stir in British official quarters. A certain amount had

14. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.333; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.233, 234, 237, 240, 242, 244.

15. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.352, 353, 354, 355; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.251, 254, 257, 258, 260, 261; Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, pp.358-65.

previously been known about the collaboration; it appears to have been regarded as now a thing of the past; and the conviction prevailed that in any case it was not possible to keep Germany permanently subject to control. (16) The Military Control Commission was now withdrawn from Berlin, leaving behind a small number of experts. There seems to have been no further discussion of a special organ of supervision in the Rhineland until the autumn of 1928.

Another aspect of German disarmament that took some months of negotiation to wind up was the control of aviation. The Aeronautical Control Commission had been withdrawn from Germany as early as May 1922 and replaced by a Committee of Guarantee and a set of regulations known as the "nine rules". The plan for the Committee of Guarantee provided that it should be reconsidered by the Allied Governments when the Cologne zone was evacuated. At the end of November 1925 the German Government proposed that the Committee and the nine rules should be abolished, and that instead they should prohibit by legislation the construction of military aircraft and all form of liaison between civil aviation and the military or naval authorities. (17) Negotiations began in Paris in December.

16. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.334, 415; Vol. III, Nos.20, 24; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.158, 270. The final stages are discussed in detail by John P. Fox, "Britain and the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control, 1925-26", in Journal of Contemporary History, IV (1969), No.2, pp.143-64.

17. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.125, 126, 136, 140, 144, 145, 149.

The Allies agreed to abandon all restrictions on German civil aviation but insisted on legislation to prevent or limit, as far as possible, the development of high-powered aircraft unsuitable for commerical purposes and flying training for military or naval personnel.

The Reichswehr were extremely loath to accept any limitation on personnel learning to fly, but eventually gave way in order to secure the advantages for civil aviation. An agreement was finally signed on 22 May 1926. Among other things the German Government undertook to prohibit the construction or import of military-type aircraft and gliders, and all military flying instruction. The number of army and naval personnel allowed to fly (apart from 36 who already held licenses) would be allowed to rise by stages to 36 at the beginning of 1932. The requisite ordinances were issued in July and the Committee of Guarantee was abolished on 1 September 1926. (18) The Air Ministry were satisfied that under this agreement Germany was not and could not become an air menace to France and Britain: only, they said, if she were again allowed a military air force would the position be different. (19)

18. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.152-500, passim; Vol. II, Nos.2 9, 34, 65, 89, 152; C.P. 269(26), CAB 24/180; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.25-220, passim. The agreement is printed in League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. LXVIII, pp.332-74.

19. Hoare to Cecil, 14 Dec. 1926; Cecil to Hoare, 17 Dec.; Hoare to Cecil, 23 Dec., Cecil Papers, BM Add. MS 51083.

Although the possibility of shortening the period of the occupation of the Rhineland was mentioned from time to time during the nine months between the signature of the treaties and Germany's entry into the League, the main problem about the occupation was a reduction in the numbers of Allied troops after the evacuation of the Cologne zone. The Allies had undertaken at Locarno and in London that the number in the second and third zones would not be increased, and the note from the Ambassadors' Conference of 14 November had referred to "chiffres normaux".(20) The Germans pressed continually for substantial reductions and contended that "chiffres normaux" meant the number of German troops garrisoned in the same area before 1914. The French military authorities were resistant to change and Briand found it very difficult to overcome their objections. After the evacuation of the Cologne zone the British contingent was so small that further reduction would have made it little more than a token body. In addition there were from time to time difficulties between the occupation authorities and the Germans, mainly the local authorities.

Part of the trouble over the troop reductions was of the German Government's own making, in that they had allowed and even encouraged exaggerated expectations as part of the campaign for the acceptance of the Locarno treaties; and during January 1926 they tried to make

20. See pp. [illegible].

reductions a precondition for applying to join the League. Representations were made in Paris and London, and it was said that the Government might have to resign if they could not get a satisfactory solution before the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee voted on the application to enter the League. Although there was some feeling in the Foreign Office that if Stresemann were in truth so isolated in his support for Locarno it would be better not to continue the pretence that the treaty would be carried out in the spirit in which it was conceived, the German complaint was regarded as justified since according to the War Office the number of troops in the second and third zones had actually increased. The French agreed that Stresemann could state in the Reichstag that the occupying powers were examining the position with a view to reducing the troops to the lowest possible number as soon as the Locarno treaties came into force. (21)

On 3 February the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee voted in favour of Germany entering the League, and four days later the decision was approved by representatives of the Länder. Stresemann made onefurther effort to get

21. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.183, 189, 191, 192, 196, 202, 206, 207, 214, 216, 217, 223; memorandum by Lampson, 15 Jan. 1926. C 566/446/18, FO 371/11297; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 43, 46, 48, 59, nn. 1-2, 60, 61, 62; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp.432-4.

an undertaking that the troops would be reduced to a specified number: he was perhaps prompted to do so by complaints from Hindenburg that the Government had not obtained more concessions. Briand, although far from pleased at this new approach, repeated his assurance that he would do his best; and on 8 February the German application was duly despatched to Geneva. (22)

Meanwhile Chamberlain had enquired of D'Abernon what was meant by a passage in Stresemann's speech of 28 January in which he was reported (not quite accurately) as having said that Germany had not surrendered a foot of territory at Locarno. He also sent D'Abernon two long telegrams and a letter of complaint about the German attitude. Without waiting, he said, for Germany to complete the disarmament requirements the Allies had evacuated the Cologne zone, had made further concessions on the difficult disarmament points, had welcomed the German proposals on air control, and had fundamentally altered the occupation régime. The German Government had made hardly any attempt to meet the Western powers' desires and showed no sign of having tried to check the abuse with which every endeavour to act up to the Locarno spirit had been met. The weak position of the German Government was appreciated, but it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that the weakness was being deliberately used to extort more concessions. British

22. A.D.A.P., Vol. III, Nos.76, 78, 80, 81, 82, 86, 87, 88; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.248.

policy was unchanged, but Briand's position was weak and Locarno required reciprocity: the Germans must perform their share of the bargain and not leave Briand and Chamberlain himself exposed to the charge that they were being duped into making all the concessions piecemeal while the German Government did nothing. (23)

Chamberlain spoke to Sthamer on the same lines on 4 February. To D'Abernon Schubert and Stresemann both rejected Chamberlain's complaints and asked him to report that the German Government were imbued with the spirit of Locarno, appreciated Briand's position, and were doing more than met the eye. (24)

After the failure over Germany's entry into the League in March D'Abernon recommended pushing on with troop reductions, as well as the settlement of disarmament and the air negotiations, in order to strengthen the position of the German Government; and Chamberlain instructed Crewe to take the matter up with Briand. (25) At almost the same moment, the last week of March, Stresemann consulted Hoesch about an approach to Briand about a whole complex of questions. Hoesch regarded the moment as not unsuitable, since although Briand's Government were in

23. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.229, 231, 232, 236, 241. Kilmarnock suggested on 3 February that in future it might be necessary to make concessions depend on the satisfaction of Western needs.

24. Op. cit., Nos.242, 245, 248; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos. 73, 74, 75, 76, 82, 97.

25. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.378, 386.

difficulties these had nothing to do with foreign policy; but he recommended leaving the question of the Control Commission alone for the time being, because disarmament was not concluded and it was not desirable that control should be withdrawn at once. (26) Briand assured both Crewe and Hoesch that troop reductions were in progress, and he impressed Hoesch with his conviction of the necessity of Franco-German co-operation. (27)

The news of the German-Soviet treaty, however, made further démarches inopportune for the time being, and on 23 April Chamberlain instructed D'Abernon to speak seriously to Stresemann about conditions in the occupied territory, on which Kilmarnock reported that the attitude of the German authorities had not changed in any way since Locarno. In a letter to D'Abernon at the same time Chamberlain wrote that the German authorities seemed incapable of realising what was needed for the execution of Stresemann's great idea. "They have no consideration for the feeling of the other nations engaged, no regard for the public opinion which other Governments have to consult, and, apparently, no gratitude or even appreciation of what, by great personal effort, has already been secured for them". (28)

26. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.182, 184. The French Government were in difficulties over the financial situation.

27. Op.cit., No.188; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.395.

28. Op. cit., No.432, 455, 469; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 23 Apr. 1926, C 4703/481/18, FO 371/11301. On 27 April D'Abernon was instructed to make representations on another despatch from Kilmarnock.

Stresemann and the Reich Commissioner in the Rhineland admitted that the atmosphere in the occupied territory was bad, but contended that it was the fault of the occupying powers for not carrying out their promises. The problem, as before, seemed to be the French military authorities. (29) But Chamberlain made another attempt to press Briand and raised with Crewe the question of the future of the occupation. The Labour M.P. Arthur Ponsonby had asked in the House of Commons about the declaration by Wilson, Lloyd George and Clemenceau of 16 June 1919, that if before the end of the occupation period Germany gave proofs of good will and satisfactory guarantees to assure the fulfilment of her obligations the Allies would be ready to agree among themselves for the earlier termination of the occupation. (30) Chamberlain wrote that until Germany was in the League and the Locarno treaties came into force there could be no question of hastening the end of the occupation. But when the treaties were in force the occupation would become an increasingly obvious anomaly, with which great play would probably be made in Britain. He was anxious to take the initiative

29. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos.456, 484; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.204, 206, 207.

30. See H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 194, cols. 1186-8. The declaration was published in Cmd 240 of 1919, Declaration by the Governments of the United States, Great Britain and France in regard to the occupation of the Rhine Provinces.

cautiously before this happened, and to cause the doctrine to infiltrate as occasion offered. Meanwhile the number of troops must be reduced, since a solemn undertaking had been given. (31)

Chamberlain thought that Briand and Berthelot favoured shortening the occupation, and this seems to have been the case provided that the Germans made suitable contributions. After the German attempt to raise the matter at the end of November 1925 had been repelled, the earliest mentions of it came from the French side, generally connected with the idea of mobilising part of the German reparation obligations. The latter idea seems to have originated with Delacroix, the former Belgian Prime Minister who was now Belgian representative on the Reparation Commission and a trustee of the German railway bonds. There was some discussion of the matter about the turn of the year, but the financial experts were generally agreed that the time had not yet come for trying to pay off any of the capital reparation debt. (32)

Crewe mentioned both the reduction of troops and the shortening of the occupation to Briand on 6 May, and received the reply that once Germany was in the League the matter of the occupation was bound to come up, but it

31. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 438, 468, 487.

32. Op. cit., No.188; Leith Ross (Treasury) to Lampson, 7 Jan. 1926; Niemeyer (Treasury) to Tyrell, 3 Feb., C 263, 1429/10/18, FO 371/11250; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.8, 11, 15, 16, 24, 33, 67, 110, 116.

could not be dealt with until then. (33) However a fortnight later Berthelot, in conversation with Hoesch, mentioned the occupation and the mobilisation of reparation obligations as topics for a conversation with Stresemann, which Briand had been hoping to arrange for Whitsun but which had to be postponed on account of the French political situation. (34) A recent incident in the Rhineland, which caused great offence to the French, appeared to show deliberate unhelpfulness on the part of the local authorities. Discussing it with Briand, Hoesch said that the best way of improving the situation was for the Allies to keep their promises of troop reductions. Briand answered that he was battling for it, and he again assured Hoesch that he was convinced that the health of Europe depended on Franco-German understanding. (35)

On 26 June Stresemann set out to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Reichstag his intention of invoking Article 431 of the Treaty of Versailles to raise the question of ending the occupation once Germany was in the League Council and the Control Commission had been withdrawn. He said that he did not intend to raise the question of revising the Dawes Plan, but stated that

33. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.505.

34. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.225.

35. Op. cit., Nos.226, 228, 229; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.3, 13, 22, 26.

Germany would be willing to anticipated payments of the annuities in order to achieve the end of the occupation. Stresemann said that when the Control Commission left the question of disarmament would be wound up, and he was sure that no one was going to revive the question of war criminals. Therefore the obligations referred to in Article 431 could in practice only be reparations, and he contended that the requirement was not that Germany should have completed payment but only that she should have ensured payment of the annuity for the current year. (36)

The Foreign Office legal advisers did not think that this interpretation of Article 431 was correct. They held that the wording of Article 429 ("If the conditions of the present Treaty are faithfully carried out...") did mean that Germany need only be up to date with her obligations for the first and second zones to be evacuated at the end of five and ten years respectively, but that by contrast Article 431 meant that Germany must have completely fulfilled her obligations if the occupation were to end before the expiry of fifteen years. Presumably the drafters of the article had had in mind the possibility that Germany might be able to pay off reparations in a large lump sum as France had done with

36. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.93. A report of the speech reached the Foreign Office in the middle of July. Article 431 of the Treaty of Versailles read: "If before the expiration of fifteen years Germany complies with all the undertakings resulting from the present Treaty, the occupying forces will be withdrawn immediately."

her indemnity after 1871. Germany was not entitled to rely on the declaration of 16 June 1919 - Stresemann indeed did not propose to do so - but it was binding as between Britain and France. The question of policy was another matter. This, according to Chamberlain, demanded that "we should use every effort first to diminish the number of troops, secondly to shorten the period of occupation. Once we have set to work on the policy of reconciliation embodied in the twofold provisions for a guarantee against aggression and of voluntary acceptance of existing obligations by joining the League and signing the Covenant, we ought not to need the occupation and its continuance by keeping up the old state of mind hinders instead of helping the new policy. But to get France to move will be most difficult.... It is however to be hoped that French statesmen will see that for success in dealing with the economic difficulties of France they require political factors which can only be produced by general appeasement and by a spreading conviction in Europe and elsewhere that the danger of new quarrels is finally averted for our time at least." (37)

These considerations were put to Crewe in the middle of August, but he was not instructed to take any action with the French Government. Before this, on 28 July, there had been another German approach about troop reductions, originally intended for late June but delayed

37. Minutes on C 8060/778/18, FO 371/11308; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.153.

by governmental crises in France. (38) Chamberlain had already decided to approach the French on certain problems which he feared might cause embarrassment at Geneva in September. He now sent Briand a personal letter and instructed Crewe to impress it on Briand that troop reductions were a matter on which a promise had been given to the Germans and that Parliamentary pressure on him was growing. (39) Briand replied that he was no less devoted than before to the policy of Locarno and a complete understanding with Britain. The Germans had not done their part since Locarno, and there were certain grounds for anxiety which dictated caution about further concessions. But the French occupation forces had been reduced by 6,000 men since the previous November, and a further 6,000 would be withdrawn by the end of this November. Briand and Berthelot also spoke seriously to Hoesch about the difficulties in Franco-German relations; but Briand said that he had made it a condition of entering Poincaré's new Government that his policy of understanding should

38. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.252, 277, 280, 291, 294; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.107. Briand's ministry resigned on 17 July. Herriot was entrusted with office but resigned after two days. On 23 July Poincaré formed a ministry with himself as Minister ~~for Foreign Affairs.~~ of Finance and Briand as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

39. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.112, 113; Petrie, Life and Letters, Vol. II, pp.304-06. Grahame was also instructed to speak to Vandervelde.

continue. (40)

As the date for the League meeting in September approached signs of nervousness increased. On 11 August Stresemann told D'Abernon of a letter in which Hindenburg had written that he wanted the occupation forces reduced to the pre-war German garrison figure, some promise on the end of the occupation, and the disarmament questions cleared up, before Germany joined the League. The German Government decided against making new conditions, but increased the pressure about troop reductions. (41) Hoesch had thought of suggesting that the British and Belgian contingents might be further reduced, and hints were dropped to D'Abernon and by Dufour. The Foreign Office had already been discussing the idea with the War Office, pointing out that the force was no longer required for an active military role; but all that was said to Dufour was that it was difficult to see how Britain could withdraw her contingent altogether without also withdrawing from the Rhineland High Commission. This, Chamberlain said to Stresemann at Geneva, he supposed that the Germans would not wish. (42)

40. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.132, 135; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.3, 4,7.

41. Op. cit., Nos.22, 24, 37, 41, 58, 68; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.140, 146, 151, 154, 184.

42. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.26, 67, 83; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.153, 177, 192, 204.

Germany's entry into the League of Nations

The final stages of the attempts to get Germany into the League of Nations were extremely well publicised at the time and have been exhaustively described since. (43) Much of the trouble that brought about the failure in March 1926 was a League matter not strictly relevant to the subject of this study. The episode will therefore only be discussed in its bearing on relations between Germany and the Western powers.

Article 4 of the Covenant provided that the Council of the League should be composed of representatives of the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Japan as permanent members, and representatives of four other states on a non-permanent basis. The Council might name new permanent members with the approval of the Assembly; the Assembly was to choose the non-permanent members; but nothing was said in the Covenant about how long the latter should retain their seats. Although proposals were made in 1921 and 1923 for the addition of new permanent members the number was not in fact increased; most of the discussion in the early Assemblies about membership of the Council was concerned with securing a system of rotation for the non-permanent seats, the number

43. Walters, History of the League of Nations, Vol. I, pp.316-27; Survey of International Affairs, 1926, pp.1-78. Spenz, Die diplomatische Vorgeschichte des Beitritts Deutschlands zum Völkerbund, is a recent account from the German side. Details in D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vols. I-II and A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1 - I.2, passim.

of which was raised from four to six. In the correspondence with the states members of the Council and with the Secretariat between September 1924 and March 1925 the German Government asked for and received assurances that Germany would be given a permanent Council seat. It is probable that the German Government and the Auswärtiges Amt, which had known and cared little about the discussions in the Assemblies of 1921 and 1923, assumed until the trouble arose that their country would join the League and receive a permanent Council seat on its own. On the other hand they had never made this a condition of entry, and if they had it is possible that it would have been rejected. There was no discussion of the procedure to be followed about German entry, either at Locarno or in London at the time of the signature of the treaties. Chamberlain was in fact made aware, on the morrow of the Locarno conference, that the earlier Spanish claim to a permanent seat was likely to be renewed. (44) The claims of Brazil, Poland and China, none of them new, were publicly staked in February 1926 as soon as the German application was sent to Geneva.

As noted above, the German Government decided to send their application without making further conditions, but they agreed to withdraw it if the permanent Council seat were not granted immediately. (45) League experts in the

44. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.17.

45. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.22.

Auswärtiges Amt had suggested in December that the German delegation should be careful to check any tendency to treat Germany like the Prodigal Son, and that they should support the principle of universality and the admission of the Soviet Union and Turkey and should stress the collectivity of the League. (46) The Germans were both very touchy about the status of their country and were strongly opposed to Poland having a Council seat of any kind at any time, not only on grounds of prestige but also because they feared that Polish membership of the Council would hinder frontier revision, strengthen Franco-Polish ties loosened at Locarno, and turn Britain towards Poland. (47) On the eve of the March meeting Dirksen suggested that if it became necessary to promise to support Poland for a non-permanent seat in September, the delegation should only agree in return for concessions from Poland on the position of the German minority with some kind of international guarantee of their fulfilment. (48) Ostensibly, however (and really in some quarters), the agitation during the month between the despatch of the German application and the special session of the Assembly fixed for 8 March to coincide with the regular Council meeting, was about the question whether Germany should be

46. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.87.

47. Op. cit., No.90 and n.5.

48. Op. cit., No.131.

admitted alone or whether the problem of the composition of the Council should come up at the same time.

On the eve of the March meeting the position of the parties concerned was as follows. The German Government were insistent upon entering alone and were opposed to making any promises for the future. At one stage they threatened to reconsider or withdraw their application if France proceeded with a proposal to give Poland a permanent seat, and Britain and France were accused of disloyalty to Locarno. (49) The French Government favoured giving permanent seats to Poland and Spain. The Italian position was non-commital. The Japanese were opposed to any increase in the number of permanent seats. The British Government felt themselves to be under some obligation to support Spain for a permanent seat, having earlier promised to do so if any others were added, and favoured giving Poland a non-permanent seat as soon as possible; but they were opposed to any change that would have the effect of preventing or delaying the admission of Germany. They were under great pressure on this point from League of Nations opinion at home. (50) Of the existing non-permanent members of the Council, whose assent to the admission of new members was necessary, the Swedish Government had declared their intention of voting against

49. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.103, 106, 109, 117; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. 1, Nos.275, 279, 282, 283, 286.

50. C. 9(26), CAB 23/52.

any increase in the permanent membership apart from Germany; Belgium was also opposed to the creation of more permanent seats, at least at present; Czechoslovakia and Uruguay had not committed themselves. Spain and Brazil were themselves claiming permanent seats: Spain said that she would vote for Germany but would leave the League unless she were given a permanent seat too; there were hints (initially denied but subsequently proved to be well founded) that Brazil might vote against Germany unless her claim were admitted.

The possibilities of confusion and breakdown were therefore great. Negotiations at Geneva, first between the Locarno powers and then with other members of the Council and other interested parties, were directed towards finding a compromise that would secure the admission of Germany. The German delegation refused all suggestions, such as that they should not formally oppose the candidature of others, or that an additional non-permanent seat should be created at the same meeting, that Sweden should resign her seat in favour of Poland, or even that they should undertake to support Poland's candidature in September, the whole question of the composition of the Council being considered by a commission meanwhile. Finally the Germans agreed to a proposal that Sweden and Czechoslovakia should resign in favour of the Netherlands

and Poland, (51) so that the ultimate cause of the breakdown was the Brazilian delegate's instructions to vote against Germany if his country were not given a permanent seat at the same time. Germany's application to join the League was neither discussed nor withdrawn. On 18 March the Council adopted a resolution appointing a committee (including a German representative) to study the composition of the Council and the number and method of election of its members.

After the March meeting the British Government took the view that a new situation had been created: they were determined that Germany should have a permanent seat but they regarded themselves as free of commitments to any other country. For the work of the committee on the composition of the Council they agreed that they did not favour adding any more permanent seats other than that for Germany, but that the number of non-permanent seats could be increased to nine, of which some could be in a new category of re-eligible or semi-permanent seats. (52)

51. The French initially supported a proposal that Poland should take Sweden's place and another member of the Little Entente that of Czechoslovakia; the Germans refused, insisting on there being one ex-neutral; and Chamberlain and Briand warned that if the negotiations failed so that Germany did not enter the League and Locarno fell through, France would not get another guarantee from Britain: D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.361.

52. This proposal was worked out by Cecil, who was British representative on the committee: C. 18(26), CAB 23/52; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.399.

Since the German delegation had in the end accepted a compromise at Geneva the setback did not greatly affect relations with the Western powers. A report to Berlin at the end of the meeting observed that if Sweden had stuck to her guns the German victory would have been complete, but it would have been gained at the cost of worsening relations with the Western powers and this was undesirable at present when other important questions such as aviation and military control awaited settlement. (53) German missions abroad were instructed that the line to take was that the League had suffered a setback and Germany had been done an injustice. She ought not to have been brought to Geneva before everything was fixed, and it would be hard to go back unless the general situation were made more favourable for her. However the Locarno policy was being continued and the Western powers had undertaken to proceed as though the treaties had come into force. (54)

After some hesitation the Germans sent a representative to the committee on the composition of the Council, which produced in May recommendations, on the lines of the British proposal, for increasing the number of non-permanent seats from six to nine, with provision for rotation but with up to three members being able to be declared re-eligible. Nothing was said formally about permanent seats, but it was evident from the discussion that only

53. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.169.

54. Op. cit., No.175.

Spain and Brazil really favoured extending the number beyond the Great Powers; and at the Council meeting in June the Brazilian delegate announced his Government's decision to withdraw from the League.

The German Government were satisfied with the recommendations of the committee; (55) but once again as the date of the September meeting approached there were signs of frayed nerves. Reports of Spanish and Polish suggestions for amending the proposals in such a way as to secure immediate re-eligibility elicited German statements that unless assurances were given that the proposals would not be changed and nothing would be done to prevent Germany from entering the Council alone, the delegation would not go to Geneva. There was also, as noted above, fresh insistence on troop reductions, which at one moment sounded like a new condition for entering the League. (56) However some amendments were made and agreed by the German Government. Poland was satisfied with a virtually cast-iron assurance that she would at once be declared re-eligible and was almost certain to be re-elected: Spain, however, refused to be satisfied and gave notice of withdrawal from the League. On 8 September the Assembly voted to admit Germany to the League, and then voted to allocate her a permanent seat on the Council

55. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.228.

56. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos.140, 141, 145, 149, 150, 154.

and to increase the number of non-permanent seats. Two days later the German delegation, which this time had been waiting in Berlin until assured of success, took their places in the Assembly. The rules for filling the non-permanent Council seats were adopted on 14 September: of the new members elected only Poland was declared to be eligible for re-election in three years' time. The exchange of ratifications of the Locarno treaties also took place on 14 September and they thereupon came into force.

Thoiry

The meeting between Briand and Stresemann at Thoiry near Geneva on 17 September 1926 gave rise to expectations of a transformation in Franco-German relations, and when this did not take place a shadow fell over the "spirit of Locarno." It is even now often supposed that the two Ministers reached agreement in principle on a bargain by which the Rhineland would be evacuated in return for German financial help to France, and that Briand, who had got carried away by his generous temper and ignorance of finance, withdrew from the bargain under pressure of nationalist opinion in France and as the financial scheme proved impracticable. French accounts of the Thoiry meeting have never supported this interpretation: the newly opened French archives throw some fresh light on the subject without, however, entirely solving the problem

subject without, however, entirely solving the problem of how far the expectation of a bargain was based on a genuine misunderstanding.

A meeting between the two Ministers had been suggested as early as the end of March 1926 and Briand had hoped for one at Whitsun. Early in August he told Hoesch that he would like to talk with Stresemann at the time of the League meeting in September, and through the French Embassy in Berlin he exchanged views with Stresemann on the subjects for their conversation. (57) It was understood that they would include financial questions, the occupation, and possibly the Saar and Eupen and Malmedy.

The possibility of placing on the market some of the German industrial obligations which under the Dawes Plan formed security for the reparation debt, and thereby giving France and the other creditors a substantial amount of cash, had been ventilated in the press for several months. More recently the President of the Reichsbank, Schacht, had with the approval of the German Government been discussing with Belgian financial circles a proposal that in return for anticipated annuities and a lump sum Eupen and Malmedy might be ceded back to Germany. The Belgian Government, which like the French were in monetary difficulties, were disposed to favour the idea; but the French were opposed to it, partly on financial

57. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No.225; Vol. I.2, Nos.3, 11, 55; Laboulaye to Briand, 2 Sept. 1926, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 89.

grounds and partly because it could form a precedent for treaty revision. The Foreign Office were also very doubtful. (58) The Belgians dropped the negotiations in August, after French objections; but they still wanted financial help and Poincaré took up the idea of marketing the German railway bonds in order to raise money for Belgium as well as for France. Poincaré was confident that German consent to the transaction and waiving of transfer protection was unnecessary and that only the Committee of Guarantees mattered, and that since Belgium and Italy had ratified their war debt settlements with the United States the fact that the French had not ratified the settlement signed in April 1926 but not yet submitted to the Chambers, would not be an obstacle to placing the bonds on the American market. The Quai d'Orsay disagreed on both points, but at Poincaré's request prepared to approach the United States Government together with the Belgians and Italians, and

58. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos.14-301, passim; Vol. I.2, Nos.11-66, passim; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No.188; Vol. II, Nos. 54, 142, 168, 195; desp. 2174 to Paris, 29 Jul. 1926; minute by Gregory, 11 Aug.; desp. 2375 to Paris, 20 Aug., W 7023, 7624/5314/4, FO 371/11823; Grahame to Chamberlain, 3 Aug., Chamberlain Papers, AC 53/326. Schacht had been talking about Eupen in Brussels a year earlier: French nervousness about these conversations may help to explain their suspicions about the omission of a mention of the Belgian frontier in the German security memorandum of 9 February 1925: Herbette (Brussels) to Herriot, 22, 23 and 24 Mar. 1925; de Margerie to Herriot, 26 and 30 Mar.; de Margerie to Briand, 16 May, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vols. 74, 75.

asked for British support. (59)

It is thus clear that it was the French Ministry of Finance who were particularly pressing the mobilisation of the railway bonds; but it is also evident that the Quai d'Orsay realised that German consent to waiving the transfer protection would be necessary, so that some offer would have to be made to Germany in return. On the German side Stresemann, up to the time that he left for Geneva, appeared to the French Embassy to expect only a general conversation with Briand without making "imprudent" demands. He indicated to his Cabinet colleagues, however, that without making any promises he would explore the possibility of far-reaching negotiations. When Briand arrived at Geneva Hoesch understood from him that he wanted to discuss a programme for a general solution which could be put into effect by stages; and Stresemann on his arrival gathered from Professor Hesnard (head of the press department of the French Embassy in Berlin, who acted as a go-between) that Briand was prepared to talk about the Saar and the occupation and intended to ask what Germany could offer in return. (60) On 11 September Stresemann told Chamberlain that he hoped to come to some arrangement with Briand about the Saar,

59. Correspondence, 19 Aug.-1 Sep. 1926, A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 398; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.228.

60. Laboulaye to Briand, 2 Sep. 1926, A.A.E., Grande Bretagne, Vol. 89; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.73, 82 and n.2.

the end of military control, the future of the Dawes Plan, and the size of the armies of occupation. Chamberlain said that he wished the meeting success. He was sure that the British Government would give friendly consideration to any financial proposals on which French and German negotiators agreed; but they would not consent to anything in the nature of new priority for France or Belgium. (61) On the morning of 17 September, according to a report given later to the German Cabinet, the German delegation at Geneva agreed that if a general settlement seemed possible, repurchase of the Saar mines for 300 million gold marks could be offered and the immediate evacuation of the second and third zones asked - Stresemann himself suggesting the end of September 1927 as a terminal date. If Briand asked for more, mobilisation of the railway bonds could be discussed and a maximum of 1½ milliard gold marks could be offered in return for evacuation. Revision of the Dawes Plan should not be discussed nor eastern questions mentioned; but it should be said that Germany expected a free hand in the negotiations with Belgium. If it appeared that a general solution was not possible, Stresemann would concentrate on improvements in the Rhineland, troop reductions, and the withdrawal of the Control Commission. (62)

61. Op. cit., No.83; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No.204.

62. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, No.95.

Briand and Stresemann lunched and spent the afternoon together at Thoiry on 17 September. Stresemann was accompanied by a private secretary, Briand by Hesnard. The main accounts of the conversation are by Stresemann and Hesnard, and they differ a good deal. (63) According to Stresemann, Briand began the conversation by saying that he wished to discuss a general solution of all questions between France and Germany, and he asked whether Germany would be forthcoming in the economic sphere. He was thinking of the return of the Saar territory and the end of the occupation. Stresemann said that he had found great opposition in Germany to a realisation of the railway bonds, because they would represent an important element in any revision of the Dawes Plan. He thought that the opposition could only be overcome if the occupation were to be ended by the end of September 1927. Briand asked what Stresemann thought of the financial possibilities. Stresemann replied that for the Saar mines agreement had been reached on a figure of some 300 million gold marks. He could not forecast how

63. Stresemann dictated a short note on the conversation on 17 September and a longer account three days later. He also gave a verbal account to the Cabinet in Berlin on 24 September (see below). On the French side Hesnard wrote two memoranda, which were used by Briand's biographer. One is preserved in the French archives; I have not found the second. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos.88, 94; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. III, pp.14-23; A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 398; Suarez, Briand, Vol. VI, pp.215-27.

much in the way of obligations the world market could take: he could not imagine that it would be more than 1½ milliard, and he also thought this the largest sum to which Germany could commit herself. France would get 52 per cent, so the whole transaction would produce for her a capital sum of 750 million plus 300 million gold marks.

Hesnard's account of this part of the conversation states that Briand began by saying that a general solution to Franco-German relations, within the framework of the peace treaty, was not conceivable before the security question was settled, and it was closely linked with the settlement of reparations. Stresemann replied that he was ready to seek a general solution. He mentioned the mobilisation of the railway bonds and said that opposition in Germany would lose importance when public opinion saw the possibility of a general solution; but in practical terms it hardly seemed possible to raise more than 1½ milliard gold marks. Briand said that this did not seem much, and Stresemann replied that this was only a partial solution. A complete settlement would mean a final assessment of the German debt and its commercialisation by stages. The two Ministers agreed that the problem would have to be studied by experts, but Briand said that talks could not begin until the question of security had been examined and settled.

According to Stresemann he then asked about the end of Military control. Briand replied that Stresemann

should see that the outstanding questions were settled. He defended French officials against Stresemann's charge of quibbling over details, and said that he had given instructions to concentrate on the main questions. The soldiers would obey if they were given clear orders. If small points remained the best thing was to settle them. Then, still according to Stresemann, Briand said that he was worried about the nationalist associations in Germany: it was a scandal that the Stahlhelm should issue a military training manual. The French military authorities accused him of ignoring what was really going on in Germany: why did the Government not suppress such things? Stresemann explained that the Stahlhelm had no military significance and was not supported by the Reichswehr, and defended the attitude towards the associations of Gessler and Seeckt. But Hesnard noted that Stresemann clearly found their loyalty less than complete.

Next Stresemann, according to his account, said that if they agreed about the occupation, the Saar, and the end of military control, they must also understand one another about Eupen and Malmedy. Briand said that the Belgians had behaved foolishly and the timing was all wrong. But when Stresemann asked whether France had objections of principle, Briand replied that if the general problems were solved Eupen and Malmedy would be solved too.

Finally Briand said that there had been disagreements about the occupied territory and he wanted to point out what had been done. Almost all of what the Germans had asked for at Locarno had been completed. The French had given up nearly a quarter of the houses requisitioned, and the number of troops had been significantly reduced. Stresemann answered that he owed Briand thanks, but the latter himself had said to Hoesch that the 6,000 men now being withdrawn were not enough. However, he could refrain from talking about reductions if they now had the prospect of complete evacuation. He then asked for a further reduction in the ordinances and enquired about supervision after the withdrawal of the Control Commission. Briand said that there must be a formula to secure the League's right of investigation, but no-one was thinking of using it against a member of the Council. But he earnestly begged Stresemann to pay attention to the Reichswehr: he had the impression that they were doing things that Stresemann did not know about, and their policy must not be allowed to suffer. Stresemann replied that he understood, but did not think that the matters were serious. The last part of the conversation was only briefly summarised by Hesnard.

The short account of what Stresemann told the German Cabinet on 24th September states that Briand talked about a general settlement and asked whether Germany was willing to help France financially. He had put forward as the German desires: (1) return of the Saar with

repurchase of the mines; (2) evacuation of the second and third zones; (3) removal of the control Commission; (4) return of Eupen and Malmedy. He had explained the objections to the mobilisation of the railway bonds. He and Briand had agreed that their Governments were not committed by what they had said. Stresemann asked for general approval of what he had done and authority to continue the negotiations. (64)

Bearing in mind that the meeting lasted for nearly five hours, so that not even Stresemann's long account can be complete, many of the discrepancies between his version and Hesnard's can be explained on the assumption that each recorded in greater detail the points on which his side had been most firm. It is perhaps not very material that Stresemann suggested that it was Briand who first mentioned the Saar and evacuation, whereas Hesnard suggested that it was Stresemann who first mentioned concrete matters. The main difference in content is that Hesnard mentioned neither the evacuation nor the Saar, the two matters of the greatest importance to Stresemann. There is other evidence from the French side that they were discussed; (65) but it is

64. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, No. 105.

65. Suarez, Briand, Vol. VI, pp. 228-9; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos. 234, 238.

regrettable that on these matters there seems to be no French version of the conversation to compare with Stresemann's.

Apart from this, the greatest difference is one of tone; but this is crucial to the question whether there was a misunderstanding. Hesnard's memoranda convey the impression of a general friendly exploration of possibilities, Stresemann's of something very like the heads of an agreement. Briand's expansiveness is reported in much greater detail by Stresemann than by Hesnard. It is impossible to tell from the written record how far Stresemann took it literally. He may have taken gestures or words of comprehension as indications of agreement; but a careful reading even of Stresemann's record indicates that Briand made no specific promises.

Examination of the financial suggestions soon revealed that they were impracticable. The Treasury, although admitting that in theory there was much to be said for converting the reparation debt into a commercial one that would engage Germany's credit, nevertheless pointed out serious practical difficulties. In the first place the reparation obligation was too large to be commercialised without being written down much more drastically than anyone had contemplated so far. Secondly, the Dawes bonds were not suitable for marketing. Under the transfer arrangements servicing could be held up at any time; until the annuities reached their maximum level in 1928 it would be impossible to say whether the safe-

guards were sufficient and so the security good enough. Any issue now would, therefore, have to be at a substantial discount. Some of the difficulties might disappear in time, but the final one, the difficulty of getting a sufficiently large block of bonds absorbed without compromising all other receipts from Germany, appeared insurmountable. It might seem invidious, the Treasury allowed, for Britain to oppose attempts by France to meet her financial difficulties, especially if Germany, who had nothing to lose by giving away other people's money, encouraged the attempts. Nevertheless such a policy ought to be discouraged. As for the repurchase of the Saar mines, there would be advantages for both sides if it took place before 1935. Payment for Eupen and Malmedy would be less complicated since it would fall outside the treaty arrangements. Either this or the Saar transaction might be financed, but the two together would involve a payment of £25 - 30 million in priority over reparations, and this would be bound to impede the development of the Dawes Plan. (66)

The Treasury wanted their objections conveyed to the French Government. Chamberlain, however, urged that criticism must also be constructive: "that we must not press our own interests too far; that we must not have the appearance of destroying for selfish reasons so

66. Treasury memorandum, 17 Sep. 1926, C.P. 333(26), CAB 24/181; conclusion in D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 237, n. 5.

promising a development in Franco-German relations; and that we must show a desire to help and not hinder the rapprochement." (67)

But in the event British criticism of the proposals was not a decisive hindrance. A committee set up by the Germany Government to examine the proposals found many objections. And on the French side, as the need for immediate financial support diminished with the success of Poincaré's emergency measures, the realisation grew that the interest on the proceeds of selling 1½ milliard gold marks' worth of railway bonds to American investors was not much for Germany to pay for the evacuation of the Rhineland, even if the United States Government did agree to the issue. (68) It is difficult to suppose that the Germans were not aware of this; but Stresemann, despite his cautious words to his colleagues, appears to have allowed not only the press but also officials, including Schubert and the chief Germany reparation expert, to believe that a bargain had almost been struck with Briand. Hence Hoesch, on

67. Minutes, 9 and 12 Oct. 1926, C 10779, 10930/10060/18, FO 371/11331.

68. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos. 142, 153, 154, 160, 162, 163; correspondence, 1-15 Oct. 1926, A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 399; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos. 232, 252, 256. No approach was made to the United States Government, because the British Government refused support, the Italian Government would not join in, the Belgian Government obtained financial help by other means, and the French Embassy in Washington considered the chances of success slender unless the French debt settlement were ratified.

returning to Paris from a visit to Berlin, was distressed to find from Seydoux, the Assistant Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay, that the French viewed the Thoiry conversation in a very different light, that they were thinking not of the return of the Saar territory but only of the repurchase of the mines, and that their idea of a general programme was simply to study all questions together in a friendly spirit. From this conversation Seydoux concluded that there had been a serious misunderstanding, probably attributable to the different personalities of the two principals. He also suggested that the Germans now realised that France did not need their help for financial recovery so that early evacuation of the Rhineland could only be purchased by political concessions. (69)

Such concessions, it was now being suggested, might consist of a settlement in the east since the occupation was a security for the observance of the Treaty of Versailles as a whole. On 28th October Hoesch had a long conversation with Briand, who explained the financial difficulties but said that German good will over reparations would make possible the earlier evacuation envisaged in the Treaty. At the end of the

69. Memorandum by Seydoux, 1 Oct. 1926; Briand to Laboulaye, 9 Oct.; Laboulaye to Briand, 11 Oct.; memoranda by Seydoux, 23 Oct., A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 399; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 230.

conversation Hoesch mentioned the press suggestions that Germany should come to an agreement with Poland or give formal assurances about Austria; but Briand replied that he saw no point in raising again questions already settled by the peace treaties and reinforced by the Locarno agreements. (70) Hoesch reported that despite Briand's honest endeavours it was no good pretending that they were on a very sure course. He thought it best to go on with the conversations, without commitments, until the December Council meeting. Stresemann, however, wanted some positive results. On the one hand he tried to encourage the French to pursue a Saar settlement on its own; on the other he suggested that the French attempts to get the disarmament questions cleared up meant an abandonment of the Thoiry policy. When Hoesch saw Briand again on 10th November he learned without surprise that the latter was not yet in a position to talk about the Saar. Although one French official, at least, considered possible subjects for negotiation, attention during the remaining weeks before the December meeting at Geneva was concentrated on disarmament and the withdrawal of the Control Commission; there were no further Franco-German talks about a general solution. (71)

70. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos. 156, 157, 167, 173; résumé of conversation, 28 Oct. 1926, A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 399.

71. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.2, Nos. 174, 176, 177, 188; memorandum by Seydoux, 23 Nov. 1926, A.A.E., Allemagne, Vol. 400.

The newly available French archives entirely support the view that the Thoiry conversation was no more than a general friendly exploration of desires and possibilities. It is still impossible to be certain how and why the different conceptions of what happened arose. As Seydoux suggested, they may have been due to the different temperaments of Briand and Stresemann - the former expansive, generous and imprecise in expression, the latter at times allowing optimism to override his realism and to rush ahead in trying to exploit favourable circumstances. Stresemann may have thought that the French monetary crisis was a good opportunity to secure his great aim in the west in the same way as, as is discussed in the next section, he hoped to use Polish financial difficulties to secure his great aim in the east. At all events the prospects for a Franco-German bargain did not greatly improve. A week after the withdrawal of the Control Commission Crewe remarked that no plan for the early evacuation of the Rhineland seemed practical politics from the French point of view. Great concessions on German disarmament had been made for political motives, and the withdrawal of the Control Commission amounted in French eyes to the abandonment of a first line of defence: it would be extremely difficult to abandon the remaining concrete pledge of French security. Crewe considered that until the German Government gave unmistakable and reiterated proofs of pacific intentions and dispelled

the suspicion with which many Frenchmen regarded Germany, or until some new compensation of value were found, France would not agree to the evacuation of the Rhineland. (72)

The Polish and Russian factors

Although after December 1924 there was no further discussion of a German-Soviet alliance against Poland, German policy towards Poland was affected by relations with the Soviet Union and vice versa, while for the Soviet Union relations with Germany were affected by those with the Western powers.

As regards Poland, far from introducing an element of stability and reconciliation into German-Polish relations as Chamberlain had hoped, Locarno at first stimulated German hopes of recovering lost territory. The means of doing so appeared for a time to be offered by a serious financial and economic crisis in Poland. As recorded in Chapter 6, D'Abernon discussed German-Polish relations with Schubert in October and November 1925 and believed that he had persuaded Schubert of the necessity of improving them. At the end of the year a brief was prepared in the Auswärtiges Amt for a further discussion with D'Abernon, setting out the existing position and the German desires. Germany,

72. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III, No. 7.

Dirksen wrote, would welcome an international operation to sort out Poland's finances but it must be accompanied by a political settlement. The only possible permanent solution would be the return of Danzig, the return of the Corridor as far south as a line from Schneidemühl to Thorn, some smaller rectifications farther south not including Posen, and Upper Silesia and parts of central Silesia. (73)

The conversation with D'Abernon does not appear to have taken place. Instead, German efforts in the next few months were directed principally at British financial circles. There had been a report in September that the Polish Government were going to approach the Bank of England for help, and that the Governor was likely to encourage British banks to increase the capital of the Bank of Poland - an action that would give Britain influence over the Polish state. (74) In the middle of November the Polish Government did make a request for British financial advice and for help from the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. They received a non-committal reply saying that since an American economist, Professor Kemmerer, was on the point of visiting Warsaw it seemed premature to send

73. A.D.A.P., Vol. II 1, No. 21.

74. K160/K019795-97.

another adviser, and that it was undesirable that any of the capital of the Bank of Poland should be owned by foreigners. (75) The Poles then seem to have dropped the idea of a British financial adviser and began to think instead of asking for a team of experts to investigate the whole economy. Treasury officials thought that Poland might have to approach the League of Nations for a financial scheme similar to those which had been applied to Austria and Hungary. This would mean a degree of international control and perhaps also an economic understanding with Germany. Whether of their own accord or not, the officials also expressed doubts about the maintenance of Poland's territorial integrity. (76)

The principal target for the German efforts was the Governor of the Bank of England. On 28th February Dufour reported him as saying that the Poles were not yet ready for international control and were trying to raise credits. Dufour asked whether it would not be advisable to make the grant of a large sum depend on a territorial settlement with Germany. Norman replied that the banks would not wish to get involved in political

75. Warsaw desp. 555, 11 Nov. 1925; Bank of England to Polish Legation in London, N 6314, 7159/43/55, FO 371/10998.

76. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, No. 26; Niemeyer to Lampson, 10 Feb. 1926, N 639/41/55, FO 371/11760. The current state of German-Polish trade relations is described by Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, Ch. VII.

questions, to which Dufour rejoined that such a settlement would be in the interest of the creditors as it would mean real peace and security in eastern Europe. At the end of March Sthamer reported that Norman was seriously examining the possibility of connecting Polish stabilisation with a German-Polish settlement. (77) At the same time the Treasury were telling the British Legation in Warsaw that the Poles would be advised to apply to the League - advice which the Legation did not expect Poland to follow. (78) In further conversation with Norman on 6th April Dufour learned that the Bank of England had been trying to prevent the grant of piece-meal credits to Poland in order to bring about a proper financial reconstruction. This should preferably be done by the League, which should be able to make it a condition that Poland should settle all economic and political problems with her neighbours. (79)

Schacht was expected to visit London in April, and Norman hoped to discuss Poland with him. But the visit

77. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos.72, 97.

78. Niemeyer to Max Muller, 29 Mar. 1926; Max Muller to Niemeyer, 7 Apr., N 1463, 1621/41/55, FO 371/11761.

79. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, No. 116. Early in March D'Abernon, reporting on renewed German-Polish negotiations for a trade agreement, commented that he saw little hope of success without some political adjustment and pressure from outside. The Northern Department of the Foreign Office saw no prospect of British pressure: Berlin desp. 113, 3 Mar. 1926, N 1034/228/55, FO 371/11768.

was postponed and instructions on German policy were instead sent to Sthamer who was, however, told not to discuss the matter himself. The instructions stressed the need for great caution in tackling the Polish question. At present Germany's position was not strong enough to enable her to put forward her political demands with any prospect of success. An attempt to settle the frontier question now in conjunction with international financial reconstruction would, at best, produce partial results, and these would prejudice the chance of a full solution later. The aim must, therefore, be to postpone a definitive rehabilitation of Poland. On the other hand if a start were made Germany would have to join in rather than be accused of sabotaging the attempt: the aim in this case must be to see that action was limited and that no territorial compromise was reached that did not secure for Germany Danzig, the Corridor, Upper Silesia and parts of central Silesia. Reconstruction by the League was undesirable since it would probably take too great a share in the territorial arrangements. (80)

Schacht's visit to London took place at the end of May. He had agreed beforehand with Dirksen about the line to take on Polish reconstruction, but he found

80. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, No, 150. An additional German reason wishing to keep Poland off the League Council was that as a member of it Poland could hardly be subjected to international financial control.

Norman much less ready to consider coupling it with a frontier settlement. Both Norman and Niemeyer tried to persuade Schacht of the bad impression that would be caused if Germany refused to take part in helping Poland. (81) The German Minister in Warsaw, too, advised that refusal to participate would not help Germany's cause; and he did not share Dirksen's hope that Britain would put pressure on Poland to come to an agreement with Germany. (82)

Hitherto the Foreign Office had not been involved in the approaches to the Bank of England and the Treasury, and its records show very little evidence of knowledge of the matter. According to the German archives the possibility of connecting Polish financial reconstruction with frontier revision was mentioned once or twice to Tyrell, and Lampson on 21st May told a German journalist that Germany ought to pursue reconciliation with Poland and not to raise political demands or try to sabotage financial reconstruction, but no confirmation from the British side has been found. (83) On 4th June, however, a Baron de Ropp,

81. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1., Op. cit., Nos. 203, 213.

82. A.D.A.P., Op. cit., Vol. II.2, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 8, 13. Rauscher continually advised his Government that there was no prospect of Poland surrendering territory voluntarily.

83. A.D.A.P., Op. cit., Vol. I.1, No. 173; Vol. II.1, No. 208.

who was sometimes used by the German Government as an unofficial mouthpiece, told a member of the Northern Department that Germany expected to have a voice in any League of Nations scheme for financial help to Poland, but that no German would lift a finger to help Poland unless there were a hope of frontier revision. This was taken as a hint that if Britain wanted German co-operation in the rehabilitation of Poland she would have to put pressure on Poland to agree to frontier revision. (84) At last on 12th August, and as if it were his own idea, Norman suggested to Lampson that the idea of Germany buying back Eupen and Malmedy might be applied to the Corridor as well. Lampson said that he thought it would be most unwise to start talking about the Corridor. He did not take Norman's remarks seriously, but on Chamberlain's instructions he repeated his advice to the Governor on the following day. (85)

The Polish position improved in the summer of 1926, largely thanks to increased coal exports as a result of the prolonged miners' strike in Britain. In October the German Government decided to resume the negotiations on a trade agreement and other matters. Rauscher

84. Minute by Collier, 4 Jun. 1926, N 2591/41/55, FO 371/11763.

85. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 143; minutes on C 9013/234/18, FO 371/11280. For the whole episode see Korbel, Poland between East and West, pp. 197-200, and Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, pp. 256-63. Sir Henry Clay, Lord Norman, London 1957, pp. 258-60, gives a very brief account of the Polish problem which reveals nothing about Norman's involvement in the political aspect.

advised that even apart from these negotiations it was desirable in the interest of overall policy that the attention of the world should not be continually drawn back to the German-Polish quarrel by press campaigns. The only result of assertions that it was irreconcilable was renewed pressure on Germany to recognise the status quo in some way. The discussions in the French press since Thoiry, Rauscher suggested, showed how even a Franco-German understanding could fail over Poland. (86)

Pilsudski's assumption of power in Poland in May, 1926, gave rise to rumours that another coup against Lithuania was being planned. There was also renewed press discussion of the possibility of compensating Poland with Lithuanian territory for the return of Danzig to Germany. In connexion with these reports and the French press discussion of an eastern settlement, and in connexion with a renewed Lithuanian suggestion of a treaty with Germany, (87) the head of the Polish section of the Eastern Department of the Auswärtiges Amt discussed once more, in the middle of November, the prospects for Germany obtaining a satisfactory revision of the Polish frontier. Any solution to this cardinal problem of German foreign policy was, Zechlin

86. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.2, No. 134.

87. Talks about a treaty had been going on desultorily for over a year: 4569/E168393-97; Stresemann, Vermächtnis, Vol. II, pp. 228-30; A.D.A.P., Vols. II.1-II.2, passim.

wrote, far distant. There were only three possible sources of help for Germany - Britain and the United States, Russia, and France. Britain had long been regarded as the best hope because British opinion had been the first in western Europe to recognise the "impossible" nature of the Corridor. But the hope of enlisting British support for a combination of a frontier revision with financial reconstruction had come to nothing; and although Britain might welcome changes which did not upset the balance of power and did contribute to pacification, she was unlikely to take any initiative. At present Germany could not undertake a foreign policy without or against Britain, but little was to be hoped for from her in the Polish question.

The most popular of the possibilities for a solution was German-Russian collaboration. The two countries had indeed a common interest in altering the Polish frontiers; but in other respects (notably Lithuania) their interests were not the same and in practice even a Russian military victory over Poland would not help German interests so long as a German-French understanding had not been reached. France, in fact, held the key to German aims in the east, and a German-French understanding on a broad basis must lead to an understanding about the east as well. It was a very large problem, but if there were no further cause of direct dispute between the two countries collaboration between them might in time enable German interests to be settled anew. On immediate questions,

Zechlin thought that a Polish-Lithuanian union would be very dangerous for Germany. (88)

Zechlin's head of department, Wallroth, agreed that the most important precondition for an eventual satisfactory solution was that France should be encouraged to disinterest herself in eastern questions. He regarded any idea of Germany co-operating in compensating Poland in Lithuania as extremely prejudicial to German interests and to German relations with the Soviet Union and the Baltic states; but he was less alarmed by the prospect of a Polish absorption of Lithuania since he thought that it would weaken rather than strengthen Poland and would worsen Polish-Soviet relations. (89)

Assurances were given to the Soviet Government that Britain had not approached Germany about compensation for Poland in Lithuania; and when Stresemann mentioned Chicherin's fears at Geneva, Chamberlain said that there was no foundation for them. Also at Geneva the Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs assured Schubert that the reports of an impending attack on Lithuania were nonsense. (90) In fact, relations between Poland and Lithuania did not reach crisis point again until the end of 1927.

88. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.2, No. 140.

89. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.2, ~~Op. cit.~~ No. 145.

90. A.D.A.P., Vol. II.2, ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 137, 148, 163: D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 323.

The negotiations for a political agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union were resumed after the Locarno conference at the Russian request. (91) Although the Germans maintained that the letter from the western powers on Article 16 of the Covenant was entirely satisfactory in safeguarding Germany's position and ought to remove the Soviet objections, the Russians professed themselves unconvinced. The negotiations, therefore, consisted in the main of Soviet attempts to induce Germany to commit herself to neutrality in case of war between the Soviet Union and other powers, even if the Soviet Union were the aggressor, and German attempts first not to have a treaty at all but only some kind of declaration not mentioning neutrality, and finally to confine a neutrality undertaking to cases where the Soviet Union was the victim of unprovoked aggression coupled with an undertaking not to join an economic boycott against her in peacetime. The Germans were throughout prepared to give assurances about Article 16. They also spared no effort to deter the Russians from signing even an arbitration treaty with Poland.

The idea of giving assurances about Article 16 worried Hoesch, who regarded any kind of promise of neutrality as incompatible with the League idea and as an unjustified weighting of the balance of German policy. He was

91. A full account of the negotiations is given in Kurt Rosenbaum, Community of Fate. German-Soviet Diplomatic Relations 1922-1928, Syracuse, N.Y., 1965, pp. 188-219. Documents printed in A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1.

sure that the Russian motive was a desire to disrupt Germany's relations with the western powers. Schubert, however, to whom Hoesch expressed these doubts and who equally distrusted Chicherin's good faith, nevertheless believed that the Soviet fears of British policy were genuine and that by entering the League Germany was giving the Russians a blow. He agreed with Hoesch that the German security offer had not been meant as an option for the west, but he argued that Locarno had in practice tipped the balance to the west so that it was necessary to make an eastward contribution to redress it again. (92)

In the last week of February the German Government approved drafts of a short treaty and a protocol which corresponded fairly closely to the texts eventually signed. Stresemann was not prepared to sign them until Germany was safely in the League; but on 1st March an agreement was concluded for a credit to the Soviet Union of 300 million marks, more than half of which was guaranteed by the Reich and Land Governments. The setback at Geneva, and the almost simultaneous Polish refusal of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union unless the Baltic States were included, altered the situation. By the end of March the Germans had made up their minds that the treaty must be signed. But the final stage of the negotiations was complicated. By telling the Western powers that a treaty was in prospect the Germans

92. ~~Op. cit.~~ A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos. 25, 41.

effectively committed themselves to signing something; but at the same time they secured themselves against the charge of repeating the surprise of Rapallo, and also to some extent against having to accept far-reaching Soviet amendments. The Russians battled to the last to secure a German undertaking of neutrality in a war provoked by the Soviet Union and one that Germany would not join in economic action against the Soviet Union at any time. They also put forward proposals for new military collaboration. At the last minute they accepted compromise proposals which, the Germans believed, secured the principle of their draft while removing words to which the Russians objected.

The British and French Governments were informed of the prospect of the treaty on 31st March. Both expressed anxiety about the compatibility of a promise of neutrality with the obligations of the Covenant. (93) Chamberlain and Briand agreed that it was impossible to prevent the conclusion of the treaty; but Chamberlain asked that the Germans should take steps to reassure the Poles, and Briand expressed a hope that the signature might be delayed until after the French Senate had approved the Locarno treaties. (94) However, on

93. D.B.F.P. Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 384, 391, 392, 397, 398, 400, 409, 410; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos. 99, 100, 104, 108, 109, 110, 113.

94. D.B.F.P. Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 412, 414, 415, 418, 420, 421, 423; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos.119, 121, 124.

14th April The Times reported that what was described as a new Reinsurance Treaty was in prospect, so that signature could not be postponed. The German Government complained about the leak, but it was not altogether to their disadvantage. Less than ever could they afford to let the negotiations fail, but their chance of resisting excessive Soviet demands was strengthened. Sthamer now repeated to Chamberlain assurances that there was no change in German policy and that nothing in the proposed arrangements was incompatible either with the Locarno undertakings or with the obligations of the Covenant. (95)

Eastern European countries were a good deal alarmed by the news of the treaty. Beneš suggested that the German Government should be asked officially how its provisions were to be reconciled with the procedures of the League; but Chamberlain thought it better to assume German good faith and unwise to enter into further discussion of Article 16. (96) The Poles were not easily encouraged and Schubert did not improve matters by accusing them of intrigue against Germany. (97)

95. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 434; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos. 135, 144, n. 8.

96. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 429, 435, 437, 441, 443, 447, 449; Prague desp. 139, 17 Apr. 1926, N 1726/718/38, FO 371/11791; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos. 155, 167, n. 3; Vol. III; No. 120.

97. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 450, 459; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, No. 157.

This "intrigue" consisted mainly of having discussed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union, the prospect of which had seriously worried the German Government; but it was, in fact, the Poles who had turned down the pact unless the Baltic States were included. In suggesting to the western governments that the possibility of a Polish-Soviet agreement and the actual signature of a new Polish-Roumanian treaty had been the motives for deciding on the German-Soviet treaty, the Germans professed fear of Polish rather than of Soviet policy. They also professed - and indeed felt - some fear of a Franco-Soviet rapprochement resulting from the debt negotiations recently started in Paris. (98)

The German-Soviet treaty and an exchange of notes were signed in Berlin on 24th April and published two days later. In the treaty the two countries undertook (1) that they would remain in friendly contact to promote an understanding on all political and economic questions affecting the two countries; (2) that if on the occasion of such a conflict, or when neither party was engaged in warlike operations, a coalition were formed

(2) that if one of the two, despite its peaceful attitude, were attacked by one or more powers the other would observe neutrality;

98. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 392, 401, 407, 409, 415, 435, 445, 454, 464. D'Abernon attributed the information given to him "a leading German authority." I have not been able to find in the German Foreign Ministry archives a parallel memorandum that would confirm whether or not this was a disguise for Schubert, as frequently was the case. The renewed Polish-Roumanian defensive alliance, signed on 26th March was not, as the original one of 1921 had been, concerned solely with aggression on the two countries' eastern frontiers: B.F.S.P., Vol. CXIV, pp. 916-17; Vol. CXXV, pp. 981-3.

against either with a view to an economic boycott, the other would not join. In their note the German Government stated that Germany's entry into the League could not be an obstacle to friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The League was designed for the peaceful settlement of international disputes and the German Government were determined to co-operate in the realisation of this idea. If, however, any efforts directed against the Soviet Union should take shape within the League, Germany would combat them. Nor could loyal observance of obligations arising out of Articles 16 and 17 adversely influence Germany's attitude to the Soviet Union, against whom sanctions could only be considered if she entered on a war of aggression against another state. The question whether the Soviet Union were the aggressor could only be determined with binding force for Germany with her own consent. As to whether Germany could take part in any application of sanctions, the German Government referred to the note on Article 16 addressed to them on the signature of the Locarno treaties. In reply the Soviet Government took note of these explanations. (99)

Knowledge of the exact terms of the treaty and notes did not allay anxiety abroad. Chamberlain was still reluctant to say so to other Governments, but he had the Germans informed that the texts were obscure and a very

99. German texts in A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, No. 168; translation in B.F.S.P., Vol. CXXV, pp. 738-41.

inadequate fulfilment of the advance assurances. It was again decided not to ask for formal explanations of the German attitude to the application of Articles 16 and 17, but it was arranged that Gaus should give explanations to Fromageot and Murat. (100)

Gaus gave these explanations on 12th May at Geneva. He repeated the assurance that the treaty could not override the Locarno engagements or the obligations of the Covenant, and then explained the articles. The neutrality stipulation was expressly conditional on the Soviet Union being the victim of unprovoked attack. The Russians, he said, had objected to the term "unprovoked aggression" on the ground that it suggested that their country might be guilty of provocation; but the words "despite its peaceful attitude" covered the same point. The provision of Article 3, also, was only applicable when the Soviet Union was the victim of unprovoked aggression or when there was no armed conflict: in such cases Articles 16 and 15(7) of the Covenant did not arise. The German note constituted replies to questions put by the Soviet Government about the effect of Germany's entry into the League. The statement that Article 16 did not oblige Germany to take any action without her own consent

100. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 470, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 482, 486, 489, 490, 492, 494, 497, 501, 502, 507, 509, 510, 512, 513, 514, 516, 519, 522; A.D.A.P., Vol. II.1, Nos. 174, 178, 184, 185; Vol. I.1, Nos. 213, 215.

accorded with the Assembly resolution of 1921: Germany had not undertaken not to agree to a vote that the Soviet Union was an aggressor. The reference to the Locarno letter said no more than the letter itself. (101)

Gaus's explanations were given and accepted verbally but were not for publication. After further discussion Stresemann agreed that Briand might state in the Senate that Gaus had explained the German Government's view, so that there could be no doubt on the question whether the German-Soviet treaty was in harmony with the Covenant and the Locarno treaty. (102)

On the effect of the Treaty of Berlin one of the best-informed German experts on the Soviet Union, Schlesinger, wrote early in July that Soviet policy would invariably affect Germany's position in international affairs. In her own interest Germany must try to prevent the Soviet Union taking steps that would endanger her existence. On the other hand Schlesinger thought that the Russian fears of Britain were justified, and argued that even if Britain, for internal reasons, could not conduct an active anti-Soviet policy herself she had the means to cause other states to conduct it for her. It was also important for Germany to prevent the threat to Soviet survival from becoming acute at a time when Soviet

101. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No. 227, annex 2.

102. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 523; Vol. II, Nos. 9, 10, 12; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos. 227, 232, 234, 235.

relations with Europe virtually rested on Germany alone. (103)

In fact, Chamberlain's policy of correct indifference towards the Soviet Union was maintained throughout 1926. As for working through other countries, the Foreign Office had very little to do with relations between the Soviet Union and her neighbours. Before Chicherin visited Paris in November 1925 the French were told that Chamberlain would be prepared to consider a suggestion of a meeting. (104) But Chicherin did not ask for an invitation and although Soviet representatives continued to say that a settlement with Britain was desired there was no sign of readiness to fulfil the condition of a changed attitude on debts and claims and an end to anti-British activities. At the beginning of November there was some discussion in the Foreign Office about a change of policy, since other European countries were trying to improve their relations with the Soviet Union and moves might be expected to include her in the pacification of Europe and perhaps to admit her to the League. The conclusion at this stage was that there should be no change; so that when the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires made enquiries about talks for a settlement he was given the same answer as before. (105)

103. A.D.A.P., ~~Op. cit.~~, Vol. II.2, No. 32.

104. Minute by Lampson, 29 Oct. 1925, N 6054/102/38, FO 371/11016; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 46, n. 4.

105. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 46, 65, 142, 150, 181.

During the winter, however, signs of a domestic campaign about Anglo-Soviet relations increased, and Chamberlain felt obliged to take some steps to forestall it. He again recommended his Cabinet colleagues not to make attacks on the Soviet Union which would confirm Chicherin's suspicions of British policy; and after a deputation from the London Chamber of Commerce, who were worried about the working of the trade agreement, had been received at the Foreign Office Chamberlain wrote in a letter for publication that the Government were prepared to consider any Soviet proposals for a settlement in good faith and did not think that abrogation of the trade agreement would serve British interests. (106)

In reporting the German-Soviet treaty to the Central Executive Committee Litvinov said that it was Soviet policy to conclude treaties with other states in order to lessen the danger of blocs being formed against her. If the object of Locarno were to bring peace among nations its authors ought to welcome the German-Soviet treaty; but if the real object were to isolate the Soviet Union then the treaty with Germany had removed some of the sting. Litvinov reiterated a desire for an understanding with Britain and professed to see some signs of a changing attitude there. (107)

106. ~~Op. cit.~~ D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 278, 416, enclosure.

107. Degras, Soviet Document on Foreign Policy, Vol. I, pp. 104-17; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 463, 465.

By about this time, indeed, the desirability of some settlement was being considered in the Foreign Office, but the transfer of Soviet funds to support the General Strike put an end to any prospect of a favourable decision and increased Conservative Party pressure for a breach. (108) For the time being the demand was resisted. Chamberlain stated in the House of Commons on 25th June that the Government did not intend to break off relations, and he told the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires that he desired to avoid a rupture. (109) No important element in the situation changed thereafter, except that the pressure from the Conservative Party and some of his colleagues finally in May, 1927, overcame the opposition of Chamberlain and his advisers to a breach with the Soviet Union. (110)

The pursuit of settlements in other troubled areas

The prospects for Locarno-type agreements in other parts of Europe did not improve during 1926, the optimism of the Foreign Office at the time of the Imperial Conference notwithstanding. The fundamental reason was

108. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I., ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 504; Vol. II, Nos. 31, 52, 55, 56, 60, 61, 62, 71, 80.

109. H.C. Deb., 5th ser., Vol. 197, cols. 769-77; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 90; also Nos. 103, 176.

110. Cf. Stambrook, in International Review of History and Political Science, VI (1969).

the lack of sufficient incentives. In the Baltic area negotiations for non-aggression treaties, guarantee pacts and the like were repeatedly hampered by the conflicting interests of almost all the countries concerned; and were especially complicated by the positions of Poland and Lithuania and the German and Soviet attitudes thereto. (111) The British Government played no part, despite the Russian conviction that the Baltic States were pawns in Britain's anti-Soviet policy (a conviction that was one of the motives for trying to conclude non-aggression pacts with them) and that under Pilsudski Poland was falling under British influence. In November, 1925, Chamberlain commended to the Lithuanian Minister in London the principle of Locarno, namely a freely chosen contribution to peace; but in recording the conversation he wrote that it was not British policy to impose such a policy on other countries. (112) On 22nd January a member of the Latvian Legation asked the Northern Department what Britain would think of a pact between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union. He was told that Chamberlain favoured any arrangement anywhere that would tend to promote peace and a feeling of security. (113)

111. See Korbel, Poland between East and West, pp. 189-208; X. J. Eudin and H. H. Fisher, Soviet Russia and the West, 1920-1927, Stanford 1957, pp. 280-2.

112. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 83.

113. Desp.29 to Riga, 29 Jan. 1926, N 300/124/59, FO 371/11723.

The Soviet proposals of the spring of 1926 for a pact with the Baltic States were said to include a provision that they would not join in any hostile alliance directed against the Soviet Union, a provision which might have conflicted with the obligations of the Covenant. In consequence the British representatives in the area were instructed that although the Government desired to see peaceful relations established everywhere in Europe, and would view without jealousy negotiations for improved relations between the Soviet Union and any of her neighbours, this attitude was based on the assumption that any agreements were purely defensive and did not in any way derogate from the duties of members of the League. (114) The terms of the German-Soviet treaty seemed to underline the need for care. At the beginning of May the Lithuanian Government asked whether it would be regarded as a suitable model for the Soviet-Lithuanian treaty now under discussion. The reply suggested was that it would be essential to make sure that the language of the treaty conformed strictly to the terms and obligations of the Covenant. (115)

Recommendations such as this would not weaken the Soviet distrust of British policy in the Baltic States.

114. Riga desp. 89, 13 Mar. 1926; Moscow desp. 227, 19 Mar., N 1309, 1531/124/59, FO 371/11723; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, No. 417.

115. Riga desp. 156, 7 May 1926; desp. 180 to Riga, 1 Jun., N 2222/124/59, FO 371/11724.

By the end of the summer, however, some Soviet officials were prepared to concede that the behaviour of the Foreign Office and British diplomatic representatives was correct, although they still harboured the darkest suspicions of other British agencies. (116) The terms of the Soviet-Lithuanian treaty signed on 28th September in fact corresponded closely to those of the Treaty of Berlin; but one of the reasons for the failure of the Soviet negotiations with the other Baltic States was their insistence on fidelity to the Covenant. (117)

Far from the prospects of settlements in central and south-east Europe improving in 1926, the situation was further disturbed by the development of Mussolini's aim of substituting Italian for French influence in the region and his decision to establish a virtual protectorate over Albania. (118) As far as relations between Hungary and her neighbours were concerned, the scandal over the discovery of a conspiracy in Hungary to counterfeit French banknotes to be used for political ends in central Europe was a serious setback after the

116. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 180; Riga desp. 322, 3 Sep. 1926, N 4251/387/38, FO 371/11787.

117. Soviet-Lithuanian treaty, B.F.S.P., Vol. CXXV, pp. 890-3; Riga desp. 263, 20 Jul. 1926, N 3466/124/59, FO 371/11724; Helsingfors desp. 180, 25 Nov. 1926, N 5431/124/59, FO 371/11726.

118. Italian policy in the Balkans and the Danubian area at this time is discussed in Cassels, Mussolini's Early Diplomacy, pp. 315-47.

tentative feelers of the winter of 1925. Austria, however, concluded an arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia in March.

Early in 1926, as a result partly of long-standing discussion of a Franco-Yugoslav treaty and partly of the more recent talk of a Balkan Locarno, the French proposed a tripartite agreement with Italy and Yugoslavia to guarantee the territorial settlement. This suggestion savoured too much of an alliance of the victors to meet with British approval. Chamberlain was anxious to see an improvement in Franco-Italian relations; but instead of welcoming a proposal that might have contributed to this end he echoed Mussolini's objection that it was contrary to the Locarno spirit. Mussolini's refusal to contemplate French participation in any combination in the Adriatic region was founded on Italian ambitions, not on devotion to the spirit of Locarno; but it was sufficient not only to kill a tripartite pact but to delay conclusion of a Franco-Yugoslav treaty.(119) Briand's deference to Mussolini's wishes on this occasion did not help to improve relations with Italy, which on the contrary deteriorated. Much as Chamberlain regretted this fact, he continued to favour the expansion of Italian influence across the Adriatic; and the Foreign Office

119. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. I, Nos. 263, 291, 300, 329; Kennard to Howard Smith, 23 Feb. 1926; Howard Smith to Kennard, 1 Mar., C 2673/1618/62, FO 371/11242; D.D.I., Vol. IV, Nos. 237, 240, 249, 250, 262, 263, 266, 269, 271, 273, 278, 283.

viewed with equanimity the French misgivings about the decline of their influence in central Europe. (120)

The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference

The Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference began its first session on 18th May, 1926. Eleven months later it adopted a report setting out a draft convention without figures and with a number of alternative proposals. The only parts of this first year's effort that are relevant to the subject of this study are the attempt that was made to devise provisions on security, and the conclusions that might be drawn about the future.

In the instructions given to Cecil it was stated, with regard to security and assistance to an attacked state, that the British Government were willing to join in considering whether Article 16 could be regarded as effective, but that they felt strongly that reduction and limitation of armaments would so greatly increase security as to make this point less important. Any further examination of Article 16 should be directed towards ensuring that the obligations were such as could and would be carried out. The real menace to security, in many cases, was competition between neighbouring states in maintaining excessive armaments. The measures

120. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos. 74, 88, 126.

contemplated in Article 16 for dealing with aggression did little to remove this menace: the only thing that could do so was effective agreement on the reduction and limitation of armaments. The British Government could only contemplate contributing to further guarantees of security in exchange for a guarantee that a genuine scheme of disarmament would be enforced. (121)

At an early meeting of the drafting committee the French delegation proposed that a sub-commission should study procedures for assistance under Article 16 and that the Council should study procedures for calling rapid meetings in case of war or threat of war. Cecil was able to get this proposal withdrawn and instead a resolution adopted, addressed to the Council, suggesting that in order to enable a state to calculate the extent of disarmament to which it could agree it was necessary to determine the procedures for giving help to a victim of attack, and asking that such procedures should be studied. (122) However, the Foreign Office were so much disturbed by this apparent attempt to go back to the Treaty of Mutual Assistance that the French Ambassador was asked for an explanation. Briand replied that there was no question of reopening the Treaty or the Geneva

121. League of Nations, Documents of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, Series II, Geneva 1926, pp. 13-23; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, No. 2.

122. Documents of the Preparatory Commission, Series II, pp. 89-101; 110-11; D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos. 14, 16, 19.

Protocol, but the majority of the Commission accepted the connexion between security and disarmament. The problem was to determine the amount of disarmament made possible by guarantees of security. (123) Remitting the question to the Council solved one difficulty in that the United States would have had great difficulty in discussing it in the Preparatory Commission; but it created another in that Germany was not yet on the Council and objected strongly to Article 16 being discussed without her. The dilemma was overcome by postponing discussion of the resolution. (124) In September the proposal was referred to a committee of the Council, where the Belgian representative suggested that what really mattered was to improve Council procedures when any danger of war existed. Recommendations to this effect were approved by the Council and the Assembly in 1927. No more was heard of Article 16 for the time being. (125)

The Preparatory Commission had by no means completed its work by the time of the Assembly meeting in September 1926, but it was then instructed to hasten so that if possible the Disarmament Conference could be called

123. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II., ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 20, 21, 28, 35, 47.

124. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II., ~~Op. cit.~~, Nos. 44, 53; A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, Nos. 236, 239, 242.

125. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. II, Nos. 83, 187, 196, 320; Vol. III, Nos. 15, 47.

before the next Assembly. With a good many doubts on the part of their advisers, the British Government decided to put forward a draft convention for the next meeting of the Commission.(126) The French delegation also put forward a draft: intensive discussion brought agreement on some points but left others unreconciled. One difficulty was over naval limitation, and the problem was made worse by the meeting and the failure of the separate naval conference in the summer of 1927, which revealed a fundamental Anglo-American difference over cruisers.

Surveying the scene after the adjourment of the Preparatory Commission in April, 1927, Cadogan, one of the Foreign Office officials permanently attached to the British delegation to the League of Nations, was inclined to think that the whole attempt not only had achieved very little but had been misguided. The League, he wrote, had discovered between 1920 and 1922 that general reduction or limitation of armaments was impossible in the absence of security. It had then pursued general security and had found it impossible. Locarno had been a "brilliant start" on the alternative road towards security by means of regional agreements; but it had had no sequel and there seemed to be no

126. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Op. cit., Vol. III, Nos. 10, 37; C. 15/27, CAB 23/54. Texts of the draft conventions in Cmd 2888 of 1927, League of Nations. Preparatory Committee for the Disarmament Conference. Report of the British Representative to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Annexes I and II.

prospect of a series of regional arrangements adding up to the creation of a general sense of security sufficient to produce a general reduction of armaments. But since 1925 the feeling that something must be done about disarmament had grown into an obsession: the wheel had come full circle and security had dropped into the background. Cadogan thought that the difficulties and dangers would be only beginning when the Disarmament Conference met, for it was then that figures would have to be filled in. Even supposing that agrement were reached on the basis of what each country regarded as the minimum effectives necessary for its safety, that would not constitute reduction of a kind to satisfy Germany. Cadogan had no proposal on how the negotiations should be continued, other than delay. He would have preferred to try for regional disarmament in areas where regional security had been achieved. (127)

Cecil, naturally, did not concede that little had been achieved, and he argued that even if the disarmament conference produced only a very modest reduction it would mark a step forward by setting up a definite machinery. He maintained also that further negotiations could not be postponed, precisely because of the German difficulty since the Allies were obliged to promote a scheme of general disarmament. (128)

127. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III, Nos. 200, 300.

128. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III, ~~Op. cit.~~ No. 202.

The question whether the German obligation to remain disarmed depended legally on the Allies' obligation to formulate and carry out a scheme of general disarmament was not as simple as Cecil thought.[129] It was, however, undeniably true that the German difficulty had already arisen and that the British Government, thanks to League of Nations opinion and not least to Cecil, had already committed themselves to the general reduction of armaments. Their feet were set on the treacherous road from which, as the next six years were to show, there could be no turning off whatever happened in Europe. Cadogan's idea that the Locarno powers might be able to agree on limitation of armaments as between themselves was possibly the least practicable alternative. It was presumably based on an assumption not only that Locarno had solved the problem of western European security but also - contrary to the evidence of the Preparatory Commission and of French military writing in 1926 - 27 - that France no longer feared Germany. In fact, at this time, as later, any limitation of armaments to which France would agree would not meet the German case, which was concerned not with world disarmament but with a substantial reduction in the

129. See D.B.F.P., Ser. IA., ~~See op. cit.~~, Vol. I, Nos. 326, 508.

in the armaments of Germany's neighbours. (130)

Conclusion.

At almost the same time as Cadogan and Cecil were discussing the lessons of the first year of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, reports from Paris and Coblenz suggested to the Foreign Office that the attitude of France and Belgium was "informed less completely than formerly by the Locarno spirit." (131) In reply to an enquiry whether this was so, Crewe pointed out on 8th July, 1927, that the Locarno treaties had never been regarded in France as a complete solution to the problem of French security: even Briand had described them in the Senate as "un bien relatif." Crewe had suggested some months earlier that the fact that the Locarno guarantees, although not regarded as sufficient, were as much as any British Government were likely to give, would impel France to do what she could

130. Cf. A.D.A.P., Vol. I.1, No. 144, a Reichswehr memorandum of 6 March 1926 which pointed out that all the aims of German policy meant controversy with Germany's neighbours and Italy. The first aim of her disarmament policy must therefore be to strip France of her dominating military power; secondly Polish armaments must be reduced; thirdly those of Belgium and Czechoslovakia: and behind them Italy. World disarmament was of no great interest to Germany. For French military reorganisation and thinking in 1926-27 see Jon Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy. Germany and the West 1925-1929, Princeton 1972, pp. 105-13.

131. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III, Nos. 249, 250, 256.

to effect a reconciliation with Germany. He thought that this was still the case, but that the mass of moderate French opinion was inclined to ask whether German policy was not fundamentally hostile to France and Britain. This, if true, need not mean that Germany contemplated a breach of the Locarno treaties: there were plenty of other directions in which she could act against her late enemies. It might, however, mean that immediate concession to Germany in all matters would not alter German policy. "France accepts Locarno," Crewe concluded, "and continues to act in its spirit. It does not follow that she believes that the Locarno policy is immediately capable of a wider development. She might be ready for such a development were Germany able to convince her that she too was guided by its spirit and not only by its letter." (132)

An answer to the question of who gained most from Locarno involves not only a balancing of immediate and long-term gains but also the weighing of imponderables and answers to further hypothetical questions. When part of Stresemann's letter to the Crown Prince, with its reference to a tactic of "finassieren," was published in the Vermächtnis in 1932 there was an outcry that the western powers had been duped. Briand's biographer later asserted that since the territorial provisions

132. D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III, ~~Op. cit.~~, No. 263; Vol. II, No. 36.

of the Treaty of Versailles were still intact at the time of Stresemann's death it was rather he who failed, and that Briand was always aware that the spirit of Locarno needed additional doses of appeasement to keep it alive. (133)

Without pursuing Suarez's argument into the 1930's one might say that in so far as Locarno led neither to the complete Franco-German reconciliation for which Briand hoped and worked, nor to the territorial revision for which Stresemann hoped and worked, both ultimately failed. But in so far as all the main parties to the treaties gained something, it was a genuinely successful settlement. The gains actually achieved by Germany were considerable. Already by the date when the treaties were signed the immediate objects for which Stresemann made the security offer in January 1925 had been secured: an Anglo-French alliance had been frustrated and the evacuation of the first zone of the occupied territory had been assured. Within the next eighteen months the Control Commission had been withdrawn without securing the complete fulfilment of the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and the idea of a permanent organ in the demilitarised zone had been abandoned. It was increasingly doubtful whether the scheme of League investigation of German disarmament would ever be applied. The hopes for an

133. ~~D.B.F.P., Ser. IA, Vol. III.~~ Suarez, Briand, Vol. VI, p. 103.

early complete evacuation of the Rhineland in return for a financial contribution proved vain: but before he died Stresemann secured a promise of accelerated evacuation and an improved reparation settlement.

The gain for France was some release from fear for the security of her eastern frontier and a formal assurance of British support in case of need: a secondary gain was a measure of relief from the danger that her strength would be over-taxed as a result of a German-Polish quarrel. But these gains were not sufficient to reconcile French opinion to German demands for the reduction of European armaments, and it is beyond the scope of this study to speculate on the circumstances in which a Franco-German reconciliation might have taken place. The gain for Britain was release from friction with both Germany and France over the peace settlement, and from the necessity for constant activity in western European affairs.

For Germany's eastern and south-eastern neighbours, especially Poland, the measure of any gain from the Locarno settlement depended almost entirely on future developments. Relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia continued on the previous passable basis: those between Germany and Poland underwent a slight improvement, but no genuinely favourable development was possible in view of the absolute German rejection of the territorial settlement in the east. The revisionist claims against Poland not merely were

a matter of policy but had the character of a national mystique which could only be modified by a dictator. The sole gain was that from 1925 German Governments, having evaluated Germany's military capacity, pursued the aim of revision by propaganda, economic and diplomatic means alone and directed the emphasis at the western governments rather than hoping for a military solution in conjunction with the Soviet Union. The hope that the western powers would secure the German aim was, however, illusory. A good deal of sympathy for it was aroused, but when the western governments had to choose between actively supporting change and maintaining the status quo, the latter always seemed the better way to preserve peace. Whether any favourable offer could have induced Poland to part with territory must be open to grave doubt: propaganda and economic pressure could not possibly do so. Stresemann pursued revision with persistence until his death. Whether he would have continued to believe that it could be achieved by these means, and whether he would have continued to use these means alone once Germany's military position had improved, are questions for speculation. While it is impossible to be sure, many sober authorities are inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt. (134) In the mean time the expansion of

134. The latest and most thorough discussion of the Polish problem is by Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, Chs. IX and XII, especially pp.263-71.

economic relations between Germany and France did not take place, whereas for all the defects of the German-Soviet relationship the economic agreements signed for political reasons with the Treaty of Berlin contributed to the improvement of Germany's position.

"L'esprit de Locarno est composé de plusieurs esprits fort differents," wrote Henri de Jouvenel in 1932. (135) The atmosphere of reconciliation and hope that made up so large a part of the spirit of Locarno was from the start more prevalent in Britain than elsewhere. It is perhaps too easy with hindsight to dismiss it as an illusion; but even without going into the question of popular optisism and the differences between generous public statements and private misgivings, it does seem that there was always a basis of wishful thinking and a false estimate of Germany's motives for entering on the security pact. Had the objectives of Stresemann's policy been better understood, it is possible that the rejoicing might have been more tempered and the expectations more realistic. No doubt those who did express misgivings in private hoped that by the time that Germany had recovered her strength she would be so tied to the west by interest and membership of the League that she would have learned to play a constructive part in European society; but the alternative was not fully faced.

135. Henri de Jouvenel, La Paix française, Paris 1932, p. 181.

The step taken at Locarno by Britain was a limited one, albeit the largest that was possible at the time. Since Britain would make no more far-reaching contribution the influence that she could exercise thereafter was necessarily also limited. Locarno was a partial settlement: unless its principle were applied in other areas it could not carry the weight that was loaded on to it. However different were the circumstances of the eventual breakdown, some of the causes were present from the start of the negotiations: the ambiguities of the relationships between the three major parties, and between them and the parties in the east, were reflected in the ambiguities of the treaties. Annelise Thimme, in her short study of Stresemann, has written that

> whereas in the negotiations for the security treaty each power had something to contribute, thereafter Germany had no more to give and could only demand. (136)

One can accept this as a statement of what was actually possible while being able to see the contributions that were still needed from Germany, in the west as well as in the east, if the pact were really to succeed. The judgment indeed demonstrates how limited was the effect of Locarno upon the security of even western Europe. General security might be unattainable, but in due course European security was proved to be indivisible.

136. Annelise Thimme, Gustav Stresemann, Hanover and Frankfurt 1957, p. 111.

Appendix

Successive texts of the western security treaty

(i)

British draft, 3 July 1925[1]

1. The high contracting parties severally and collectively guarantee in the manner provided in the following articles the maintenance and inviolability of the frontiers between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other hand, as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on the 28th June 1919.

2. France and Belgium of the one part and Germany of the other part severally undertake that they will in no case resort to war against the other except in resistance to invasion or attack by the other or when acting with the authorisation of the Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations.

3. If any party to the present treaty alleges that a violation of article 2 of this treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles has been, or is being, committed, the question shall be brought before the Council of the League forthwith.

4. As soon as any violation of article 2 of this treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles shall have been established to the satisfaction of the Council of the League, the Council shall forthwith notify such violation to each of the parties to this treaty.

5. The parties to this treaty severally agree that in the event of any notification being made to them as provided in article 4, they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against which the act complained of is directed.

6. Treaties shall be concluded between France and Germany and between Belgium and Germany respectively providing for the peaceful settlement of all disputes, whether juridical or political, which may arise between them.

1. C 8861/459/18, FO 371/10735.

7. (1) The treaties referred to in article 6 shall be placed under the guarantee of the parties to the present treaty.

(2) If it is alleged by a party to one of the said treaties that the other party has failed to comply with its provisions, either by refusing to submit a dispute to the machinery therein provided for the settlement of disputes, or by failing to comply with an award, recommendation or report resulting therefrom, the question shall be referred to the Council of the League.

(3) If the Council of the League is satisfied that a party to one of the said treaties has failed to comply with its provisions as alleged, the Council shall propose what steps shall be taken to secure compliance with the treaty.

(4) If the party which has failed to comply with the provisions of one of the said arbitration treaties is found by the Council of the League to have resorted to war against the other party to that treaty, the parties to the present treaty severally agree that they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power attacked.

8. The provisions of the present treaty shall not be deemed to prevent action, provided that such action is not inconsistent with the Covenant, in fulfilment of a guarantee given by one of the parties to the present treaty for the execution of an arbitration treaty of the same purport as those referred to in article 6, concluded by another party to the present treaty with a third State, where the party failing to comply with the provisions of the said arbitration treaty resorts to war against the other party to that treaty. Nor shall they be deemed to affect the rights enjoyed by any of the parties to the present treaty under the Treaty of Versailles or under the subsequent agreements therein provided for, including the agreements signed in London on the 30th August 1924.

9. Nothing in this treaty shall affect the rights and obligations of the high contracting parties as Members of the League of Nations, nor shall it prejudice the power and duty of the League to take, in accordance with the provisions of the Covenant, any action that may be deemed wise and

effectual to safeguard the peace of the world.

10. The present treaty must be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations and must be recognised by the Council, acting if need be by a majority, as an engagement which is consistent with the Covenant of the League; it will continue in force until, on the application of one of the parties to it, the Council, acting if need be by a majority, agrees that the League itself affords sufficient protection.

11. Copies of the treaties referred to in article 6 shall be communicated to each of the parties to this treaty before its ratification.

12. This treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of any such Dominion, or of India, signifies its acceptance thereof.

The present treaty shall be ratified, but shall not come into force unless and until Germany has become a member of the League of Nations.

(ii)

French redraft, 31 July 1925 (translation)[2]

1. The high contracting parties severally and collectively guarantee in the manner provided for in the following articles the maintenance and inviolability of the frontiers between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other hand, as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on the 28th June 1919, and the integrity of the neighbouring territories, together with the territorial status quo of the Rhineland resulting from the said treaty and, particularly, from articles 42, 43 and 180.

2. France and Belgium of the one part and Germany of the other part severally undertake that they will in no case resort to war against the other.

This stipulation shall not, however apply in the case of resistance to invasion, attack, or hostile acts, or in the case of action undertaken with the authorisation of the Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations.

2. C 10146/459/18, FO 371/10737.

3. Except in the cases contemplated in paragraph 2 of article 2, any disputes which may arise between Germany and Belgium or between Germany and France, and which cannot be settled by negotiation, shall be settled by means of arbitration, and the said Powers hereby agree that they will comply with the settlement so arrived at. The methods of arriving at such a settlement are the subject of special arrangements.

4. Subject to the provisions of article 6 below, if one of the high contracting parties alleges that a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles has been or is being committed, it will be for that party to bring the question at once before the Council of the League of Nations.

5. As soon as the Council of the League of Nations is satisfied that such a violation has been committed, it will notify its finding without delay to the Powers signatory of the present treaty, who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against which the act complained of is directed.

6. In case of a manifest violation by one of the high contracting parties of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles, if the other contracting parties are agreed that such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression, and that by reason of the outbreak of hostilities or of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone immediate action is necessary, the said parties severally agree that they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against which the act complained of is directed. Nevertheless the Council of the League of Nations, which is to be seized of the question in accordance with article 4, will issue its findings and the high contracting parties will act in accordance therewith.

7. The provisions of article 3 above are placed under the guarantee of the high contracting parties as provided by the following stipulations:

(1) Where one of the parties referred to in article 2, without resorting to hostile measures, has refused to submit

a dispute to arbitration or to comply with an arbitral decision, the other party shall be at liberty to bring the matter before the Council of the League of Nations, which shall propose what steps shall be taken to secure compliance with the provisions of article 3.

(2) If one of the Powers referred to in article 2 refuses to submit a dispute to arbitration or to comply with an arbitral decision, and resorts to hostile measures, the provisions of article 6 shall apply.

8. The provisions of the present treaty do not affect the rights and obligations of the high contracting parties under the Treaty of Versailles or under subsequent arrangements, including the agreements signed in London on the 30th August 1924, nor yet the rights of any one of the high contracting parties to take action, in so far as such action is not inconsistent with the Covenant, in fulfilment of a guarantee given by it to the observance of the arbitration conventions concluded this day between Germany and Poland and between Germany and Czechoslovakia, if the party which violates such a convention resorts to hostile measures.

9. Nothing in the present treaty shall affect the rights and obligations of the high contracting parties as members of the League of Nations, or shall be interpreted as restricting the role of the League of for the purpose of maintaining the peace of the world.

10. The present treaty must be submitted to the Council of the League of Nations and must be recognised by the Council as an engagement which is consistent with the Covenant of the League.

11. The special conventions on the procedure for arbitration, referred to in article 3 and signed this day, and the arbitration conventions referred to in article 8 above between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, shall, before the ratification of the present treaty, be communicated to each of the high contracting parties who are not parties to the said conventions.

12. The present treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of any such Dominion, or of India, signifies its

acceptance thereof.

13. The present treaty shall be ratified, but shall not come into force until Germany has become a member of the League of Nations.

(iii)

Anglo-French draft, 12 August 1925(3)

1. The High Contracting Parties severally and collectively guarantee in the manner provided in the following articles the maintenance and inviolability of the frontiers between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other hand, as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on the 28th June, 1919, and also the status of the Rhineland as laid down in articles 42, 43 and 180 of the said treaty.

2. France and Belgium of the one part and Germany of the other part severally undertake that they will in no case resort to war against the other.

This stipulation shall not, however, apply in the case of resistance to invasion or attack or in the case of action undertaken in agreement with the Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations, or in case of a flagrant violation of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles, if such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and by reason of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone, immediate action is necessary.

3. Any dispute which may arise between Germany and Belgium or between Germany and France and which cannot be settled by negotiation shall be settled by means of arbitration, and the said Powers hereby agree that they will comply with the settlement so arrived at.

The detailed arrangements for effecting such settlement shall be the subject of special agreements.

4. (1) If one of the High Contracting Parties alleges that a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles has been or is being committed, it shall bring the question at once

3. C 10611/459/18, FO 371/10738.

before the Council of the League of Nations.

(2) As soon as the Council of the League of Nations is satisfied that such a violation has been committed, it will notify its finding without delay to the Powers signatory of the present treaty, who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed.

(3) In case of a flagrant violation by one of the High Contracting Parties of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180 of the Treaty of Versailles, if the other Contracting Parties are agreed that such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression, and that by reason of the outbreak of hostilities or of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone immediate action is necessary, the said parties severally agree that they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed. Nevertheless the Council of the League of Nations, which is to be seized of the question in accordance with the first paragraph of this article, will issue its findings, and the High Contracting Parties will act in accordance therewith.

5. The provisions of article 3 above are placed under the guarantee of the High Contracting Parties as provided by the following stipulations:

(1) Where one of the Powers referred to in article 3, without resorting to force, refuses to submit a dispute to arbitration or to comply with an arbitral decision, the other party shall bring the matter before the Council of the League of Nations, and the Council shall propose what steps shall be taken to secure compliance with the provisions of article 3.

(2) If one of the Powers referred to in article 3 refuses to submit a dispute to arbitration or to comply with an arbitral decision, and resorts to force, the provisions of article 4 shall apply.

6. The provisions of the present treaty do not affect the rights and obligations of the High Contracting Parties under the Treaty of Versailles or under arrangements supplementary thereto, including the agreements signed in London on the 30th August, 1924, nor yet the rights of any one

of the High Contracting Parties to take action, in so far as such action is not inconsistent with the Covenant, in fulfilment of a guarantee given by it to the observance of the arbitration conventions concluded this day between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, if the party which violates such a convention resorts to force.

7. Nothing in the present treaty shall affect the rights and obligations of the High Contracting Parties as Members of the League of Nations, or shall be interpreted as restricting the duty of the League of Nations to take whatever action may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of the world.

8. The present treaty shall be deposited with the League of Nations in accordance with the Covenant. It shall remain in force until the Council, acting at the request of at least two of the High Contracting Parties, and voting if need be by a majority, decides that the League of Nations ensures sufficient protection to the High Contracting Parties.

9. The special agreements embodying the detailed arrangements for effecting a settlement by arbitration, referred to in article 3 and signed this day, and the arbitration conventions referred to in article 6 between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, shall, before the ratification of the present treaty, be communicated to each of the High Contracting Parties who are not parties to the said conventions.

10. The present treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of such Dominion, or of India, signifies its acceptance thereof.

11. The present treaty shall be ratified, but shall not come into force until Germany has become a Member of the League of Nations.

(iv)

Text drawn up at the jurists' meeting, 4 September 1925[4]

The President of the German Republic; His Majesty the King of the Belgians; the President of the French Republic; and His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India:

Anxious to satisfy the desire for security and protection which animates the peoples upon whom fell the brunt of the war of 1914-18;

Taking note of the abrogation of the treaties for the neutralisation of Belgium, and conscious of the necessity of stabilising the territorial status quo in the area which has so frequently been the scene of European conflicts;

Animated also with the sincere desire of giving to all the signatory Powers concerned supplementary guarantees within the framework of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the treaties in force between them;

Have determined to conclude a treaty with these objects, and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

Who, having communicated their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:-

1. The High Contracting Parties severally and collectively guarantee in the manner provided in the following articles the maintenance and inviolability of the frontiers between France and Belgium on the one hand and Germany on the other hand, as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on the 28th June, 1919, and also the status of the Rhineland as laid down in articles 42, 43 and 180, paragraphs 1 and 3, of the said treaty.

2. France and Belgium of the one part and Germany of the other part severally undertake that they will in no case attack or invade the other or resort to war against the other.

This stipulation shall not, however, apply in the case of resistance to action in violation of the above undertaking or in the case of action undertaken in agreement with the

4. C 12792/459/18, FO 371/10742. Words underlined in article 6 not agreed.

Council or the Assembly of the League of Nations, or in case of flagrant violation of articles 42, 43 or 180, paragraphs 1 and 3, of the Treaty of Versailles, if such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and by reason of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone, immediate action is necessary.

3. In view of the undertakings entered into in article 2, Germany and France and Germany and Belgium undertake to settle by peaceful means and in the manner laid down herein, all questions of every kind which may arise between them and which it may not be possible to settle by the normal methods of diplomacy.

Questions with regard to which the parties are in conflict as to their respective rights shall be submitted to judicial decision, and the parties undertake to comply with such decision.

All other questions shall be submitted to a conciliation commission. If the proposals of this commission are not accepted by the two parties, the question shall be brought before the Council of the League of Nations, which will deal with it in accordance with the Covenant.

The detailed arrangements for effecting such peaceful settlement shall be the subject of special agreements.

4. (1) If one of the High Contracting Parties alleges that a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180, paragraphs 1 and 3, of the Treaty of Versailles has been or is being committed, it shall bring the question at once before the Council of the League of Nations.

(2) As soon as the Council of the League of Nations is satisfied that such a violation has been committed, it will notify its findings without delay to the Powers signatory of the present treaty, who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed.

(3) In case of a flagrant violation by one of the High Contracting Parties of article 2 of the present treaty or of articles 42, 43 or 180, paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Treaty of Versailles, each of the other Contracting Parties, which agrees that such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of

aggression, and that by reason of the outbreak of hostilities or of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone immediate action is necessary, will come at once to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed. Nevertheless, the Council of the League of Nations, which will be seized of the question in accordance with the first paragraph of this article, will issue its findings, and the High Contracting Parties undertake to act in accordance with the recommendations of the Council provided that they are concurred in by all the members other than the representatives of the Parties which have engaged in hostilities.

5. The provisions of article 3 above are placed under the guarantee of the High Contracting Parties as provided by the following stipulations:-

(1) Where one of the Powers referred to in article 3, without committing a breach of article 4, paragraph 1, refuses to submit a dispute to peaceful settlement or to comply with an arbitral decision, the other party shall bring the matter before the Council of the League of Nations, and the Council shall propose what steps shall be taken.

(2) If one of the Powers referred to in article 3 refuses to submit a dispute to peaceful settlement or to comply with an arbitral decision, and commits a breach of article 4, paragraph 1, the provisions of the said article 4 shall apply.

6. The provisions of the present treaty do not affect the rights and obligations of the High Contracting Parties under the Treaty of Versailles or under arrangements supplementary thereto, including the agreements signed in London on the 30th August, 1924, nor yet the rights of any one of the High Contracting Parties to take action, in so far as such action is not inconsistent with the Covenant, in fulfilment of a guarantee given by it to the observance of the arbitration conventions concluded this day between Germany and Poland and between Germany and Czechoslovakia, if the party which violates such a convention resorts to force.

7. Nothing in the present treaty shall affect the rights and obligations of the High Contracting Parties as Members of the League of Nations, or shall be interpreted as

restricting the duty of the League to take whatever action may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of the world.

8. The present treaty shall be deposited with the League of Nations in accordance with the Covenant. It shall remain in force until the Council, acting on the request of at least two of the High Contracting Parties, and voting if need be by a majority, decides that the League of Nations ensures sufficient protection to the High Contracting Parties.

9. The special agreements embodying the detailed arrangements for effecting a settlement by arbitration, referred to in article 3 and signed this day, and the arbitration conventions referred to in article 6 between Germany and Poland and Germany and Czechoslovakia, shall, before the ratification of the present treaty, be communicated to each of the High Contracting Parties who are not parties to the said conventions.

10. The present treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Governmant of such Dominion, or of India, signifies its acceptance thereof.

11. The present treaty shall be ratified, but shall not come into force until Germany has become a Member of the League of Nations.

(v)

Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, 16 October 1925 (translation)[5]

The President of the German Reich, His Majesty the King of the Belgians, the President of the French Republic, and His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, His Majesty the King of Italy:

Anxious to satisfy the desire for security and protection which animates the peoples upon whom fell the scourge of the war of 1914-18;

Taking note of the abrogation of the treaties for the

5. Cmd 2525 of 1925.

neutralisation of Belgium, and conscious of the necessity of ensuring peace in the area which has so frequently been the scene of European conflicts;

Animated also with the sincere desire of giving to all the signatory Powers concerned supplementary guarantees within the framework of the Covenant of the League of Nations and the treaties in force between them;

Have determined to conclude a treaty with these objects, and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries: [names omitted]

Who, having communicated their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:-

1. The high contracting parties collectively and severally guarantee, in the manner provided in the following articles, the maintenance of the territorial status quo resulting from the frontiers between Germany and Belgium and between Germany and France and the inviolabilty of the said frontiers as fixed by or in pursuance of the Treaty of Peace signed at Versailles on the 28th June, 1919, and also the observance of the stipulations of articles 42 and 43 of the said treaty concerning the demilitarised zone.

2. Germany and Belgium, and also Germany and France, mutually undertake that they will in no case attack or invade each other or resort to war against each other.

This stipulation shall not, however, apply in the case of -

1. The exercise of the right of legitimate defence, that is to say, resistance to a violation of the undertaking contained in the previous paragraph or to a flagrant breach of articles 42 or 43 of the said Treaty of Versailles, if such breach constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and by reason of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone immediate action is necessary.

2. Action in pursuance of article 16 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

3. Action as the result of a decision taken by the Assembly or by the Council of the League of Nations or in pursuance of article 15, paragraph 7, of the Covenant of the League of Nations, provided that in this last

event the action is directed against a State which was the first to attack.

3. In view of the undertakings entered into in article 2 of the present treaty, Germany and Belgium and Germany and France undertake to settle by peaceful means and in the manner laid down herein all questions of every kind which may arise between them and which it may not be possible to settle by the normal methods of diplomacy:

Any question with regard to which the parties are in conflict as to their respective rights shall be submitted to judicial decision, and the parties undertake to comply with such decision.

All other questions shall be submitted to a conciliation commission. If the proposals of this commission are not accepted by the two parties, the question shall be brought before the Council of the League of Nations, which will deal with it in accordance with article 15 of the Covenant of the League.

The detailed arrangements for effecting such peaceful settlement are the subject of special arrangements signed this day.

4. (1) If one of the high contracting parties alleges that a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or a breach of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles has been or is being committed, it shall bring the question at once before the Council of the League of Nations.

(2) As soon as the Council of the League of Nations is satisfied that such violation or breach has been committed, it will notify its findings without delay to the Powers signatory of the present treaty, who severally agree that in such case they will each of them come immediately to the assistance of the Power against whom the act complained of is directed.

(3) In case of a flagrant violation of article 2 of the present treaty or of a flagrant breach of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles by one of the high contracting parties, each of the other contracting parties hereby undertakes immediately to come to the help of the party against whom such a violation or breach has been directed as

soon as the said Power has been able to satisfy itself that this violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and that by reason either of the crossing of the frontier or of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarised zone immediate action is necessary. Nevertheless, the Council of the League of Nations, which will be seized of the question in accordance with the first paragraph of this article, will issue its findings, and the high contracting parties undertake to act in accordance with the recommendations of the Council provided that they are concurred in by all the members other than the representatives of the parties which have engaged in hostilities.

5. The provisions of article 3 of the present treaty are placed under the guarantee of the high contracting parties as provided by the following stipulations:-

If one of the Powers referred to in article 3 refuses to submit a dispute to peaceful settlement or to comply with an arbitral or judicial decision and commits a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or a breach of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles, the provisions of article 4 shall apply.

Where one of the Powers referred to in article 3 without committing a violation of article 2 of the present treaty or a breach of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles, refuses to submit a dispute to peaceful settlement or to comply with an arbitral or judicial decision, the other party shall bring the matter before the Council of the League of Nations, and the Council shall propose what steps shall be taken: the high contracting parties shall comply with these proposals.

6. The provisions of the present treaty do not affect the rights and obligations of the high contracting parties under the Treaty of Versailles or under arrangements supplementary thereto, including the agreements signed in London on the 30th August, 1924.

7. The present treaty, which is designed to secure the maintenance of peace, and is in conformity with the Covenant of the League of Nations, shall not be interpreted as restricting the duty of the League to take whatever action may

be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of the world.

8. The present treaty shall be registered at the League of Nations in accordance with the Covenant of the League. It shall remain in force until the Council, acting on a request of one or other of the high contracting parties notified to the other signatory Powers three months in advance, and voting at least by a two-thirds' majority, decides that the League of Nations ensures sufficient protection to the high contracting parties; the treaty shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of one year from such decision.

9. The present treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the British Dominions, or upon India, unless the Government of such Dominion, or of India, signifies its acceptance thereof.

10. The present treaty shall be ratified and the ratifications shall be deposited at Geneva in the archives of the League of Nations as soon as possible.

It shall enter into force as soon as all the ratifications have been deposited and Germany has become a member of the League of Nations.

The present treaty, done in a single copy, will be deposited in the archives of the League of Nations, and the Secretary-General will be requested to transmit certified copies to each of the high contracting parties.

In faith whereof the above-mentioned plenipotentiaries have signed the present treaty.

Done at Locarno, the 16th October, 1925.

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