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THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH APPEASEMENT: THE COLLAPSE
OF THE ENTENTE CORDIALE: 1918-1925

by

ELAINE JOYCE WEISS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in History in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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1973

This manuscript has been read for the Graduate Faculty
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requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Preface

The burden of guilt for appeasement of Nazi Germany has been placed on the British leaders who governed during the 1930's. However, these leaders who faced the challenge of Nazism had their thoughts, motives, and deeds shaped by the horrors of the first world war. Indeed, many were the same men who served in British governments during the years after the formation of the Coalition under Lloyd George in 1916. It is the purpose of this dissertation to show how the belief that another war must be avoided led to the birth of British appeasement in the immediate post-World War I era.

This thesis is an exploration of the formation and execution of British policy toward France and Germany from 1918 to 1925. It was made possible by the opening of the British government archives at the Public Record Office, and it is substantially based on the documents found in those archives. On January 1, 1968, the fifty-year secrecy rule was replaced by the thirty-year rule, thus allowing historians to explore British policy during the inter-war period with full archival resources. The

private papers of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Balfour, and other men in power during the period with which this paper deals became available during the middle and late 1960's.

The amount of secondary literature available has been limited by the short time during which historians have had access to British archival materials. However, an acknowledgement must be paid to Fritz Fischer's Germany's Aims in the First World War (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), which has altered the previously orthodox view of pre-Nazi Germany. Fischer's work presents the expansionist policies and desires of Germany as a force transcending the individuals holding power in Berlin. This study attempts to show how the British government appeased Germany because they feared potential German aggression after the first world war.

I am deeply grateful to the librarians at the Public Record Office and the Manuscript Division of the British Museum for helping me to locate pertinent materials, and thus aiding me in accomplishing as much as possible during the time I spent in London, to the staff of the Beaverbrook Library, and especially to the Honorary Director, Professor A. J. P. Taylor, for aiding my research by answering numerous questions and providing numerous insights into the materials with which I worked, to Professor Stuart E. Prall for locating materials for

me to microfilm during his stay in London, to Dean Elliot Zupnik for approving a grant for the microfilming of those materials, and to Professors Stuart E. Prall and Louis L. Snyder for their help in improving this manuscript. I am especially grateful to Professor Keith Eubank, my sponsor, who has supervised my research and writing since I was an undergraduate, and encouraged me to develop this topic.

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Introduction

The meaning of the word "appeasement" has continued to change throughout the twentieth century. Although the word itself means to pacify a situation or conciliate another power, the post-Munich connotation of appeasement has meant to placate an aggressor or potential aggressor out of fear. It is this definition of appeasement that has led to a condemnation of the concept of appeasement in international affairs from the outbreak of the second world war to the present day. However, the post-Munich definition of appeasement can be applied to the policies of a government without the vociferous and impassioned condemnation of the concept itself to which we have become accustomed.

Appeasement, as used throughout this dissertation, is defined as the British government granting concessions to Germany because Britain was aware that German weakness after the 1918 defeat was transitory. Britain feared the future consequences of Germany turning to aggression to rectify what Germans considered the injustices of the

1919 peace settlement. It is the purpose of this study to show that British appeasement began immediately after the end of the first world war, was established British policy by 1920, and became the cornerstone of Anglo-French-German relations in 1925.

The concept of British appeasement beginning in the immediate post-World War I period has been discussed by a limited number of historians. Martin Gilbert's The Roots of Appeasement (New York: Plume, 1966), is an essay which develops British appeasement from Lloyd George to Neville Chamberlain. Gilbert believes that appeasement during the post World-War I era was a policy consistent with British interests, and based on a realistic appraisal of Britain's limitations as well as strength. Because the work is an essay rather than a detailed monograph, evidence showing that fear of German military revival was present in this period is not fully explored. Gilbert's remains the only work that has shown the continuity of British policy toward Germany during the inter-war period.

In addition to Gilbert's work, there are three relevant monographs. Harold I. Nelson's Land and Power: British and Allied Policy on Germany's Frontiers: 1916-1919 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), is a detailed monograph which discusses British appeasement at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. Nelson's work

is substantially based on Canadian sources, which include some of the papers of the Imperial War Cabinet and the minutes of the British Empire Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. Although Nelson leaves the question of whether British policy at the Paris Peace Conference actually constituted the birth of appeasement open to the reader's interpretation, he is the first historian to have explored the concept of British appeasement in 1919. Jon Jacobson's Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West: 1925-1929 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), although beginning with the terminal date of this dissertation, bases the interpretation of British policy on the full archival sources, and reaches similar conclusions concerning Locarno. A. J. P. Taylor's The Origins of the Second World War (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1961), suggests that appeasement was the cornerstone of British policy during the entire inter-war period. Taylor's controversial interpretation of both German and British foreign policy has led many historians to reconsider traditional viewpoints.

One of the reasons why few historians have differed with the traditional viewpoint of post-World War I British policy toward Germany can be attributed to the fact that Anglo-German rapprochement after the first world war appeared to be a justifiable return to traditional British foreign policy. Great Britain had close ties

with the Germanies for centuries. The common heritage of Protestantism and existing dynastic ties were cemented by the practical concern of self-interest in resisting French hegemony in Europe from the late seventeenth century to the fall of Napoleon. After Waterloo, Britain was unquestionably the greatest power in the world, but France remained strongest on the continent in part, because France alone among the continental powers began industrial development in the early nineteenth century. As Germany achieved unification, first by establishing economic ties, and finally with success under Prussian hegemony, few in Britain initially saw cause for alarm.

The British had not come to realize that rapid industrialization wedded to the Prussian military tradition was a threat to world stability. Only after the fall of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1890, when German imperialists became more vocal and more powerful, did Anglo-German relations begin to deteriorate.

While Anglo-German relations were growing poorer, Anglo-French relations, poisoned by the impact of imperial rivalry, were so strained that the two nations came close to war over control of the Nile in 1898. The French backed down at Fashoda, for they remembered what many British statesmen appeared to have forgotten: the fundamental relationships among the powers were determined

in Europe. The French Foreign Ministry, headed by Théophile Delcassé, appointed a reputed Anglophile, Paul Cambon, to the French Embassy in London. These two men would not engage in the folly of a war with Britain over a piece of African real estate while Germany still held Alsace-Lorraine. Changes in British policy were soon to aid the French diplomats in their desire to bring Britain and France together.

With the turn of the century British policy makers moved toward what was to become a diplomatic revolution: alliance with France and involvement in the European alliance system. With Lord Salisbury's retirement, the foreign office passed to Lord Lansdowne, who was open to discussions with France to settle colonial rivalries. The Entente Cordiale of 1904 was simply that: an agreement with France liquidating colonial differences. The essential aspects of the Entente were French recognition of the British occupation of Egypt and British recognition that France was to have the dominant influence in Morocco. The blunders of the German government were to turn this understanding into a military alliance.

Germany was seeking an Empire and attempting to become a naval power. Germany already had become an economic rival to Britain. When the German Chancellor, Count Bernhard von Bülow tested the Entente by threatening the French into granting Germany concessions in Morocco,

Britain stood by the agreement. Britain found that closer ties with France, to prevent German naval and colonial expansion from meeting with success, were in her national interest. Secret military talks with the French, begun under the Balfour government, were continued after the Liberal victory of 1906. By 1907, Britain signed an entente liquidating colonial disputes with Russia, France's ally since 1894. Almost a century of British isolation from continental commitment had ended.

The ten years between the signing of the Entente Cordiale in 1904 and the outbreak of World War I saw a growth of Anglo-German rivalry. During international crises, Germany was presented as a potential enemy of Britain. The Anglo-German naval race was blamed for the fact that Britain had to spend money on dreadnoughts which could have been used for social improvements. German competition was blamed for British economic problems, and German militarism was exposed as a threat to peace. However, anti-German sentiment must not be seen as a pervasive feeling within Britain. Within the ruling Liberal party there were many who admired the German nation and there were constant attempts by the British government to improve relations between the two nations. In addition, these were years of economic, social, political, and constitutional change in Britain. Domestic issues preoccupied men's minds, while interest in foreign

affairs came with international crises only to lapse once the crisis was resolved.

Domestic issues and the Irish question dominated British political life even after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand on June 28, 1914. Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, did not act immediately, nor did he realize that the military talks with France, about which Parliament and the people were uninformed, deeply committed Britain to war. After the outbreak of fighting, both Sir Edward Grey, and the Cabinet vacillated. A British declaration of war on August 3 came only after the German violation of Belgian neutrality. In spite of pre-war anti-German sentiment, Germany only then became an object of national hatred, and even then, a small but influential minority of the intelligentsia, the left, and Labor, did not fully support the war.

The Entente powers did not enter the war with united war aims. Britain had been able to live in peace and harmony with a united and powerful Germany. She entered the war to prevent a possible German conquest of Europe which could endanger Britain and the Empire. When the German attempt to conquer France failed in September 1914, German conquest of Europe was no longer an immediate threat, and the defeat of German militarism became Britain's objective. But a war which everyone expected to be over by Christmas 1914 had settled into

the deadly stalemate of trench warfare.

The war did not end by Christmas 1914, nor 1915, nor 1916; it dragged on for over four years. Britain lost three-fourths of a million men. The scope and scale of the slaughter on the Western Front defied the imagination. A people who had not known war with a great power for over one hundred years had come to realize what the mobilization of industrial nations could do when directed to destruction. The personal grief felt in the humblest home was shared by those who governed during the war and those who were to govern during the inter-war period. The staggering numbers of men killed tells only part of the story, for those who survived were to remember the war for horror, not glory. British appeasement during the inter-war period was born on the Marne, the Somme, and Passchendaele ridge.

The premise that appeasement was born of the casualties on the Western Front emerges from the attitude of the British government during 1918. In that year, before victory, the British government was willing to consider a peace which would leave Germany the greatest power on the continent. This was considered because of the dread of the casualties from a longer war. The Armistice took everyone by surprise, for Germany was not decisively defeated. When the Armistice came, the German army retreated intact, and the German nation suffered no

material destruction. However, Germany had become a republic. It appeared as if the objective of the war, the destruction of German militarism, had been achieved by the German people themselves.

The establishment of the Weimar Republic gave further impetus to the development of appeasement. The ideal that this had been the war to end all wars appeared to have been accepted by the German people. Thus the hope for the future of German democracy was wedded to fears of a repetition of the holocaust. Appeasement during the inter-war period was founded on this threefold premise: fear of another war, the conviction that this fear was shared by all reasonable men, and the hope that Germany would consider herself a satiated power if permitted a strong role in European affairs. However, in 1918, appeasement had emerged only as an idea. The translation of this idea into the cornerstone of British policy was to occupy the immediate post-war years.

At the end of the war, the British government had no policy for the European settlement. In the search to find a policy, the impulse toward appeasement was justified as one which would return Britain to the traditional policy of seeking a balance of power in Europe.

The restoration of the balance of power was a difficult task given civil war in Russia, disintegration

in eastern and central Europe, the collapse of Austria, and revolutionary chaos in Germany. France was the only **power** on the continent both victorious and unified. But knowing that the political crisis would pass, France looked to the future and saw Germany with a greater population, and her industry undamaged. The absence of the Austrian Empire as an additional power in central Europe increased French fear. France looked across the Rhine in fear and sought security. Britain looked to Europe and saw France, appearing strong, harboring ambitions to weaken Germany permanently, seeking to establish a dominating influence in the Low Countries through control of the Rhine, and sending garrisons as far east as Poland. The British, having carried the burden of the Allied war effort since Verdun, knew that the war had depleted French human and material resources. However, the British government rationalized that France was a threat to the balance of power despite the realization that French strength in her hour of victory was as transitory as German weakness in her hour of defeat.

The rationalization was encouraged by the fact that Germany was then a young republic which appeared to have shed its archaic political structure. Germany must be encouraged for the peace of the world. The survival of the Weimar Republic and the revival of Germany under a democratic regime slowly came to be not feared but hoped

for when viewed from London, because in the promise of a stable and democratic Germany resided the hope of a stable and prosperous Europe. Britain's belief that Germany must remain a great European power caused the collapse of the Entente Cordiale.

In addition, the failure of the Entente to become the cornerstone of British policy after World War I can be attributed to a fundamental flaw in the alliance. Britain had allied with France because of the threat of German world-wide expansion, but she had not opposed Germany as the dominant power on the continent, whereas France viewed global politics as secondary to continental politics. After victory in 1918, Britain and France were divided over the future of Europe. Leading figures in Britain and the Dominions, who looked back to the peaceful years of isolation, doubted the wisdom of retaining a continental alliance system.

British appeasement actually began at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. There, the British government concluded that the French proposal to sever the left bank of the Rhine from Germany could lead to another war. Their opposition helped preserve German territorial integrity in the west. Lloyd George's opposition to Polish claims to German territory in the east forced France to accept a plebiscite in Upper Silesia rather than direct transfer to Poland. As to reparations, Lloyd George quarreled with French demands despite great

domestic political pressure to get large sums for Britain. Consequently, the French were left with the clear knowledge that Britain would not allow reparations to render Germany economically prostrate.

Between the signature of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, and its coming into force on January 10, 1920, Britain began to resist French demands for execution of unfulfilled Armistice provisions. The policy foreshadowed her unwillingness to execute completely the Treaty of Versailles. Britain had demobilized her army extensively in 1919, but failed to fulfill Treaty requirements to occupy plebiscite areas, while ignoring the evidence that Germany showed no disposition to demobilize as required by the Treaty. During the fall of 1919, all of the ostensible difficulties of the German government were greeted with sympathy in London, while French demands for enforcement of the Armistice and Treaty were greeted with inaction.

The basis of appeasement was strong in 1919 and became fully established in the critical year of 1920. In the spring of 1920, Germany sent troops into the Ruhr in violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland clauses of the Versailles Treaty. France responded by occupying five towns in western Germany. Britain, who argued that Germany had the right to maintain law and order in her own land, opposed the French occupation.

Moreover, Britain demanded that France pledge never to act unilaterally again and insisted on French withdrawal. London called for face to face meetings with the Germans to discuss difficulties in implementing the Treaty of Versailles. When Germany met Britain and France at Spa, the former allies demanded German disarmament. However, when Germany still failed to disarm, Britain opposed French efforts to force Germany to do so.

The year 1920 was the pivotal year in the development of appeasement, for Britain refused to act when faced with the knowledge that German militarism remained. In 1920, Britain, in fact, abandoned any prospect of the use of force to implement the Versailles settlement. The Lloyd George government accepted German excuses for failing to carry out her obligations while breaking with France in her efforts to enforce the Treaty.

The policy of appeasement, once initiated, gradually created its own momentum. Each British government's effort to avoid military commitment, to weaken the alliance with France, and to encourage German recovery was encouraged by growing national sentiment in support of the League of Nations as a body to build a lasting peace, the desire to avoid military obligations, and the belief that the conflict with Germany had been the result of human error rather than a struggle between opposing national values. By the end of 1920, only a

small fringe of the body politic remained Germanophobes. Most members of the government and the influential public again supported the traditional compatibility between Britain and Germany. The primary task of British statesmanship evolved into persuading or cajoling France into a rapprochement with her enemy across the Rhine. However, British appeasement during 1920 had aggravated French fears, thus serving to increase European tensions.

The intervening years between Britain's commitment to appeasement in 1920 and the establishment of a general European appeasement through the Locarno Pact in 1925 were filled with Anglo-French conflict characterized by Britain's failure to win German friendship, despite British acquiescence to German violation of the Versailles Treaty. Germany was on the road to accepting British appeasement as a device to shed the burdens of Versailles and to achieve European stabilization, after the failure of the French invasion of the Ruhr.

It took British statesmen until 1925 to achieve what they had sought since 1919: a mutual guarantee of the Franco-German border rather than a Treaty and alliance system which could involve them in military obligations at any time. With Locarno, Britain could consider the Versailles system altered, be pleased to see French recognition of Germany's place among the powers, and retreat from an active role in Europe.

PART I

THE ORIGINS OF BRITISH APPEASEMENT AND THE
PEACE SETTLEMENT: 1918-JUNE 28, 1919

British appeasement was conceived during the last year of World War I and developed during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919.

The concept of a peace without victory emerged within the British government during the final year of the war. Harboring no territorial ambitions in Europe, the British government concluded that a decisive defeat of enemy forces and the occupation of large portions of enemy territory was not worth the cost in life and treasure. Leading figures within the British government were willing to allow Germany to remain a strong continental power, believing that Germany's remaining a power was compatible with peace. Such a belief precluded any war aims agreement with France. However, British conceptions remained ill-defined, and therefore, British European war aims remained lacking. The British government was uncertain of its European policy until early 1919.

During the early months of 1919, when British statesmen reacted to French peace proposals, the

pragmatic reasons for British appeasement of Germany emerged. The British government feared that Germany could regain her strength and renew the fighting within a number of years because Germany had not been decisively defeated. Therefore, it was believed to be in Britain's interest to formulate a peace which Germany would accept. However, British government leaders rarely justified policies on that realistic basis. Rather, they chose to look at German difficulties with sympathy and hoped that the establishment of the Weimar Republic would destroy German militarism. Moreover, the British government expressed fear that France was striving to dominate the continent, while the French were seeking not dominance, but security against a German revival.

British policy makers deliberately sought to weaken the Entente Cordiale, despite the French wish to maintain the Entente to prevent German revival. The British government failed to take cognizance of the requirements of French security and to support France in her desire to end German militarism permanently. The British government not only considered German revival inevitable but feared that Germany, if unappeased, would seek revenge. Therefore, as the Paris Peace Conference progressed, Lloyd George, with the full support of his government, attempted to preserve German territorial integrity. At the same time, he encouraged the

restoration of German economic vitality and supported many of the German objections to the draft Treaty of Versailles. To the British government, appeasement became the method of building a lasting peace.

CHAPTER I

The Uncertainty of British Policy for Peace in Europe: January - December, 1918

In 1918, the uncertainty of British European war aims helped weaken the Entente Cordiale. Early in that year, when Allied military fortunes appeared to have descended to their nadir because of the collapse of Russia, Britain began to consider a political solution which would strip Germany only of her conquests in western Europe, and, therefore, leave Germany a great power on the continent. Using the language of support for national self-determination and democracy, Britain was in fact contemplating peace without victory. Because France could never accept a peace without victory, there was no Anglo-French planning for peace. The speed of the collapse of the Central Powers caused events to overtake diplomacy. When the Allies turned the tide on the Western Front and Germany asked for an Armistice, the British were willing to accept an Armistice without taking cognizance of the effect the conditions would have

on French security. The Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918 before any British plans for the future of Europe were developed. An Armistice was not peace, but simply a cessation of hostilities. British leaders, however, proceeded as though peace was established. They began to demobilize forces and they plunged into a campaign for a General Election. As a result, ill-defined and general war aims were not shaped into specific peace proposals, while French peace terms came to be looked upon with derision. Thus the end of 1918 found British diplomacy floundering much as it had been at the beginning, making negative responses to the plans of other nations and offering no alternative solutions because British leaders had come to realize that Germany must play a significant role in the future of Europe.

The first example of indecision in British policy appeared when the government was forced to consider the effect the collapse of Russia would have on the war. On December 9, 1917, the Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, advocated a deliberate policy of drift regarding events in Russia. He called the Bolsheviks sincere fanatics who really wished to implement wild theories which had long germinated under the yoke of autocracy.¹

1. Note on the Present Russian Situation, A. J. Balfour, December 9, 1917, Public Record Office, War Cabinet Minutes, CAB 23/4, Appendix to W. C. 295.

However, the military position of the Central Powers had been strengthened by the Russian withdrawal from the war. Therefore, a conciliatory peace proposal from the Central Powers would receive the consideration of the British government. At Brest-Litovsk, the Central Powers appeared to have moved toward moderation when Count Ottokar Czernin, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, made a speech asserting no desire for annexation or indemnity.²

The Cabinet met on January 3, 1918 to discuss the possibility that Czernin's speech implied a genuine peace feeler. Lloyd George stated that a declaration on war aims was needed because of the drastic change on the Eastern Front. A discussion ensued and,

the view to which the Cabinet inclined was to issue a declaration of our war aims which went to the extreme limit of concession, and which would show to our own people, and to our Allies, as well as to the peoples of Austria, Turkey, and even Germany, that our object was not to destroy the enemy nations.

To be mentioned as aims in the speech were restoration and reparation for Belgium, Serbia, and Rumania, a general statement about Poland, and self-determination for the German colonies; but the fate of Alsace-Lorraine

2. David R. Woodward, "The Origins and Intent of David Lloyd George's January 5 War Aims Speech," The Historian, Vol. XXXIV, November, 1971, pp. 22-39.

was to be considered a French matter.³

The Cabinet meeting of January 3 revealed that as late as that date, the British government had not gone beyond restoration of Belgium in considering the future of western Europe.

There were two additional Cabinet meetings before Lloyd George delivered his speech on British war aims before the Trade Union Conference at Caxton Hall on January 5. The speech was designed both as a response to Czernin's remarks and as a measure to satisfy public opinion in Great Britain. The Trade Union Conference was chosen because Parliament was not sitting. Lloyd George urged the Cabinet to accept his view that the speech was not to be seen as the long awaited peace move because he was bound to state conditions which he believed the Germans would not accept.⁴

Lloyd George began his January 5 address with a statement of how horrible the war had been for all the peoples of the world. He believed in the need for a clear statement of policy as to why Britain continued to fight.

3. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, January 3, 1918, 11:30 A.M., CAB 23/5, W. C. 312. The German motives for Czernin's speech are discussed in Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), pp. 486-488.

4. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, January 3, 1918, 5:00 P.M., CAB 23/5, W. C. 313; Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, January 4, 1918, ibid., W. C., 314.

Despite German aggression on Belgium in 1914, the prime minister said they were not fighting for

the destruction or disruption of Germany or the German people. . . . Nor did we enter this war merely to alter or destroy the Imperial Constitution of Germany, as much as we consider that military and autocratic Constitution a dangerous anachronism in the twentieth century. Our point of view is that the adaption of a really democratic constitution by Germany would be the most convincing evidence that her old spirit of military domination has, indeed, died in this war and would make it easier to conclude a democratic peace with her.

Lloyd George declared that German peace offers which ignored self-determination of Belgium could not be accepted. He concluded with vague statements of future policy calling for a peace approved by peoples not diplomats, the need for self-determination, an international organization, and disarmament. Lloyd George included restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France in his demands although his Cabinet colleagues had considered it a matter for France alone. The next day, the United States Ambassador to Britain, Walter Page, despatched the text of the address of which he wrote, "More importance is placed on it than any other British utterance since the war began."⁵ The American ambassador was correct, for

5. Page to Lansing, January 6, 1918, with enclosure, "Address of the British Prime Minister before the Trade Union Conference at London," January 5, 1918, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, hereafter cited as FRUS. (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1933), 1918 Supplement I, Vol. I, pp. 4-12.

Lloyd George had publicly called for peace without the defeat and conquest of the enemy.

The premise that Allied conquest of Germany was required to eradicate German militarism had been repudiated by the British government. The idea of a German defeat being accompanied by the loss of territory other than Alsace-Lorraine was not considered. Later in 1918, in British government circles there appeared an idea of allowing Germany to remain the greatest potential power on the continent. Influential men in the War Cabinet and in the Imperial War Cabinet thought about permitting the German European role to be greater than pre-1914, with a quid-pro-quo of the Germans accepting the loss of their Empire.

The Secretary of War, Lord Milner, thought that it was undesirable to make the Germans believe they were fighting for their existence because it would stiffen their resistance and in the end the Allies might be forced to accept an unfavorable negotiated peace. These ideas had been germinated for a long time, for Milner, a man who saw Britain's future in terms of Imperial interdependence rather than in Europe, did not believe the German army could be defeated in the field. His statement is even more remarkable because he made it after his return from Russia in February

1917.⁶ Milner's general views were shared by Jan Smuts, minister of defense of South Africa, who was the most important spokesman for the Dominions in the inner circles of the British government, and who steadfastly appealed for a conciliatory viewpoint long after Allied fortunes on the battlefield had changed in late summer 1918.

On August 14, 1918, Smuts expressed his views before the Imperial War Cabinet. He stated that after four years the Allies had been unable to force a decision and he feared looking ahead. If the war continued, Europe would be utterly exhausted and without even the potential of a dynamic future left in her. Great Britain must ask herself how she would be affected,

. . . whether, in the attempt to prolong the war and to smash Germany, we may not find that we have achieved our object, but at the cost of our own life and the life of the Empire, and Germany is indeed broken, but we are broken too . . . I am very much against fighting it to the absolute end, because I think that although that end will be fatal to the enemy it may possibly be fatal to us too.⁷

The next day, the Lord President of the Council, Lord Curzon dissented from this view, saying that only a true defeat of Germany would give Britain a peace which

6. A. M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics: A Study of Lord Milner in Opposition and in Power (New York: Macmillan, 1964), pp. 523-540.

7. Notes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, August 14, 1918, CAB 23/43, I. W. C. 31.

Germany did not have the power to break. A member of the War Cabinet, Austen Chamberlain, warned that they lacked knowledge about the internal weakness and exhaustion of Germany. He cautioned that Britain must not give the Allies cause to suspect her of breaking agreements. Lloyd George said that Chamberlain was correct, but a conference with France on war aims would fail because the moderate statements which he and American President Woodrow Wilson had made would never be accepted by the French.⁸

The British government believed that a meeting of the Entente powers would fail because of the incompatibility of French war aims with their own conciliatory approach. Beginning in August 1918, however, events took a more decisive turn. Allied fortunes on the battlefield improved, and in October the Germans asked for an Armistice. The period of Armistice negotiations revealed a wide divergence in Anglo-French views, since the expressed British fear of initiative moving to the United States did not stimulate the government to seek agreement with France over policy goals.

On October 5, Wilson received a note from the German Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, asking for negotiations over peace on the basis of the Fourteen

8. Notes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, August 15, 1918, CAB 23/7, I. W. C. 32.

Points. In the same note, the German government requested an immediate Armistice.⁹

In the Anglo-French discussions of October 5-9, during which Lloyd George and French Premier Clemenceau met regularly, the only mention of the Armistice was a referral of the question to the Military Representative at Versailles.¹⁰

At the first Cabinet meeting after the German request for an Armistice, Lloyd George revealed his fear that Wilson's terms would allow the Germans to regroup and renew the war. Lloyd George considered the views of military men, especially Marshal Foch of France, to be drastic. He informed the Cabinet that Foch had gone to the extent of saying that German troops should be disarmed before they evacuated occupied territory. However, the prime minister who shared Foch's fear of Germany renewing the struggle, reported that at Paris he had agreed to send Wilson a message indicating that the evacuation of occupied territories by the German forces was not a fully adequate guarantee that hostilities would not be renewed. The prime minister also informed the Cabinet that the Allies had requested an American representative with the

9. Max of Baden to Wilson, October 4, 1918, Public Record Office, War Cabinet Memoranda, CAB 24/66, G. T. 5976.

10. Maurice Hankey, The Supreme Command (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), Vol. II, pp. 840-843.

full confidence of the President to join in discussions of the Armistice.¹¹

No objections to the prime minister's actions or opinions were raised. Despite Wilson's bilateral negotiations with the Germans, no plans for closer co-operation with France were made. Britain herself had begun to lean toward a Wilsonian peace, that is, peace without a decisive defeat and conquest of the enemy, but based on the Fourteen Points.

On October 13, Lloyd George met with his advisors to consider the German proposals and the European implications of a Wilsonian peace. All present were of one mind concerning the necessity for the Armistice to render Germany incapable of renewing hostilities. They believed that Britain was practically bound to demand German disarmament as a condition of the Armistice. Lloyd George asserted that in order to feel defeat, Germany must be defeated on her own soil, but everyone present disagreed with the prime minister's viewpoint. Milner stated that the militarists were already out of power in Germany. While the Chief of the Imperial

11. Minutes of a Meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, October 11, 1918, CAB 23/8, I. W. C. 35; Telegram approved by the Conference for Transmission to Wilson, October 9, 1918, *ibid.*, Annex I; c.f. Harold I. Nelson, Land & Power: British & Allied Policy on Germany's Frontiers, 1916-1919 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 80-85.

General Staff, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, could think of no greater humiliation to an army than surrender on enemy soil. Lloyd George summarized the discussion by saying that the Conference was opposed to his idea of carrying the war into Germany despite the fact that once an Armistice was signed hostilities could never again be reopened by the Allies. No one objected to the prime minister's conclusions.¹² During all future discussions, both before and after the Armistice, the idea of carrying the war on to German soil was never mentioned again.

Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig set out his views in an October 19 memorandum, which reinforced the lack of desire on the part of the British government to carry the war into Germany. Haig began by stating that whether or not the Allies granted an Armistice should depend on two conditions: whether Germany was defeated decisively enough to accept any terms, and whether the Allies could force a rapid enough German withdrawal to prevent destruction by the retreating forces of the railroads, roads, and other aspects of the transportation and communications network up to the German frontier. Haig's assessment of the German army was that a large part of it had been badly beaten, but that the whole army was not broken up and general disorganization was not apparent.

12. Draft Notes of a Conference held at Danny, Sussex, October 13, 1918, CAB 24/66, G. T. 5967.

He believed that the German army was capable of retiring to its own frontier and holding that line against superior forces. Haig's outlook was pessimistic, for he believed the French army to be worn out, and that it would take the United States army another year to become a superior fighting force. Therefore, he advised the Cabinet, "We must reckon with . . . the fact that the British Army is not sufficiently fresh or strong to force a decision by itself." Given this situation, Haig recommended as Armistice demands: complete evacuation of Belgium and occupied France, evacuation of Alsace-Lorraine with Metz and Strassburg to be handed over to the Allies, and all inhabitants of occupied areas to be repatriated.¹³

A Cabinet meeting was held on October 21 to discuss Haig's Armistice terms. These terms, which represented the views of the highest British military authorities, had pointed out important Allied military weaknesses. Consequently, the Cabinet considered the situation on the Western Front with Haig's assessment of Allied military weakness in mind. When Balfour pointed out that Haig's terms gave the Allies no leverage to obtain reparation for Belgium and northern France, Lloyd George replied that the blockade provided sufficient leverage. Haig said that the Germans would be in a

13. Memorandum by Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, October 19, 1918, CAB 34/14, W. C. 489, Appendix II.

better position to fight again after an Armistice, and he felt that the Germans would fight harder on their own soil. The discussion then turned to the weakness of the United States army, which led Lloyd George to criticize the French for their patronizing attitude toward the United States. The Cabinet agreed that frank discussions about American military problems should be held with Colonel Edward House, President Wilson's personal advisor. All agreed that the Germans had devastated areas in the course of their retreat, but the possible effect of this on French attitudes was not discussed.¹⁴ The Cabinet accepted Haig's Armistice terms with only the most cursory consideration of how France would be affected.

The British Cabinet, in accepting Haig's conclusions, had admitted that they were willing to leave Germany with potential military strength. However, President Wilson had concluded that more stringent Armistice terms were necessary. In an October 23 note to the German government, Wilson stated that it was his duty

14. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, October 21, 1918, *ibid.*, W. C. 489. Although Balfour did not mention it to the Cabinet, a letter he received from British Ambassador to France, Lord Derby, on October 2, reported a talk with Clemenceau during which the premier, after extracting the promise of confidence, began to discuss the " . . . hopeless confusion in the American Army," which he called "appalling", and explained that Foch was trying to help with the key problems of staff and transport. Derby to Balfour, October 2, 1918, Balfour MSS, 49744.

to enter into an Armistice which, "should leave the United States and the powers associated with her in a position to enforce any arrangements that may be entered into, and to make a renewal of hostilities on the part of Germany impossible." In his note, Wilson informed the Germans that the Allied and Associated Powers and their military advisors would meet to draft terms of an Armistice which would prevent Germany from renewing war. The President stated that the Allied and Associated Powers needed these safeguards because the German government was not based on the will of the people, and because the power of the Kaiser to determine policy remained unimpaired.¹⁵ Wilson's note of October 23 indicated his basic agreement with the French principle that the Armistice must be harsh enough to prevent Germany from renewing hostilities in a position of greater strength on her own soil.

Serious Armistice negotiations began only after Wilson made it clear that the Armistice terms must reduce the German army to impotence. On October 25, Lloyd George informed the Cabinet that Clemenceau had arranged a Conference with Foch and Haig to ensure Armistice terms which would prevent Germany from being able to resume hostilities. Lloyd George sent Clemenceau

15. Wilson to German Government, October 23, 1918, CAB 24/66, G. T. 5976.

a message indicating that Colonel Edward House, President Wilson's personal advisor, should be invited to the meeting.¹⁶ At this time, the British government still had no proposals beyond Haig's Armistice terms.

During the next few days, the British government decided that peace was their immediate goal. This decision was made without formulation of policy for the future of Europe. On October 26, the Cabinet discussed the question of whether British representatives in Paris should work on the assumption that an immediate peace was desirable. Chamberlain said that if the war continued, Germany would not be weakened in the east, but the smaller states would grow even weaker and the German role greater. Curzon expressed the fear that if Germany was not impotent after the war she would push eastward. Smuts urged peace quickly, asserting that if Germany was pushed into weakness the disintegration of Europe would result. He felt this would make the United States the greatest power in the world, because she alone among the powers would not be exhausted. The special Ambassador to the United States, Lord Reading, agreed with Smuts. The Cabinet decided that in the forthcoming Conference at Paris, the prime minister and Balfour should seek peace. Prevalence of the desire for peace was illustrated in an

16. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, October 25, 1918, CAB 23/14, W. C. 491A.

exchange between the prime minister and Eric Geddes over German retention of submarines. When Geddes said that the Admiralty wanted all effective submarines interned, Lloyd George replied that this was undesirable because it was humiliating to Germany and thus a prohibitive condition to a speedy peace. Balfour, Curzon, Chamberlain, and Conservative leader and Chancellor of the Exchequer Andrew Bonar Law strongly objected to Lloyd George's statement, but with the aid of Smuts the prime minister held his ground. The Cabinet decided that the First Lord of the Admiralty should go to Paris.¹⁷

Lloyd George was unable to oppose both the Cabinet and the Admiralty. Consequently, the naval Armistice terms included surrender of one hundred-sixty submarines. This decision was reported to the Cabinet by Haig on November 5. On that occasion, the general also explained that in view of the fall of Austria and Turkey, he had come around to believing that Foch's more stringent Armistice terms were workable.¹⁸ German retention of submarines would be dangerous to Great Britain should the Armistice fail. The fact that allowing Germany to retain them entered Lloyd George's mind shows that the end of hostilities was not accompanied by serious

17. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, October 26, 1918, *ibid.*, W. C. 491B.

18. Minutes of the Imperial War Cabinet, November 5, 1918, CAB 23/42, I. W. C. 36.

thought concerning the future by the highest authority in the British government.

Lloyd George's thinking during the period prior to the Armistice was somewhat erratic. On October 23 he had suggested that Germany could retain her submarines. Earlier that month the prime minister had expressed a desire to invade Germany, but by November 2 he allowed international relations to recede into the background because he planned to call a General Election. In discussion on October 13 with Bonar Law, Balfour, Field Marshal Wilson, Reading, the Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, the First Sea Lord, Admiral Wymess, Cabinet Secretary Sir Maurice Hankey, and his personal secretary Philip Kerr, the prime minister asserted the need to bring defeat home to the German people in order to ensure the future peace of the world. On that day he made a tragic prophecy, saying that Germany might in twenty years time conclude that better organization and preparation would bring victory in another war. Without the humiliation of defeat, " . . . the Germans will say that these miserable democrats had taken charge and become panic stricken, and the military party would get in power again."¹⁹

The prime minister's motives for those statements

19. Draft Notes of a Conference held at Danny, Sussex, October 13, 1918, CAB 24/66, G. T. 5967.

are a matter of speculation. He may have believed them at the time, or he may have wished to learn whether or not such ideas were entertained by his colleagues. In any case, by November 2, Lloyd George was thinking about calling an election. In a letter to Bonar Law of that date, he treated a lasting peace as an assumption and wrote in terms of domestic issues to be dealt with.²⁰ The prime minister had come to regard a lasting peace as a fait accompli. But peace would not come easily, for the British government lacked both a policy of its own and an understanding with France.

The period preceding the Armistice revealed a lack of Anglo-French planning. The British government was much more concerned with a speedy settlement than with one that was politically sound. Consequently, an absence of concern with the political effects of the Armistice on the Entente was all too apparent in London. For German sea power was effectively destroyed, leaving Great Britain without fear of Germany, and the Allies were on the Rhine, guaranteeing that if fighting began again it would be on German soil. The absence of carefully formed war aims in western Europe, and the conflict with France which it produced, began to surface as soon as all knew that the shooting would cease on November 11.

20. Lloyd George to Bonar Law, November 2, 1918, CAB 24/86, G. T. 7941.

On November 10, Lloyd George pointed out that the problems of political disintegration within Germany required Great Britain to reach an understanding with France. This was essential since Foch was disposed to go on to destroy the German army and capture material, while Lloyd George himself was opposed to marching troops into Germany. The prime minister said that bringing men into Germany was bringing them into a cholera zone. It was decided to have a talk with Clemenceau as soon as possible.²¹ Thus, British opposition to marching troops into Germany led to the first realization of a need for understanding with France.

Later British Cabinet discussion showed that the government did not seek an accord with France concerning policy, but only wanted France to understand that they planned to reduce their military presence in Europe. On November 14, the Cabinet considered the question of an army of occupation for Germany. Even as early as November, the effects of popular pressure for demobilization were felt in government circles; the upcoming election only made the pressure stronger. General Wilson reported to the Cabinet that Foch was expected to ask for sixteen infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions in western Germany. This figure would mean the retention

21. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, November 10, 1918, CAB 23/4, W. C. 500A.

of one half million British troops in the Rhenish provinces under Foch's command. Lloyd George did not dispute Foch's estimate, but he did not endorse it. He said only that the British Army Council, working without the Allies, would soon develop schemes to maintain the army, and in doing so they would be obliged to consider not only occupation, but the garrisons which were essential in other parts of the world.²²

The reluctance of the government, which was under pressure to demobilize, to commit troops to Europe was evident in their reaction to a request received from the French government asking for troops to be sent to Vienna and Budapest. The French had received this request from the governments of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. France, although determined to comply, was anxious that Great Britain participate equally. Balfour had learned from Derby that this request was personally important to Clemenceau, yet the foreign secretary was himself unable to understand how France could have enough troops. He saw no reason to comply to please Clemenceau; he believed it intolerable for British troops to police foreign capitals. Milner regarded further commitments of British troops as disastrous, reminding the Cabinet how difficult it would

22. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, November 14, 1918, CAB 23/8, W. C. 502.

be to reduce the army by one-half in six months. The soldiers could become involved in a chaotic internal dispute. Curzon said that as long as France was sending troops Britain should show the flag, but he found himself alone. It was decided that the French government should be informed that Great Britain could not comply with the request.²³

Although French advantage in having troops in Austria because of revolutionary activity throughout the Germanies can easily be understood, it was during the Anglo-French Conference in December that French plans for western Europe were discussed. The Allies had been unable to agree on war aims, and it remained to be seen whether they could reach agreement about the peace.

On November 30, Clemenceau and Foch arrived in London to a big public reception, followed by discussions. As Lloyd George later wrote, Foch soon got down to his real purpose in requesting the meeting: his plan for a defensive alliance of France, Belgium, Luxemburg, and a new state or states to be carved out of the German territory west of the Rhine. This Confederation of the Rhine could be one state or several states, but it must be severed from Germany. The Rhine border was chosen simply because it was the best military frontier. Without

23. Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet, November 22, 1918, ibid., W. C. 506.

the Rhine frontier, Foch could see no hope of preventing a repetition of the German onslaught of 1914, which would take the form of an occupation of the channel ports, and virtually separate France and Great Britain. Lloyd George asked Foch if he realized that this would be another Alsace-Lorraine, to which Foch replied that France would try to conciliate the people. Lloyd George caustically remarked that that was what the Germans had said of Alsace-Lorraine and the British of Ireland. Without an agreement or a pledge to discuss it further, the topic shifted to the trial of the Kaiser.²⁴

At the December 3 meeting, the occupation of the Rhineland was discussed. Foch said a total of forty-one divisions would be needed, eleven of which would be British, to defend the line of the Rhine. Foch said this force would remain until the Treaty was signed, but he thought it would be wise to keep thirty divisions on the Rhine for at least one year after the signing of the Treaty.²⁵ Foch's statement may have resulted in Anglo-French misunderstanding, for the marshal conveyed the impression that France expected a short-term occupation

24. David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), Vol. I, pp. 77-86; Hankey Diary, December 4, 1918, Stephen Roskill, Hankey: Man of Secrets (London: Collins, 1972), Vol. II, pp. 28-30.

25. Notes of an Allied Conversation, December 3, 1918, CAB 23/42, I. W. C. 41.

of the Rhineland. However, a short term occupation of the Rhineland would satisfy the French only if a portion of the Rhineland was severed from Germany. British and French conceptions of future policy toward Germany remained divergent when the French delegation returned home to Paris.

This was the only Anglo-French summit meeting before the Paris Peace Conference. The failure to reach an agreement determined that the Entente powers would go to the Peace Conference without a united policy. Britain had not only rejected French plans, but presented no plans of her own for the French government to consider. The inability to reach an agreement on war aims had foreshadowed the collapse of this meeting, but the course of events within Britain after the Armistice made British adaption of French goals completely out of the question. Although Britain had no specific plans for peace, reduction of her military presence in Europe had become a policy of the government.

The desire for military responsibility in Europe was definitely not on the prime minister's mind when, on December 6, he informed the Cabinet that he was dissatisfied with both the method of speed of demobilization. He said that there were two million men in France, while only 300,000 as an upper limit, were needed for the occupation of Germany. When it was revealed that only 700 men were brought home per day, and only 50,000

exclusive of sick, wounded, and repatriated prisoners of war, had come home, Lloyd George, in an angry tone, reminded his colleagues how quickly they had been able to transport men to France during the emergency in March 1918.²⁶ On December 19, Lloyd George appointed Sir Auckland Geddes as minister in charge of demobilization. Geddes was to act in this capacity as the representative of and with the full authority of the War Cabinet. The existing committee on demobilization was disbanded.²⁷ The British government had limited their options by committing themselves to rapid demobilization before they had determined any goals for the future of Europe.

The commitment to demobilization grew in part out of the fact that Lloyd George called an election in December 1918. November and December should have been months of planning the Peace Conference, but instead members of the government were concerned with domestic political strife. In seeking the greatest electoral victory of his career so soon after the killing had stopped, Lloyd George had himself determined that the passions of four years of war would be unleashed on platforms throughout the country. Questions which could

26. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, December 6, 1918, CAB 23/8, W. C. 510.

27. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, December 19, 1918, ibid., W. C. 513.

determine the future of Britain and Europe became objects of campaign oratory.

The critical issue of reparation and indemnity came to the forefront in December. It was thrust into the public eye by the rhetoric of the election. The electorate was led to believe that Germany was obliged to make reparation for damages caused by her aggression. The concept had never been properly defined in public nor had the Allies discussed it among themselves privately. Lloyd George realized how great a problem reparations could become. At a meeting of the Imperial War Cabinet, when Prime Minister W. M. Hughes of Australia raised the question of indemnity, Lloyd George replied that it was not as easy as it appeared, since Germany could not pay large sums in gold, and she therefore would have to sell goods to raise the cash, currency reserves, and credit. No nation would become the dumping ground of cheap German goods. Lloyd George stated that people who desired a large indemnity failed to realize that the only way Germany would be able to pay it was by maintaining a favorable balance of trade with her creditors, which in the case of Great Britain could only be harmful to the creditor nation itself. Bonar Law added that these proposals also implied making every German worker a slave for fifty years. Lloyd George wanted to establish a committee to advise the Cabinet and Peace Conference

delegation as to policy regarding reparation and indemnity. Hughes consented to serve as Chairman.²⁸

Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law realized that the dream of large sums of money flowing from Germany would have to be dispelled. The Committee, consisting of W. M. Hughes, the Canadian Foreign Minister G. E. Foster, a member of Parliament Walter Long, Governor of the Bank of England Lord Cunliffe, a leading city banker Herbert Gibbs, and an economist W. A. S. Hewins, was appointed with the motive of keeping the onus of reducing the reparations and indemnity figures off the politicians, many of whom were making extravagant promises during the campaign. Lloyd George knew that directing popular attention away from the politicians would be difficult, for financiers and businessmen who should have known better were convinced Germany could pay large sums. This Committee concluded that Germany should pay the total cost of the war, which they estimated to be £24 billion. The Germans were to pay in cash, kind, securities, and by funding a loan. There would be no ill effects to the Allies since they could develop their industry while German capital went abroad. The experts report concluded that enforcement of these conditions would deter future aggression. Lloyd George and Bonar Law found it incred-

28. Minutes of the Imperial War Cabinet, November 26, 1918, CAB 23/43, I. W. C. 38.

ible that men in such responsible positions could come out with such nonsense. The prime minister never accepted the report.²⁹ This report was the only serious study made by the British regarding reparations. Lloyd George's rejection of its conclusions left the government without a specific plan for the settlement of reparations and indemnity. Lloyd George's personal views foreshadowed conflict with the French.

In his memoirs, Lloyd George denied promising an exaggerated amount of reparations during the election campaign.³⁰ His campaign speeches confirm this assertion. In one of his most important addresses, delivered at Colston Hall, Bristol, December 12, the prime minister declared that when the Military Service Act lapsed, he had no desire for its renewal, and pledged to strive to end conscript armies on the continent. Regarding indemnities, he asked rhetorically, "Who is going to foot the bill?" and a voice cried out "Germany." The prime minister replied that Germany was to pay to the limit of her capacity, explaining,

It is not right for the Government to raise any false hopes in the community, and least of all it is not right to do so on the eve of an

29. Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, Vol. I, pp. 303-305.

30. Ibid., pp. 310-311; c.f. Nelson, pp. 126-128; c.f. A. J. P. Taylor, English History, 1914-1945 (New York: Oxford, 1965), p. 127.

election . . . I should say the balance of trade between Germany and this country before the war was hardly thirty or forty millions. If you had to take hundreds of millions of goods from Germany, whether it were coal, or ships, or cotton, or what not, well, then greater injury would be inflicted on the industries of this country than anything you could possibly hope to gain by merely exacting an indemnity.³¹

Lloyd George had denounced promising large sums in reparations and indemnities. However, the impression that the government was committed to large reparations demands was conveyed to the general public by excessive campaign oratory of British politicians whom Lloyd George did not silence. During the campaign, Lloyd George failed to encourage the mitigation of wartime hatred for the Germans. This left a large portion of the British public convinced that their government sought a peace of revenge, while the prime minister was actually moving toward seeking a moderate peace.

The prime minister was not committed to the destruction of German economic might, nor did he appreciate the change in the economic balance of power in Europe that devastation in France and Belgium had caused. Although the prime minister had not described a specific policy, harsh punishment for Germany had not been advocated. At the same time, a portion of public opinion was coming closer to replacing hatred with magnanimity.

31. Lloyd George's Speech at Bristol, December 11, 1918, The Times (London), December 12, 1918, p. 6.

A public desire to make a peace that the German people would accept began to emerge from the psychology of blaming the Kaiser for the war. The question of the Kaiser's responsibility for the war was a burning issue during the period between the Armistice and the Peace Conference. All politicians paid lip service to the idea of his individual guilt, and some genuinely did believe that a trial of the Kaiser was necessary and just. However, after the establishment of the Weimar Republic, the constant refrain of blaming the Kaiser set the stage for advocating a peace with the "People" who had been led astray by an evil man. This way of thinking was compatible with the idealism which had germinated during the war and which came to be crystallized in the public mind through Wilson's proposals.

The growing idealism can be seen in the chief press organ of liberal thought, the Manchester Guardian, which began its criticism of French peace proposals as soon as French ambitions on the Rhine became known. On December 10, the Guardian praised the prime minister for warning against another peace of 1871; that is, a peace which turned Europe into an armed camp and provoked a war of revenge. The editor praised the prime minister for cautioning against allowing emotion to run wild, but blamed him, probably with truth, for having caused much of the demagoguery by calling an election so soon. On

December 14, the Guardian carried an exposé about hunger in Cologne, where, it was asserted, that women and children were dying for want of milk, while the French army was advancing with the hope of seizing all of the Rhineland. French injustice toward Germany was already seen as a potential source of discord. On the eve of the Peace Conference, France and Italy were condemned for harking back to the old diplomacy. The editor came out in opposition to any territorial arrangements contrary to the spirit of the League of Nations.³² To the idealist in Britain, France had already been labeled as an enemy in the search for a just and peaceful world.

The year 1918 ended with the Entente powers never having agreed about plans for peace, and with the British government never having gone beyond restoration of Belgium in development of their European policy. As long as the only practical aim was victory, the Entente remained strong. Anglo-French division over how strongly the Armistice had to crush Germany had not become pronounced because of the speed of events on the battlefield. After the Armistice was signed, Britain failed to reach agreement with France on the Rhineland question,

32. Editorial: "The Warning of 1871," December 10, 1918, The Manchester Guardian, p. 6; "Hunger in Cologne," December 14, 1918, ibid., p. 7; Editorial: "The Conference and the Peace," January 10, 1919, ibid., p. 4.

and Lloyd George's views on reparations could not find favor in Paris because of the French need to rebuild devastated areas.

When the British delegation prepared to travel to Paris, they had no peace proposals because the politicians, instead of studying the problems and reaching conclusions, had canvassed the nation in search of votes. Britain had failed to develop a European policy because some members of her government did not believe that affairs on the continent were Britain's primary interest in the world. But most important, Britain had no policy for the restoration of Europe because her statesmen realized that Germany was an integral part of any European settlement. The British government had not decided what role Germany was to play in the restoration of a peaceful and stable Europe. However, the British government realized that Germany had not been totally defeated. The German nation, remaining potentially a great power, had to be appeased if the European peace settlement could endure. The British government spent the early months of the Paris Peace Conference formulating proposals based on these ideas.

CHAPTER II

The Evolution of British Policy for Peace in Europe: January - March, 1919

The history of the Paris Peace Conference is a story of blunder and chaos.¹ This is not surprising, for when the Conference convened on January 10, 1919, there was no unity among the delegations. President Wilson came to Paris seeking his League of Nations; the French were concerned only with their own security; while the British government had no policy. However, some members of the government had come to the belief that Germany must remain a European power if the time-honored doctrine of balance of power could be adapted to the new circumstances of 1919.

The British government believed that they sought the restoration of the balance of power because France

1. Harold Nicolson, Peacemaking: 1919 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), illustrates the confusion of the Conference; see also, Sally Marks, "Behind the Scenes at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919," Journal of British Studies, Vol. IX (May, 1970), pp. 154-180.

was the only major continental nation both victorious and unified. They failed to consider the fact that the war had depleted French human and material resources while the German population remained greater than the French, and German industry remained untouched. In addition, Germany was now a young republic which appeared to have shed its archaic political structure. When viewed from London, the revival of Germany under a democratic regime slowly came not to be feared but welcomed. For in the promise of a stable and democratic Germany resided the hope of a stable and prosperous Europe. During the first three months of the Peace Conference, the British government developed a policy for European stabilization with a placated Germany as the key to their policy. Therefore, a peace which would conciliate Germany rather than embitter her became the goal of the British government.

Nevertheless, ideas which pointed to a policy for peace incompatible with the French goal of preventing future German revival began to emerge in British government circles during early talks over the military terms of peace.

On January 24, in the Council of Ten Clemenceau began a discussion of the strength of Allied forces to be maintained during the Armistice. Foch presented figures displeasing to Lloyd George, who demanded to know why

German demobilization had not progressed more quickly. The prime minister then suggested that they fix the number of troops Germany should be permitted to retain to maintain internal order. He warned his colleagues that demobilization was a political necessity.²

Lloyd George was being frank with the Council of Ten in discussing political considerations because pressure for demobilization in Britain had reached a level where disorder could easily turn into mutiny. In January of 1919, only a few days before the prime minister left for Paris, men on leave in the coastal towns had refused to obey orders to return to France. While in London, servicemen marched to Whitehall demanding a meeting with the Commander-in-Chief of British forces, Sir William Robertson. The Cabinet met during the crisis; Lloyd George offered to meet with the soldier's delegates himself, but the Cabinet decided that they should send delegates to meet with Robertson. Lloyd George, in consultation with Secretary of War Winston Churchill, prepared a statement pledging the government to facilitate rapid demobilization.³ On January 15, 1919, Lloyd George's special appointee, Sir Auckland Geddes, informed Churchill that he had streamlined demobilization procedure in

2. Minutes of the Council of Ten, January 24, 1919, FRUS., The Paris Peace Conference of 1919, Vol. III, pp. 705-712.

3. Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, January 8, 1919, CAB 23/9, W. C. 514.

accordance with the prime minister's wishes.⁴

Of the Allied and Associated Powers, France was the only nation to remain mobilized as long as the German Army remained strong in eastern Europe and retreated intact in the west. The fact that the French government was alone in its fears became more apparent as discussions over disarmament of Germany progressed. On February 7, Foch presented figures from Allied demobilization tables showing that by April 1, Great Britain would have twelve divisions on the Rhine, the United States ten, and France forty-six. The Allies would then be incapable of offensive action. In rebutting Foch's case for immediate disarmament of Germany, all that Lloyd George would say was that the Allies could impose their terms even after they had demobilized further because the blockade held the threat of starvation over Germany.⁵

At the February 7 meeting, Lloyd George had instructed the military experts to determine the number of troops needed by Germany to ensure domestic peace.⁶ The framers of the military, air and naval clauses of the draft Treaty had operated on the premise that Germany

4. Geddes to Churchill, January 15, 1919, ibid., W. C. 521, Appendix.

5. Minutes of the Council of Ten, February 7, 1919, FRUS., Vol. III, pp. 896-901.

6. Ibid., p. 898.

should be permitted to retain enough force to maintain law and order. On March 3, Foch presented the proposals for the military sections of the preliminaries of peace which had been unanimously agreed to by the chiefs of staff. Balfour asked to study the plan with the intention of holding it until Lloyd George could approve, but when he requested the papers, Foch stated the present rate of Allied demobilization required that they proceed without delay.⁷ Rejecting the proposals, Balfour wrote to Lloyd George accusing Foch of trying to force the Conference to follow his lead by using the scare tactic of warning that by April 1, demobilization would have rendered the Allies incapable of effective action.⁸

Balfour's criticisms of Foch revealed the evolution of the foreign secretary's policy for the peace settlement. He viewed the military settlement within the wider context of the future of the Rhineland and its effect on Franco-German relations. In reviewing the proposal to cut German armaments to the amount necessary to maintain internal order, the foreign secretary could not see the justification for such a policy unless it was associated with a guarantee of German territory

7. Minutes of the Council of Ten, March 3, 1919, ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 183-199.

8. Notes on the Military Peace Proposals by A. J. Balfour, March 5, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/3/4/15.

against external aggression from any source. Balfour opposed Foch's proposal for conscription in Germany. In an assessment of French motives, the foreign secretary wrote that,

The question of the Buffer State can hardly be disassociated from the general question of the military terms to be imposed on Germany. The creation of such a state had no political justification, and though the French hope that, if once established, it would be so popular as to be permanent, this is a matter upon which it would be rash to prophesy.⁹

At the Council of Ten meeting on March 10, Lloyd George showed that he had accepted some of Balfour's criticisms, but in order to facilitate the end of the discussion of the military terms, he did not associate them with the buffer state question during the conversation. Lloyd George asserted that peacetime conscription was incompatible with democratic principles, but he accepted Foch's argument that if the German army was to be professional it must be smaller. The prime minister felt the figure of 100,000 men was too low, but he concluded that France should have the final say in determining the size of the German land forces.¹⁰

Lloyd George had not allowed a great struggle to develop concerning the military clauses, for he realized, as Balfour had seen, that a crisis would arise over the

9. Ibid.

10. Minutes of the Council of Ten, March 10, 1919, FRUS., Vol. IV, pp. 295-304.

French desire for the buffer state. The draft military terms were approved on March 17. They were slightly altered, however, on May 7, when it was decided to allow Germany until March 31, 1920 to reduce her army to seven divisions of infantry and two of cavalry. Total enlistment was not to exceed 100,000 men, with no more than 4,000 officers, officers and men serving twenty-five and twelve years respectively. The Germans were required to destroy or surrender war material, limit their manufacture of munitions, open plants to inspection, and close down military schools.¹¹ The British government could then tell the French that Prussian militarism was eradicated. French arguments for a buffer state were based on strategic considerations, and were, therefore, weakened by the stringent military terms Britain had agreed to impose on Germany.

During February and March, the French desire for a buffer state dominated the Peace Conference precipitating a conflict with the British. During the course of resolving this conflict with France, the British government at last developed a policy toward the European settlement.

In December of 1918, the British Foreign Office had begun to consider the French desire to detach the left bank of the Rhine from Germany while the politicians

11. The Treaty of Versailles, Military Clauses, Part V, ibid., Vol. XIII, pp. 318-365.

ignored the question. Balfour was informed by Derby of a conversation with Clemenceau in which the French premier asserted that the Rhine was the natural border between Germany and Gaul, and should be the border in the future. Clemenceau said that the territory should be made into an independent state. Derby warned Balfour that Clemenceau would press very strongly for the severance of the left bank of the Rhine from Germany. Balfour instructed Sir Eric Drummond of the Foreign Office to write to Field Marshal Wilson requesting his opinion of French aims in the Saar and on the left bank of the Rhine.¹²

On January 2, Wilson replied that the possible advantage of the buffer state was that it would cause France to disarm and thus encourage European disarmament. An enclosed memorandum from the General Staff examined the question in detail. They considered the French historic argument to be weak, because the only time France had the territory was during the aggressive wars of Louis XIV and Napoleon. The strategic value of the area could only be meaningful if garrisons were maintained in Luxemburg. The authors of the memorandum

12. Derby to Balfour, December 14, 1918, Balfour MSS, 49744; Drummond to Wilson, December 16, 1918, Public Record Office, Private Collections, Ministers and Officials: Various (Balfour Papers), F. O. 800/210.

believed that France should be allowed to have the Saar because of her dependence on Saar coal and its proximity to the Briey ironfield. Although the General Staff asserted that a large neutral area could prevent another 1914, they considered the political difficulties this implied insurmountable. They concluded that political and economic union with Germany coupled with military neutralization was the best possible solution.¹³

James W. Headlam-Morley, assistant director of the Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office, and a member of the British Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, considered that an effective buffer could not be created. He criticized Field Marshal Wilson for failing to mention the possibility of a general system of alliances in which all of the states concerned guaranteed one another against aggression. The failure to create such an alliance would force a continuation of a Europe divided into hostile camps. Headlam-Morley also criticized the French view of the Saar, which he said really constituted the same thing the Germans had done in Longwy-Briey. He suggested that French claims in the Saar be based on German damages, and suggested that temporary control rather than annexation

13. Wilson to Drummond, January 2, 1919, Memorandum by the General Staff, War Office, January 2, 1919, Public Record Office, Peace Conference of 1919-1920, F. O. 608/124.

be considered. Sir Eyre Crowe, assistant under-secretary of state, had the General Staff paper, including Headlam-Morley's commentary, printed for limited circulation and sent to Sir Maurice Hankey.¹⁴

Headlam-Morley's position was the first illustration of the viewpoint that the continuation of the Entente Cordiale would not only fail to bring peace and stability to Europe, but actually result in a perpetuation of existing tension. His position foreshadowed Foreign Office reaction to the French plan for a buffer state when it was presented in detail in February 1919.

On February 26, a French memorandum on fixing the Rhine as the western frontier of Germany and the Inter-Allied occupation of the Rhine bridges, which had previous limited circulation, was presented to the Peace Conference. The French government expressed no wish to annex the territory, but proposed a common protectorate including Great Britain and Belgium. The memorandum emphasized the danger of German aggression which a contiguous land border created, and used historical arguments to illustrate that point. According to the memorandum, the military limitations on Germany included loopholes permitting the continuance of Prussianism; only

14. Minutes by Headlam-Morley of January 16, 1919 to Memorandum by the General Staff of January 2, 1919, ibid.

Allied observers in every branch of German government could erase the military tradition. Only permanent occupation of the Rhine bridges, rather than reliance on the League of Nations, could prevent a sudden German attack.¹⁵

The author of the memorandum, Clemenceau's personal advisor, André Tardieu, elaborated his ideas further in a March 12 memorandum. Tardieu proposed to forbid Germany from maintaining fortifications in a zone fifty kilometers east of the Rhine. He wanted to compel the German government to provide coal for the industries of the state or states that might be carved out of the left bank. Tardieu further proposed the general liquidation of German economic interests on the left bank of the Rhine, under the auspices of the League of Nations, to begin two months after the Treaty was signed.¹⁶

In a note to Balfour prepared by the Foreign Office on February 15, before the Tardieu memorandum was officially presented to the Conference, the arguments Tardieu put forth were criticized both for lack of merit,

15. Memorandum of the French Government on the Fixation at the Rhine of the Western Frontier of Germany and on Inter-Allied Occupation of the Rhine Bridges, February 26, 1919, André Tardieu, The Truth About the Treaty (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1921), pp. 147-167.

16. Memorandum of the French Government on the Western Frontier of Germany, March 12, 1919, ibid., pp. 175-176.

and for potential negative effects on the future of Europe. The historical arguments were refuted on the basis that the 1914 offensive was based not on the Rhine bridges, but on the railroads. The general view that a river could afford protection against attack was also refuted. According to the memorandum, without the coal of the Saar and Silesia, Germany would not have the material to fight another war. The question was asked: should Great Britain maintain the watch on the Rhine to play into the hands of French chauvinists? Tardieu's paper was interpreted as proving that the Rhine was not France's border, and that garrisons on the Rhine bridges " . . . would merely be to plant so many poisoned thorns in an open wound which it is our business to endeavor to heal."¹⁷

The Tardieu memorandum, with the comments of those in the British government who had seen it, was sent to the prime minister by Hankey.¹⁸ After Tardieu's proposals were examined by the British Military Section in Paris, they advised Balfour that the Inter-Allied occupation of the Rhine bridges alone, without any

17. Remarks on M. Tardieu's Memorandum for Mr. Balfour on the subject of the Left Bank of the Rhine, February 25, 1919, P. O. 608/142. On February 26, copies of this were sent to Lloyd George, Balfour, Hankey, and House, ibid.

18. Hankey to Lloyd George, February 24, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/23/4/24.

territorial changes, would prevent a German offensive from ever being launched.¹⁹

Balfour appeared to have made up his mind to resist the French proposals by the time he met with representatives of other Allied governments during February. On February 6, the Belgian Foreign Minister, Paul Hymans, called on Balfour to discuss Franco-Belgian relations. Although deeply conscious of the need to remain on good terms with France, Hymans viewed French power with misgivings, expressing the fear that French policy threatened the full independence of Belgium.²⁰

On February 9, Balfour told Colonel House of his dismay at French policy. The foreign secretary said that France could understand only military security, and could not see the extent to which their policies were a violation of the right to national self-determination. During a February 19 meeting, Balfour and House agreed that the reduction of the German army to a tiny professional force offered enough security to the French to induce them to cease agitating for the left bank of the Rhine.²¹

19. Short Notes for Mr. Balfour on the Subject of the Left Bank of the Rhine, February, 1919, F. O. 608/142.

20. Memorandum of a Conversation with M. Hymans, February 6, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49750.

21. House's Diary, February 9, 1919, Charles Seymour, ed. The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1928), Vol. IV, p. 345; House's Diary, February 19, 1919, ibid., p. 346.

With both Belgium and the United States cool toward French Rhineland ambitions, the fate the French proposals would have at the Peace Conference was in British hands. If the British government decided to oppose France at the Peace Conference, France would be isolated and her aims thwarted. The views of the Foreign Office and military pointed toward British rejection of the French proposals, but the full Cabinet had not met to consider them and the prime minister had not reached any decision.

On February 28, with Lloyd George back in London, the Cabinet began a full discussion of the French proposals for the frontiers of Germany. The Cabinet had Tardieu's paper and Foch's proposals for the occupation of the Rhine bridges. Churchill said that he was surprised by French views because the occupation they envisioned was to be permanent, and he urged Britain to use her influence with France to persuade the French to adapt a merciful policy toward Germany. The prime minister said that his mind was not made up on many French claims, but he feared the people in the buffer state would wish to cooperate with Germany. Curzon mentioned the possibility of using the Rhineland issue to reach a general accord with the French on all matters of conflict. At the end of the meeting the acting foreign secretary was asked to draft a full report on the

question.²² The prime minister had still not reached a decision.

Not until the Cabinet discussion of March 4 did Lloyd George decide to oppose the French scheme for a buffer state. Curzon explored the French proposals in depth. The French proposed to rectify the border to include Landau for military reasons, and the Saar for economic reasons. The buffer state on the left bank was part of another set of proposals, and according to Curzon, the two issues could be separated. Curzon said that the idea of a permanent military force on the Rhine was intolerable, while the buffer state was ethnically pure German and would some day seek reunification. When the discussion shifted to the problem of garrisons, Bonar Law reminded the Cabinet how quickly public opinion would turn against keeping troops in Germany once the peace was secure. Lloyd George said they must force France to rely on a disarmed Germany and the League of Nations. The prime minister then said that if the United States and Great Britain guaranteed France against aggression, it would be enough to satisfy the French. Field Marshal Wilson agreed with Lloyd George, and thus the idea of the Treaty of Guarantee was born. Curzon then asked Wilson to develop a program with regard to a demilitarized

22. Draft Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet, February 28, 1919, CAB 23/15, W. C. 538A.

zone in the Rhineland, which could be used as an alternative to the French proposals in Paris.²³ The British government had searched for, and in suggesting a demilitarized zone, found a way to leave the Rhineland within Germany and at the same time give France guarantees which would not require the permanent maintenance of British garrisons on the Rhine. This plan, however, required the cooperation of the United States.

On March 12, Lloyd George met with Colonel House. The prime minister had concluded that the French would be satisfied if his government guaranteed France against invasion and pledged immediate support. He asked House to study the proposal.²⁴

Lloyd George had made a specific proposal on the Rhineland question, but his thinking about the buffer state had not yet led him to develop a comprehensive way in which it fitted into the view of the peace he desired.

Balfour's conclusions on the Rhineland question represented a comprehensive view of the peace and were one of the first clear statements of the arguments in support of appeasement of Germany. In a March 18 memorandum analyzing the French fear of German aggression, the

23. Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet, March 4, 1919, ibid., W. C. 41A.

24. House's Diary, March 13, 1919, Seymour, Vol. IV, pp. 360-361.

foreign secretary stated that the French arguments were based on the assumptions that Germany's population would always be greater, disarmament and the League of Nations would fail, German militarism would survive, and her ambition would remain invasion of France. Balfour did not wish to prophesy, but he expected any new German drive for expansion to be directed east because of past German successes there and the existing power vacuum. The foreign secretary concluded:

If Germany is to again be a great armed camp, filled with a population about twice the size of that in any state in Europe; if she is going to again pursue a policy of world domination, it will no doubt tax all the statesmanship of the rest of the world to prevent a repetition of the calamities from which we have been suffering. But the only radical cure for this is a change in the international system of the world- a change which French statesmen are doing nothing to promote, and the very possibility of which many of them regarded with ill-concealed derision. They may be right; but if they are it is quite certain that no manipulation of the Rhine frontier is going to make France anything more than a second-rate power, trembling at the nod of its great neighbors in the East, and depending from day to day on the changes and chances of a shifting diplomacy and uncertain alliances.²⁵

Balfour had come to believe that the future of

25. France's Fear of German Aggression, by A. J. Balfour, March 18, 1919, Blanch Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour (London: Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., 1936), Vol. II, pp. 277-278; see also Balfour MSS, 59751; see also F. O. 608/141 where minutes are attached. Headlam-Morley marked it "useful," and it was seen by Lord Robert Cecil, Hardinge, and prepared for circulation by Crowe on March 23.

Europe could not be planned on the basis of continuing the Entente Cordiale as a force to keep Germany permanently weak, and Lloyd George was soon to reach the same conclusion after consultation with his closest advisors.

Lloyd George frequently made decisions after discussion with his personal advisors. Sometimes he was more profoundly influenced by these men than by his Cabinet colleagues. During his years as prime minister, the role of the Foreign Office in determining foreign policy declined. Lloyd George's private secretariat, under the leadership of Philip Kerr, housed in quarters in temporary huts in the gardens at Ten Downing Street, exercised influences on the prime minister which previously would have belonged to the Foreign Office. Sir Maurice Hankey, secretary to the Cabinet, was anything but a simple bureaucrat. His position as head of the Secretariat at Paris gave him a role in determining the course of the Peace Conference, while Tom Jones temporarily assumed the role of Cabinet Secretary at home. A January 17, 1919 letter from Hankey to his wife illustrated Lloyd George's treatment of career diplomats. Upon his appointment as British Secretary to the Peace Conference, Hankey wrote, "It is very awkward, as it ought to have been Lord Hardinge's job, and he has brought over a huge organisation. However, he has been

most charming about it, and I think I can fit in without friction as I generally can."²⁶ Thus the permanent undersecretary to the Foreign Office was simply to be ignored. To Lloyd George, the prime minister without a party, men such as Hankey, Kerr, and Jones provided a coterie personally loyal to him. The opinions of Kerr, Hankey, and Jones always reached the prime minister, and most often played a role in shaping his thinking. Although there was no friction between the prime minister and Balfour, there were a few occasions when even he was not consulted.²⁷

Philip Kerr, rather than a career diplomat, represented Great Britain on a committee of three which had been set up in Paris to consider the French proposals for making Germany's frontier the Rhine. On March 13, Lloyd George received a letter from Kerr which began with the statement, "I would resist the Tardieu proposition to the end." Kerr did not believe the Rhine frontier was necessary for French security, and said that

26. Hankey to Adeline Hankey, January 17, 1919, Roskill, Vol. II, p. 47.

27. Gordon A. Craig, "The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain," The Diplomats (New York: Atheneum, 1967), Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert eds., Vol. I, pp. 15-25; Keith Middlemas ed., Thomas Jones Whitehall Diary (London: Oxford, 1969), pp. 72-85; Kenneth O. Morgan, "Lloyd George's Premiership: A Study in Prime Ministerial Government," The Historical Journal, Vol. XII (March, 1970), pp. 130-157; Roskill, pp. 43-67.

Clemenceau himself was pushing for it. The prime minister's secretary saw adequate guarantees in the reduction of the German army and armaments, but he supported an Anglo-American guarantee of troops in case of German aggression. Kerr proposed an occupation only of the Rhine bridges only until the essential aspects of the Treaty were executed, which he expected to take about one year.²⁸

Kerr and Hankey were not only opposed to French Rhineland ambitions but uneasy about all developments regarding the peace. In a March 19 memorandum, Hankey explained the reason for their disquiet. He wrote that every exaction from Germany was justified, but the accumulation of them was placing Germany in an impossible position. He believed that consideration of European policy must include concern over Russia because Bolshevism had become the greatest threat striving to destroy European civilization. The new states were small, divided, and could not provide a barrier against Bolshevism, while Austria was no longer a force in Europe and Germany was falling to pieces. The Allies proposed to strip Germany of five to six millions in population, some of her richest provinces, render her incapable of defense, try

28. Kerr to Lloyd George, March 13, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/89/2/40; Balfour also received a copy of Kerr's letter, Kerr to Balfour, March 13, 1919, F. O. 608/142.

her leaders in foreign courts, and then impose an indemnity on, " . . . this exhausted, depleted, crippled, and reduced country." The terms as drafted deprived Germany of her self-respect and rendered her incapable of resisting Bolshevism. Germany could easily become a barrier against Bolshevism, or the leading Bolshevik state, a revolution which would be a greater threat to peace than Russian Bolshevism could ever be. Hankey suggested only short term occupation of the Rhine provinces, and that Germany be permitted to join the League of Nations at its inception.²⁹ This memorandum influenced both the prime minister's decision to call the Conference at Fontainebleau, and the policy statement which resulted.³⁰

Lloyd George called for a Conference at Fontainebleau on March 22-23, 1919, because some members of the British government, including his most trusted advisors, were opposed to French ambitions and concerned about Germany's role in the future of Europe. General Smuts, Lord Cunliffe, Field Marshal Wilson, the treasury under-secretary and reparations expert, John Maynard Keynes, Hankey, and Kerr were invited. With the possible exception of Cunliffe, these men shared a moderate

29. Hankey to Lloyd George, March 19, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/23/4/39.

30. Roskill, pp. 70-71.

approach to the German question, and an appreciation of the need for Germany to play a constructive role in post-war Europe.³¹ During the Fontainebleau Conference, Lloyd George explained his views of the peace terms, which he declared must not attempt to crush Germany.³²

Lloyd George gave a revealing account of the Conference at Fontainebleau and his own thoughts at that time. He told Bonar Law that he and his colleagues went, " . . . in order that we might survey the whole field and put together ideas for the settlement of Germany." Lloyd George thought that his role at the Paris Peace Conference had been simplified because of the deterioration in the personal relations between Wilson and Clemenceau and Franco-American relations in general. This development had resulted in the French doing all they could to avoid conflict with the British, although they knew that Britain disapproved of a separate state in the Rhineland. Lloyd George was displeased with the delay in drafting the peace terms but believed they had overwhelming problems. In reference to politicians critical of delay at the Peace Conference, he wrote, "a mistake in the treaty of 1870 produced a world war in

31. Nelson, pp. 222-224.

32. Wilson's Diary, March 22, 1919, Sir C. E. Callwell, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries (New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons, 1927), Vol. II, p. 176.

1914 and undue precipitancy may create a dozen such bloody mistakes." The prime minister also expressed the conviction that high military expenditure must be ended as soon as the Treaty was signed.³³ Lloyd George had decided that French peace proposals were a potential source of danger, and, therefore, Britain had to present an alternative policy.

The basis of British policy was stated in the Fontainebleau Memorandum, a document drafted on the last day of the Conference by Hankey and Kerr, and presented to the Paris Peace Conference as Lloyd George's proposals.³⁴ The memorandum, entitled "Some considerations for the Peace Conference before they finally draft their terms," stated that the aim was not to produce a peace which would last thirty years and endanger the victors as well as the vanquished. The history of France since 1870 itself demonstrated the fallacy of current French government views that one could make a great nation so weak she could never avenge a wrong. Germany could be stripped of her fleet, her colonies, and her armaments, but if she believed herself to be the victim of injustice, she would be avenged. The generation which had suffered

33. Lloyd George to Bonar Law, March 31, 1919, Bonar Law Papers, 97/1/17; A typewritten copy without the postscript appears in the Lloyd George Papers, F/30/3/40.

34. J. R. M. Butler, Lord Lothian (London: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 171-174.

through this war would see its memories dimmed, grow old, and die, and those who never knew its horrors would not fear to seek redress. Therefore, the memorandum stated,

I cannot conceive any greater cause of future war than the German people, who have certainly proved themselves one of the most vigorous and powerful races in the world should be surrounded by a number of small states, . . . each containing large masses of Germans clamouring for reunion with their native land.

The memorandum spoke of the Russian Revolution, the general unrest in Europe, and expressed the fear that Germany might well place her brains and resources at the disposal of Bolshevism. If Germany went Bolshevik, she would add an element of organized militarism to a revolutionary creed stretching from the Rhine to the Urals. The Allies, therefore, must give Germany terms of peace she could accept, for they could not occupy Germany. The Allied peoples, in Britain and the United States, would never consent to an occupation. Therefore, a settlement must be found which Germany could fulfill and which did not contain the seeds of future war. In addition, the League of Nations must become a meaningful force to which Germany would be admitted as soon as she had a stable democratic government. Until the effectiveness of the League was demonstrated, the British Empire and the United States should give France a guarantee against German aggression. As a final impetus toward a

lasting peace, the Allies must seek understanding with Russia.³⁵

Lloyd George's position was acceptable to Wilson. On March 28 the President presented a memorandum to the French government pledging to "come immediately to the assistance of France as soon as any unprovoked movement of aggression against her is made by Germany."³⁶

The Fontainebleau Memorandum was the first clear statement of British policy for a European peace based on appeasement of Germany. The principles stated at Fontainebleau had evolved within the British government as diplomats, generals, ministers, and finally the prime minister himself came to believe that only a united and prosperous Germany could restore the balance of power in Europe and prevent further political disintegration. According to the memorandum, Britain desired a treaty which Germany herself would accept as just. Britain would not permit the formulation of a treaty which required the use of force for an indefinite and lengthy period to secure its implementation. The document contained a pledge to give France temporary security, yet it clarified

35. "Some considerations for the Peace Conference before they finally draft their terms," David Lloyd George, Martin Gilbert, The Roots of Appeasement (New York: Plume, 1966), Appendix I, pp. 189-196, quotation on p. 190.

36. Wilson to Clemenceau, March 28, 1919, Tardieu, p. 205.

the British desire for military disengagement in Europe, and placed the future of European security in the hands of the League of Nations. The memorandum revealed that the British government had repudiated the notion that the Entente Cordiale would remain a post-war alliance dedicated to keeping Germany crushed. At last, in March 1919, Britain had a policy for European peace. The goal of that policy was to draft a treaty which would conciliate Germany rather than make Germany embittered and encourage her to turn to militarism. The implementation of this policy would be as difficult as its formulation had been, for British statesmen were faced with the task of maintaining an alliance with France while appeasing Germany during the remainder of the Paris Peace Conference.

CHAPTER III

British Policy at the Paris Peace Conference: The Development of a Compromise Peace: March - June, 1919

The Fontainebleau Memorandum had expressed the principles and goals of British policy toward the German Treaty. The Memorandum set the stage for a Peace Conference dominated by Anglo-French compromise, for French peace proposals had been repudiated by the British government, and in some areas, such as the critical question of the Rhineland, alternatives had been presented. Throughout the Peace Conference, the harsh French attitude toward Germany was countered by the conciliatory posture of British representatives. Finally, after the draft treaty was presented to the Germans, British policy became the instrument through which some of the changes Germany desired were incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles.

During the Peace Conference, Britain and France presented conflicting views about reparations and indemnities, the borders of Poland, and the need to occupy German territory. As weeks and months of Anglo-French conflict passed, members of the British government came to

doubt whether the French alliance should be continued. The discussions of the British Empire Delegation and the Council of Four revealed the British desire for a peace which Germany herself would consider just and carry out without military coercion by the Allies. In the end, the Entente was preserved only when France gave up many of her goals to preserve Britain's friendship. The British role in negotiating the Treaty of Versailles required Lloyd George to satisfy France as much as possible while drafting a Treaty which Germany would not consider an instrument of revenge. The first example of this, the resolution of the Rhineland controversy according to the plan the British had suggested, illustrated the pivotal role Lloyd George played at the Peace Conference.

The difficulties the Council of Four was to face became apparent as early as March 27 when Wilson stated his belief that the Rhineland question had been settled according to Lloyd George's compromise. Clemenceau could not accept the Anglo-American guarantee against aggression unless German aggression was defined as any German military activity within a zone extending fifty kilometers east of the Rhine. On March 31, Foch came before the Council of Four to argue that the Rhine was the natural border of France. Lloyd George was not moved. Clemenceau finally compromised on the Rhineland at the April 22 sitting of the Council of Four by accepting a guarantee which appeared as a substantial victory for France. German ag-

gression was defined as any military activity within a fifty kilometer zone on the right bank of the Rhine, or at any point west of that line of demarkation. This provision had been designed to make Inter-Allied occupation of the Rhine bridges unnecessary. When Wilson suggested two separate bi-lateral treaties, one between France and Great Britain, and one between France and the United States, Lloyd George accepted the proposal. The Treaty of Versailles included provisions requiring Germany to disarm and dismantle all fortresses and field works situated west of a line fifty kilometers east of the Rhine, and the Germans were given only two months to complete this task.¹

There was no difficulty in creating a demilitarized zone in the Rhineland in 1919, because the Allies occupied all of the left bank and the three key bridgeheads on the right bank. The Treaties of Guarantee, signed June 28, tried to make this demilitarized zone permanent, for both stipulated that any German violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland would be considered an act of aggression against France. They would continue to operate until, " . . . on the application of one of the Parties to it, the Council, acting if need be by a ma-

1. Minutes of the Council of Four, March 27, 1919, Paul Mantoux, Les D lib rations du Conseil des Quatres (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1955), Vol. I, p. 50; Minutes of the Council of Four, March 31, 1919, ibid., pp. 92-95; Minutes of the Council of Four, April 22, 1919, ibid., p. 319; The Treaty of Versailles, Part III, Articles 42-43, FRUS., Vol. XIII, p. 159.

prity, agrees that the League itself offers sufficient protection."² The Treaties of Guarantee removed the obligation from Great Britain to occupy Germany, and even offered her a way out of the obligation to aid France in case of aggression by providing that the League of Nations shall take over the maintenance of western European security once conditions were stabilized.

The Rhineland compromise with France, a product of the policy formulated by the British government in February and March, not only freed Britain from a permanent military commitment to France, but prevented Germany from losing territory in the Rhineland.

The Rhineland agreement alone could not conciliate Germany. However, even before British policy had been expressed in the Fontainebleau Memorandum, the government had already begun to make limited attempts to reconcile the Germans and eradicate the spirit of revenge from public opinion at home. This involved refusing reparations and indemnities from Germany, and sending supplies into Germany. As early as December 1918, the idea had been expressed that the British themselves would be harmed by the hatred created because of the effects of continuing the blockade of Germany.³

2. Agreement between the United States and France, June 28, 1919, ibid., p. 159.

3. Headlam-Morley to Sir William Tyrell, December 28, 1918, Public Record Office, Foreign Office: General Correspondence since 1906; Political. P. O. 371/3776.

Pressure to feed the Germans grew in Great Britain. The War Cabinet received reports, endorsed by Churchill, describing how limited rations left the German people so undernourished that the mortality rate had risen, while the lack of coal had brought industry to a standstill. The reports spoke of the desperate plight of the poor, who had no resistance to disease because of want of food, and the pathetic state of middle-class people who had either fixed civil service salaries or were elderly pensioners, and had been reduced to poverty by inflated prices of foodstuffs. These reports asserted that Germany needed not only food, but clothing and raw materials to reopen industries, or they would be driven to a hatred of the English and Americans which would be as bitter as their feelings toward the French.⁴ Lloyd George recognized the need for action on his part.

At a March 8 meeting of the Supreme War Council, Lloyd George supported the desire of British delegate to the Supreme Economic Council, Lord Robert Cecil, to relax the blockade and enter into an agreement to feed Germany until September 1, 1919. Foch opposed this, stating that the Allies would lose their ability to exert

4. Combined Reports on Food Conditions in Germany during the Period 12th. January to 12th. February, 1919, CAB 24/76, G. T. 6921; Further Reports on Visits to Germany, 13th. to 15th. February, 1919, ibid., G. T. 6936.

pressure on Germany by withholding food. Lloyd George, staggered by Foch's assumption, insisted that the honor of the Allies was involved. The Germans had accepted an Armistice, and the Allies had not only prevented food shipments, but had forbidden German fishing fleets from going out, and allowed food to lie on the docks at Rotterdam while people starved. Lloyd George said that the memories of starvation could one day turn against the Allies because they were sowing hatred for the future. He revealed that British occupation forces were indignant at allowing starvation to continue, quoting the Commander-in-Chief of the Army on the Rhine, General Herbert Plumer, in support of his assertion. Clemenceau said that the Allies could not yield to the Germans, for it would set a precedent for yielding in the future. The British prime minister then read Plumer's March 8 telegram from Cologne, which stated that present rations in the Cologne area were not sufficient to sustain life, and food must be sent without delay. The French then accepted the proposal for a vote of credit to Germany for the purchase of food which stipulated the method of German payment.⁵ The telegram

5. Minutes of a Meeting of the Supreme War Council, March 8, 1919, Suda L. Bane and Ralph H. Lutz eds., The Blockade of Germany After the Armistice 1918-1919; Selected Documents of the Supreme Economic Council, Superior Blockade Council, American Relief Administration, and other Wartime Organizations (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1942), pp. 200-221; Plumer to Lloyd George, March 8, 1919, ibid., p. 214.

from Plumer, which had done so much to influence the French, was arranged to arrive at the critical moment when Lloyd George asked Plumer to wire in advance of the meeting.⁶

On March 24, Bonar Law received the prime minister's approval to release reports of officers who had visited Germany. In commenting on the report, the Conservative leader said, "effect will however certainly be to induce a more humane feeling about the Germans."⁷ The prime minister had not only acted to pressure the French to aid in easing the plight of the German people, but had come to believe that it was time the British public began to realize that the reparations and indemnities envisioned were to come from a hungry Germany.

The question of reparations and indemnities, the most difficult problem for the Peace Conference, produced the fiercest conflict between Britain and France. It remained, always unsolved, the most unsettling aspect of international relations during the post-World War I period.

The period of the Peace Conference is the story

6. Riddell's Diary, March 7, 1919, George A. Riddell, Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, 1918-1923 (London: Victor A. Gollancz Ltd., 1933), p. 30.

7. Bonar Law to Lloyd George, March 24, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/30/3/36; the letter was marked "approve" by Lloyd George.

of a search for a workable reparations formula which both France and Germany could accept, and which would not involve Britain in the loss of markets on the continent because nations were to receive German goods, or in military operations to secure payment. At the same time, conditions within Germany, and the effect of this on Europe, weighed heavily on the prime minister's mind, and troubled many of his closest colleagues.

One of the reasons why reparation grew to become the primary international problem was the haphazard way in which the question was handled from the beginning. No one had any policy beyond getting something from someone else. The British delegation had gone to Paris with no plans, for the chief detailed study made prior to the Conference, the December report of the experts, had been rejected by Lloyd George. This report had held that Germany was to pay the entire cost of the war.

Lloyd George was not alone in recognizing that a large reparations bill would require Germany to pay in kind, and that payment in kind would hurt the British economy, but in Paris he was faced with the fact that northern France and Belgium had been devastated, and therefore a peace which did not require Germany to pay would be unacceptable to those nations.

During the period of Armistice negotiations, the extent to which France was planning to rely on reparation

of her damaged industries was revealed. On November 3, 1918, Clemenceau inserted the words, "damages to civilian populations," into a note which was to go to the Germans through American channels. According to the Lansing Note of November 5:

. . . invaded territories must be restored as well as evacuated and freed, the Allied and Associated Governments feel that no doubt ought to be allowed to exist as to what that provision implies. By it they understand that compensation will be made by Germany for all damages done to the civilian populations of the Allies and their property by the aggression of Germany by land, by sea, and from the air.⁸

With their right to study the question based on this masterpiece of vague prose, a reparations committee was set up on January 23, 1919 by the Council of Ten at the request of Lloyd George. In order to ensure that they accomplished nothing, the committee was to have twenty members, three from each of the five great powers including Japan, and one representative each from Belgium, Greece, Rumania, Serbia, and Poland. When they met for the first time, Louis-Lucien Klotz, the French finance minister, was elected chairman. Immediately the committee began to argue over whether Germany should be charged with the entire cost of the war, a proposal which Wilson

8. Minutes of the Supreme War Council, November 2, 1918, Philip Mason Burnett ed., Reparation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), Vol. I, pp. 399-400; Minutes of the Supreme War Council, November 3, 1918, ibid., p. 404; House to Wilson, November 5, 1918, ibid., pp. 407-408; Lansing Note of November 5, 1918, ibid., pp. 411-412.

adamantly opposed. Although Lloyd George did not become deeply involved in this conflict, he had made it clear that he considered such a proposal absurd. When the United States and Great Britain asked the committee to try to agree on a fixed sum, the French Minister of Liberated Regions, Albert Lebrun, explained that a study of the cost of devastation to France would take years. At the time the Council of Four was established in March, nothing had been decided.⁹

The Council of Four discussed reparations for the first time on March 26. At that meeting the French introduced an estimate which Lloyd George considered so inflated that he stated Germany would turn to Bolshevism rather than submit to such a high indemnity. That afternoon, when Loucheur estimated the cost of repair of damaged mines at two milliard francs, Lloyd George accused him of exaggerating the figures. As they continued to argue, the prime minister made statements about the value of French property which he could not prove since he had never seen the destruction and his experts had never made a study. On March 28, British reparations expert John Maynard Keynes discussed the difficulty of assessing Germany's capacity to pay, and the big four abandoned the fixed sum and found no other

9. Ibid., pp. 17-28, 31-36.

solutions. The problem was referred to the Reparations Commission.¹⁰ Because Lloyd George would not permit Germany to be given a reparations burden which could turn her toward revolution or revenge, no agreement could be reached with France.

The Saar question, which the Council of Four turned to after failing to agree on reparations, was really a part of the total reparations and indemnities problem. France wanted the Saar because of her dependence on German coal. Lloyd George's advisers and experts had concluded that Saar coal was legitimate compensation for the destruction of French mines. On March 28, Lloyd George suggested transferring ownership of the mines to France and making the area politically autonomous, but on March 31, when Clemenceau suggested military occupation of the Saar, Lloyd George balked at the suggestion.¹¹ Although Lloyd George would not permit military occupation of the Saar, he was in agreement with the basic French demand for the coal mines.

Lloyd George's skill at compromise was put to the test in the resolution of the Saar question, for at the March 31 meeting of the Council of Four, Wilson and

10. Minutes of the Council of Four, March 26, 1919, Mantoux, Vol. I, pp. 24-40; Minutes of the Council of Four, March 28, 1919, ibid., pp. 58-62.

11. Minutes of the Council of Four, March 28, 1919, ibid., pp. 67-73; Minutes of the Council of Four, March 31, 1919, ibid., pp. 89-91.

Clemenceau had an argument over the Saar and Wilson left the Council in anger. On April 6, with House representing the United States, Lloyd George came out in support of a system of governance of the Saar which would give area residents self-government under the sovereignty of the League of Nations, while French ownership of the mines would foster permanent economic ties with France. Lloyd George believed this might inspire the people to join France of their own free will at a future date. When Wilson returned on April 8, he proposed leaving the Saar under German sovereignty with a guarantee of French economic privilege and a plebiscite in fifteen years to determine whether the area would remain permanently French or German. Lloyd George supported Clemenceau's refusal to accept this proposal. On April 9, Lloyd George and Clemenceau decided to accept the plebiscite in fifteen years, but refused to allow the area to remain under German sovereignty. The agreement was accepted by the Council of Four at the April 10 meeting.¹²

12. Ibid.; Minutes of the Council of Four, April 8, 1919, ibid., pp. 181-183; Clemenceau to Wilson, April 9, 1919, Tardieu, pp. 272-276; Minutes of the Council of Four, April 10, 1919, Mantoux, Vol. I, pp. 209-213. In addition to the Saar agreement, Germany was to give France the difference in coal production in the Departments of the Nord and the Pas-de-Calais from 1913-1919. This amount could not exceed 20 million tons for the first five years, and 8 million tons for the second five years. Germany was also to give 7 million tons of coal to France and 8 million tons of coal to Belgium as restitution for her wartime exploitation of mines in occupied areas. John Maynard Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace (London: Macmillan, 1920), pp. 78-84.

Although Lloyd George had been able to reach a compromise on the Saar question, the Council of Four never resolved their disagreement over reparations.

Sections of the Treaty of Versailles concerning the purely economic aspects of reparations were dealt with by the Reparations Commission. In order to facilitate Germany paying her debt, the amount of which was not determined, and for which she had no gold in any case, the Commission worked out a system outlining due dates for percentages of the payment. In order to enable Germany to meet the deadlines, she would be permitted to issue gold marks bearer bonds. The British accepted this proposal over the objections of J. M. Keynes, who believed that the bonds forced Germany to hand over "the whole of her surplus production in perpetuity."¹³

The reparations section of the Treaty of Versailles required Germany to issue bonds to Belgium immediately. The Reparations Commission would advise them of their total debt and method of payment on May 1, 1921. Germany would have thirty years to discharge her entire obligation; the Reparations Commission would be required to consider Germany's capacity to pay, and allow her representatives to be heard after May 1, 1921.

13. Burnett, Vol. I, p. 83; ibid., pp. 84-87.

The cost of Allied armies of occupation was to be met by part of the initial sum due from Germany.¹⁴

At the April 7 meeting of the Council of Four, Lloyd George suggested that the economic section of the Treaty clearly indicate that the Allies were accepting less than full compensation for the war because he wished to make the justice of Allied policy apparent to the Germans. Clemenceau suggested a statement of that nature be placed as a preamble to the economic section of the Treaty. Thus a statement, similar to the Lansing Note of November 5, 1918 in both language and meaning became Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm and Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected to as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her Allies.¹⁵

The intensity of the German response to this statement was not foreseen.

The British government had recognized that Germany's needs were great, and before they could gain anything in reparations or indemnity, they had to aid the defeated enemy. Lloyd George had demonstrated his desire

14. The Treaty of Versailles, Part VII, Articles 232-235, ibid., Vol. II, pp. 215-218.

15. Minutes of the Council of Four, April 7, 1919, Mantoux, Vol. I, p. 169; The Treaty of Versailles, Part VIII, Article 231, Burnett, Vol. II, p. 215.

to use government channels to alter British public opinion, yet vocal opinion, as reflected in the press and Parliament, was far from ready to accept a peace based on the principles of the Fontainebleau Memorandum. By April 1919, press attacks on Lloyd George's diplomacy were a source of potential harm to his efforts at the Paris Peace Conference.

Lloyd George's conflicts with the press were due to his conflict with Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of The Times. Northcliffe had gone on a mission to the United States for Lloyd George, and they worked well together until after the Armistice. The break between the two men probably came when Lloyd George did not appoint Northcliffe to manage Peace Conference propaganda. However, there is no conclusive evidence for the frequently repeated assertion that Northcliffe wanted to be a member of the Peace Delegation. On November 3, 1918, the two men had harsh words. Northcliffe later wished to do all he could to bring about the fall of Lloyd George, and began to campaign to end the independence of The Times editorial staff. On February 25, Geoffrey Dawson, who was close to Lord Milner, one of the first to advocate conciliation of Germany, resigned as editor, and The Times began to rival Horatio Bottomley's John Bull in its hatred for the

Germans.¹⁶

The Times became the leading critic of the government's plans for peace. The paper hammered away at the Peace Conference for delay in drafting the peace terms. The April 7 editorial, which criticized the government for being concerned with what Germany could pay rather than what the Allies had suffered, was typical of the tone of The Times editorial staff.¹⁷ After his own policy statement at Fontainebleau, Lloyd George did not wish to see these ideas in The Times, for continental Europeans, unaccustomed to an unrestricted press, tended to consider The Times a reflection of government policy. Lloyd George was forced to dispell this notion.

At the same time, unrest concerning the Peace Conference grew in the House of Commons. A former business associate of Northcliffe, Kennedy Jones, M. P., wrote to Northcliffe for his views. Northcliffe advised that as many M. P.'s as possible send a telegram to Lloyd George asking that election pledges be carried out.¹⁸ Lloyd George received the telegram, and in the

16. The History of the Times: The 150th. Anniversary and Beyond 1912-1948, Part I, 1912-1920 (London: The Times Offices, 1952), pp. 386-485.

17. Editorial, "The Delays at Paris," The Times, April 7, 1919, p. 13.

18. Henry W. Steed, Through Thirty Years: 1892-1922: A Personal Narrative (New York: Doubleday, 1924), pp. 320-322.

House of Commons his supporters were upset by cries of betrayal which Bonar Law had difficulty silencing. The telegram had been drafted after Bonar Law defended reparation based on Germany's capacity to pay. This telegram which Northcliffe had suggested, accusing Lloyd George of failing to carry out election pledges on reparations, was signed by 233 members of the coalition. Bonar Law came to Paris, where he and Lloyd George drafted a reply to the April 8 telegram. They chose April 16 as the date for the prime minister to address the House of Commons.¹⁹ Thus, in mid-April, all of the unanswered questions of the Peace Conference were thrust into the background, and the prime minister returned to London to openly state his case for a conciliatory peace.

Lloyd George began his April 16 address in an authoritative tone, for he wished to inform his critics that their position was untenable. He painted a verbal picture of the chaos in Europe, telling the House that the Conference was dealing with the fate of millions of people, who lived in areas that many of them had never heard of, and who had endured suffering during the war that no Englishman had ever experienced. He demonstrated the inconsistency of those Conservative members who

19. Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, Vol. I, pp. 373-377.

demanded anti-Bolshevik action in the morning, said bring the boys home in the afternoon, and tried to balance the budget by cutting military expenditure the same evening. The prime minister switched from sarcasm to a statesmanlike posture later, saying that Britain wanted a just peace and must learn to tolerate other political systems and appease the aspirations of others or another war would be upon the nation.²⁰

Lloyd George began his attack on the press after an exchange with Kennedy Jones, who had angered him by leaking things to the press from "high officials" and "informed sources" unbeknown to the government. Lloyd George accused the press of sowing dissension between Great Britain and France stating that, " . . . in France, they believe that The Times is a serious organ. They do not know that it is merely a three penny edition of the Daily Mail."²¹ Northcliffe owned the Daily Mail.

Lloyd George later believed that his address to the House of Commons had been a success.²² This was true, for he had less difficulty with the press and Parliament for the remainder of the Peace Conference. The April 16

20. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, April 16, 1919 (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1919), 5th. Series, Vol. 114, cols. 2936-2950.

21. Ibid., cols. 2951-2953.

22. Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference, Vol. I, p. 283.

address was not directed only at those who supported Northcliffe's position, but to the whole nation and the Peace Conference in Paris. The desire to conciliate Germany, which had evolved in British government circles since the end of the war, and the peace proposals, which grew out of this desire had been placed out in the open; the challenges to them had been refuted. The relative absence of opposition to Lloyd George's positions had an impact on Anglo-French relations, for when no significant antipathy to them arose in Britain, the French were forced to realize that the articulate elements in British political life did not support the French desire for a peace based on revenge.

A relative absence of political pressure to frame a Treaty he did not believe in gave the prime minister greater freedom to negotiate during the remainder of the Peace Conference. When he returned to Paris, only days before the Germans were originally scheduled to arrive, Anglo-French difficulties may have been submerged in the crisis over Fiume between Wilson and the Italian government, but they were far from resolved.

Because the Rhineland compromise was seen as a surrender of the future security of France by many Frenchmen, Clemenceau did not have full support for his decision to accept it. All the coal within the pre-1914 borders of Germany and all the promise of reparations

could not eradicate French fear. Many in the British government never understood the depth of French hatred for Germany, and those who did, such as Balfour and Lloyd George himself, could only see the severance of territory from Germany as the seed of another war. As the British saw it, the French were blind to the fact that a prostrate and unstable Germany meant an unstable Europe. When the French unilaterally sought to exploit German weakness in Germany's hour of defeat, the British government grew distrustful of the ambitions of its own ally.

As the French looked across Germany's eastern border, and saw Russia in chaos and dominated by a philosophy to be abhorred, they focused on the hope of a strong Poland to fill partially the power vacuum in eastern Europe. This French goal, desired most strongly by Foch, was to be aided by President Wilson's sentimental attachment to the Poles, an idea which Lloyd George considered to be just as irrational as the French notion of Poland as a potential great power.

Poland had to receive territory from Germany in order to have the potential of power. British policy, as stated in the Fontainebleau Memorandum, was pledged to prevent the incorporation of German minorities into neighboring states. However, a large German minority within Poland was exactly what the French, Americans, and

the Poles themselves proposed.

On January 29, the President of the Polish National Committee, Roman Dmowski, outlined the position of his country before the Council of Ten. The Poles wanted Danzig, part of East Prussia, Upper Silesia, and the Danzig-Thorn railroad included in their borders. They hoped that a small buffer could be carved out of the rest of East Prussia. A committee, established earlier, including Sir Esme Howard, a member of the British delegation, the Americans, R. H. Lord and Colonel House, had agreed that Poland should receive Danzig and a corridor through East Prussia, while Germany would remain in control of the Schneidemühl-Dirschau-Königsberg railroad, which connected the land east of the corridor with the rest of Germany.²³ The British government did not commit itself to the Howard-Lord agreement. On February 26, Balfour instructed Howard, then in Warsaw, to be very careful not to commit himself in any way on the future of Danzig.²⁴

The prime minister's resolve not to allow French ambitions for Poland to upset the future peace of Europe became apparent during the March 27 discussions of the Council of Four. Lloyd George desired strict

23. Nelson, pp. 145-149.

24. Balfour to Howard, February 26, 1919, F. O. 608/141.

adherence to the principle of nationality, and suggested making Danzig a free port. The French wanted Polish troops despatched to Danzig and Wilson agreed. On April 1, the Council of Four approved the despatch of troops to Danzig in the morning and determined the future status of the city in the afternoon.²⁵

Upper Silesia, a district producing 23% of the total coal output of Germany, was to be ceded to Poland.²⁶ Lloyd George had originally advocated strict adherence to the principle of nationality concerning Germany's borders, and did not favor this provision of the preliminaries of peace. To France, it was the key to Poland's ability to become a second-rate power, an essential aspect of the reduction of Germany's potential to wage war, and, therefore, an essential part of the preliminaries of peace.

The Upper Silesia provisions made it appear as though Lloyd George had abandoned his principle of opposing the incorporation of German minorities in other states for strategic or economic reasons. This was not so, for Lloyd George waited to see how the Germans

25. Minutes of the Council of Four, March 27, 1919, Mantoux, Vol. I, pp. 43-48; Minutes of the Council of Four, March 29, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 76-79; Minutes of the Council of Four, April 1, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 105-106, 109-112. The final draft preliminaries on Danzig were approved on April 22 without further debate. Nelson, p. 196.

26. Keynes, p. 77.

would react to the preliminaries of peace before attempting to force further French concessions.

When the preliminaries of peace were presented to the German delegation on May 7 at Trianon Palace, the head of the German delegation, Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, replied protesting the assumption of German war guilt which he saw in Article 231. However, he pledged restoration of devastated areas, which he said could only be accomplished by a proper business arrangement. The German's worst fears had been confirmed. Commissioner General of the German delegation to the Peace Conference, Dr. Walter Simons, called the Treaty:

. . . in so far as the French have dictated it, a monument of pathological fear and pathological hatred. . . . Its shamelessness does not lie in treading down the brave opponent, but in the fact that from beginning to end all these humiliating conditions are made to look like a just punishment.²⁷

This was not the reaction Lloyd George had hoped for. He had desired a peace Germany would accept. The negative reaction of the German government led Lloyd George to begin a campaign to appease German grievances. The British prime minister did not believe that the preliminaries as they stood were a sacred text to remain untouched. The time had come to seek changes in the

27. Alma Luckau ed., The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), pp. 65-71, quotation on p. 71.

preliminaries which would turn the draft Treaty into the cornerstone of a peace which would conciliate Berlin. During the weeks between the May 7 meeting and the June 28 signature, the prime minister, with the support, and in some cases precipitated by the urgings of his government and Dominion colleagues, sought to make the Treaty acceptable to Germany.²⁸

During late May, leading members of the Cabinet expressed deep anxiety to Lloyd George over the possible consequences of Germany's negative reaction to the preliminaries of peace. Although each minister was primarily concerned with issues pertinent to his own area of expertise, they all expressed a willingness to weaken Anglo-French ties in the hope of conciliating Germany.

On May 20, Churchill wrote to the prime minister. In words which were designed to influence, and which clearly represented serious reflection and consideration

28. The final chapter of Harold I. Nelson's Land and Power, entitled "Appeasement or Statesmanship?", explores British and Allied policy between the presentation of the terms on May 7 and the signing of the Treaty on June 28. Nelson interprets the 52 day period as the first revelation of the Anglo-French-German difficulties which were to plague the entire inter-war period. Although certain British Foreign Office records, the Cabinet Papers and the Lloyd George Papers were not available to Professor Nelson, the Minutes of the British Empire delegation are in the Foster Papers, and the possibility of this interpretation emerges from a careful reading of the Minutes of the Council of Four, which have been available since 1946.

of the views of colleagues, the secretary of war called for reaching a settlement with the German government as quickly as possible. He did not doubt that the Allies could invade, but he believed that every step into German territory was a step into greater difficulty. He reminded the prime minister that British military strength was dwindling rapidly, not only because of demobilization itself, but also because of the impatience of men wishing only to go home. Churchill felt that the clamor from all classes demanding the end of rationing and rapid demobilization was a reflection of the national mood. Sending young conscripts into large areas of Germany to hold down a starving population would only lead to disaster, for British moral sentiment might soon recoil from such a situation. Churchill urged serious consideration of counter proposals which the Germans would put forth so that there would be a genuine German acceptance of the Treaty rather than new dangers resulting from its enforcement. The secretary of war wrote that, "I wish to place on record my opinion that the military forces at our disposal are not adequate in numbers, and still less in morale, for the prolonged execution of the kind of policy that is now coming into view." He concluded by stating that the British Empire stood in a strong position at that moment, and the maintenance of that position required peace, not the

following of "Latin ambitions and hatreds."²⁹

Only a few days later, Milner reported to Lloyd George his distress over Dominion views of the Guarantee to France. General Botha, Prime Minister of South Africa, interpreted the Guarantee to exclude the Dominions. This would mean that Great Britain could be at war while the Dominions remained neutral. Milner believed such a possibility was incompatible with the existence of the Empire as a political unit.³⁰ Serious reservations about Britain's future commitment to France had already emerged; convincing reasons to appease German desires had been stated.

Bonar Law considered the German counter proposals, which flooded the Peace Conference during May, well drawn but very difficult to answer because they completely rejected the preliminaries of peace. He hoped it would be possible privately to discover from the Germans what they considered to be absolutely essential. The Conservative leader believed that it was most difficult to justify the Allied position in giving Upper Silesia to the Poles. He wished the matter could be reconsidered since loss of Silesian coal would make it impossible for

29. Churchill to Lloyd George, May 20, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/8/3/55.

30. Milner to Lloyd George, May 28, 1919, ibid., F/39/1/23.

Germany to pay reparations and seriously injure her economic life. Bonar Law also believed that the demand for coal from Germany without Upper Silesia was not justified and demands for livestock were indefensible. He suggested they fix a reparations sum of £7,000 or £8,000 million, allow Germany to issue bonds for that amount, and then regard the whole matter as settled.³¹

The fact that the deep anxiety felt by men such as Bonar Law, Churchill, and Milner was shared by most men of influence in Great Britain and the Dominions became apparent during two June 1 meetings of the British Empire delegation. At this juncture, the British Empire delegation was really an expanded Imperial War Cabinet sitting in Paris. Included were the prime minister, Balfour, Milner, Chamberlain, Barnes, Hughes, Smuts, Churchill, Field Marshal Wilson, Lord Chancellor Birkenhead, the India Secretary, E. S. Montague, the First Sea Lord, Admiral G. P. W. Hope, the President of the

31. Bonar Law to Lloyd George, May 31, 1919, Bonar Law Papers, 101/3/93. Bonar Law never supported large reparations claims, and in 1918, while Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had set up a Treasury committee under Keynes to discuss Germany's capacity to pay. This committee decided that Germany could pay up to £3,000 million but £2,000 million was the prudent figure. Robert Blake, Unrepentant Tory: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law (New York: St. Martins Press, 1956), pp. 402-403. At the same time Lord Sumner argued that no concession be made to the Germans on the reparations question, "Memorandum on the German Objections to the Draft Treaty: Reparations," Sumner to Lloyd George, May 31, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/213/5/36.

Board of Education, H. A. L. Fisher, Sir G. Foster and C. J. Doherty, Canadian Ministers of Trade and Justice respectively, Sir Joseph Cook, Australian Secretary of the Navy, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, W. F. Massey, and South African Prime Minister Botha. Kerr and Hankey were also there.³² The individual opinions expressed by these men reveal a great deal about British policy at that time and give indications of how British policy would develop in the future, for all present were in positions of power then and some would remain influential for decades.

The prime minister began the morning meeting by summarizing the views which the experts of the British Empire delegation held on the various German counter proposals. He had two questions for each member of the delegation: was the delegation in favor of concession or retention of the draft treaty? If concessions were to be made, should they continue communicating with the Germans in writing or should verbal communication be arranged? In reply to the first question put by the prime minister, every man present was prepared to make concessions.³³

32. Minutes of Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, June 1, 1919, 11:00 A.M. and 5:30 P.M., Public Record Office, Peace Conference and Other International Conferences, CAB 29/28.

33. Minutes of a Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, June 1, 1919, 10:00 A.M., CAB 29/28.

Smuts was the first to express a developed viewpoint, calling the settlement in the west thoroughly bad. He believed occupation of a large and rich part of Upper Silesia to be indefensible, and considered an army of occupation unnecessary. Massey agreed that the Germans had made an excellent case for a change in the settlement of their borders in the east.³⁴

Churchill stated that they must face brutal facts which were involved in the use of force if Germany did not sign. He believed that the occupation of Germany would involve grave military and political difficulties, and emphasized the fact that blockade and occupation were mutually exclusive, for once they occupied, they had to supply their forces and feed the civilians. He felt they could not occupy without retaining conscription indefinitely, but the people did not want that. The secretary of war considered French hatred of the Germans something more than human, and believed this would lead to French occupation forces' provoking the Germans to aggression and then calling Great Britain to aid her in stopping it. Churchill also asked his colleagues to consider that if Great Britain proposed satisfactory terms to Germany, division with France would result. He did not think concession in Upper Silesia would upset the

34. Ibid.

French. Chamberlain expressed his agreement with Churchill's views of the dangers inherent in occupation. He was almost certain that the French would provoke the people with whom they dealt to the point of insurrection. The chancellor of the exchequer believed that they should meet German territorial demands inside Europe as far as possible; he wished to see the army of occupation a small one to be taken out of Germany as soon as German military strength decreased.³⁵

Chamberlain stated his belief that it would be impossible to get £11,000 million out of Germany. He urged a fixed sum, since with her debt remaining uncertain, Germany could get no credit and would therefore be unable to revitalize her industry. Lord Birkenhead, who also believed that Germany must be presented with a fixed sum, thought the Allies should make concessions on her eastern boundaries. Barnes wished to state in the strongest possible terms that Labor in Great Britain was not disposed to keep the German people as pawns of the Reparations Commission for thirty years. He urged a fixed sum. Montague felt that they had been unable to fix a sum because they could not decide what each of the Allies should receive, and were therefore opening the way to an occupation of Germany for thirty years combined

35. Ibid.

with Anglo-French conflict over reparations. He reminded his colleagues that because restoration had been given priority, Great Britain would get nothing at the outset. Lloyd George observed that the sums claimed by France and Belgium were so high as to be incredible, since Belgium claimed an amount greater than her national wealth in 1914, and France half her estimated total wealth for 1912.³⁶

Foster stated his opposition to the Saar provisions, which he felt would give France, " . . . abundant opportunities of creating trouble." He also supported changes in the eastern boundaries, stating that he had never heard a good reason to exclude Germany from the League of Nations. Lloyd George said he wanted an adjournment of the meeting to think over the points raised in the discussion.³⁷

When they assembled that afternoon, Balfour summarized his own views and the impressions he had gained from the morning discussion. He stated his belief that the delegation was united in wishing a revision of the German-Polish border, and voiced his own inclination to join with the critics of an army of occupation. The foreign secretary objected to the cost of maintaining the force, and shared the expressed belief of many of

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

his colleagues that France should not manage affairs in Germany. He too feared that France would provoke rebellion and then summon Britain to her assistance.³⁸

Lloyd George wished to summarize the practical suggestions which had grown out of the meeting. The Allies sought a just peace, but they must also consider expediency because the army of occupation was a question of expediency rather than justice. He believed the Allies had been wrong on the question of Germany's eastern frontiers. Montague asked if Lloyd George had suggested a plebiscite in the east to the Council of Four. The prime minister replied that he had not made the suggestion, but believed that there should be a plebiscite in Silesia. The prime minister said that the Saar provisions could not be defended on principle, but were a part of a compromise given to France in return for her not taking the left bank of the Rhine. He did not think Germany would refuse to sign because of the Saar settlement. The prime minister did not wish to alter the reparations settlement at that time, since Germany could have her debt reduced at a later date. However, he considered the Allies fully justified in their demand for reparations. He said they could not come

38. Minutes of a Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, June 1, 1919, 5:30 P.M., CAB 29/28.

up with a fixed sum, for both the capacity of Germany to pay and the extent of damages in devastated areas was impossible to assess so rapidly.³⁹

The prime minister shifted his remarks to the question of military occupation, which he had discussed with Field Marshal Wilson earlier. He did not see this question as a military matter, but a political one, for the French, who considered their true boundary the Rhine, wanted occupation for thirty to forty years--in a word, permanent. Lloyd George agreed that France would create trouble in occupied areas; he considered this a grave issue. He felt the French would give up nothing unless forced. Lloyd George agreed that their hatred of the Germans was savage, but after seeing the devastation he understood their feelings. Only the threat that no British troops would advance to Berlin, and no British ships would be used to starve the Germans, would force the French to make concessions. Lloyd George asked his colleagues if they were willing to support that attitude. Churchill replied that from all which had been said it appeared clear that they would. The prime minister did receive that support. He would tell the Council of Four that after a serious meeting the British Empire delegation decided that they might not be able to

39. Ibid.

enforce the Treaty as it stood. This would force Clemenceau to discuss matters. Botha gave the prime minister strong words of support, stating that he must take the lead for world peace. After additional discussion, it was decided that they should seek changes in Germany's eastern border, reduce both the numerical strength and duration of the occupation, modify reparations to help facilitate a fixed sum, and promise Germany entry into the League of Nations. The prime minister was to be allowed full latitude on these points, and he was authorized to refuse the use of British military and naval forces should his proposals be resisted.⁴⁰

The June 1 discussions of the British Empire delegation clearly revealed a united desire to conciliate Germany. All were prepared to make concessions to Germany by changing the draft Treaty to meet German territorial demands in Europe. Some had gone as far as to consider French exploitation of the Saar coal mines as undesirable. Despite the knowledge that, without Silesian industry, Poland had little potential for economic growth, the British Empire delegation unanimously

40. Ibid.; c.f. Nelson, pp. 333-338. Within the next few days, Smuts wrote to Lloyd George twice pleading with him to force changes in the Treaty which he believed, if left as it then stood, would cause a war of revenge. Smuts to Lloyd George, June 2, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/45/9/39; Smuts to Lloyd George, June 4, 1919, ibid., F/45/9/41.

considered German loss of the province as an injustice. Many considered an army of occupation unnecessary. Some even feared that an army of occupation would embroil Britain in future Franco-German disputes which they assumed would be provoked by French acts of vengeance rather than German recalcitrance. Most important, they unanimously opposed the use of British military forces to compel Germany to accept the present draft Treaty. They authorized the prime minister to threaten France with military isolation should she refuse to grant concessions to Germany. With the full support of the most influential men in the governments of the British Empire, Lloyd George returned to the Council of Four to present France with the alternative of either accepting the German counter proposals which Britain desired or facing British non-participation in Allied military action.

On June 2, Lloyd George spoke with Clemenceau and Wilson at his residence with Hankey and interpreter Paul Mantoux the only others present. The prime minister began by stating that it was his duty to explain the position of the British delegation, among whom there was a deep feeling of uneasiness about the German Treaty. The delegation unanimously opposed invasion of Germany or resumption of a complete blockade, including foodstuffs, unless certain defects in the Treaty were

rectified. Both Barnes, the only Labor member in the Cabinet, and Botha of South Africa had written him that they would not sign the Treaty. Lloyd George then began to explain specific changes desired. Using an ethnographic map of Poland, he asked for a plebiscite in Upper Silesia, and return to Germany of the German areas of Schneidmühl-Konitz, Guhrau, and Militsch, which had been given to Poland for strategic reasons. The prime minister also said that the northern part of Pomerania, which had been given to Poland to widen the corridor, should be returned to Germany.⁴¹

After a reference to reparations, which he said he wanted the experts to discuss further, Lloyd George began to speak about the army of occupation. The prime minister stated that there was no logical reason for a fifteen-year occupation of Germany, for Germany could not possibly be a threat in fifteen years. The cost of occupation would delay reparations. Experience had shown that an army of occupation could be nothing but a source of discord and friction. His colleagues were unanimous in opposing a fifteen year occupation, and British military authorities considered two years the utmost limit for keeping troops in the Rhineland. After

⁴¹. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 2, 1919, FRUS., Vol. VI, pp. 138-146.

Clemenceau replied, stating that France must keep troops on the Rhine, the prime minister said that he had clear instructions and wished to speak frankly. Lloyd George declared:

His colleagues believed that it would be a real danger to the peace of Europe to have a great French army on the Rhine. Occupation by a foreign power was always dangerous, but it was doubly so in the case of peoples who had hated one another for centuries. The result might be an incident which would necessitate Great Britain coming to the assistance of France. If M. Clemenceau and his Cabinet came to the conclusion that they could not meet the British Government on that point, he would have no alternative but to go home and place the whole matter before Parliament. He had to admit that he ought to have contested this point before. He had never much liked it, and neither did Mr. Balfour. But he had not realized the strength of the feeling of his colleagues about it. Although they had not put the matter quite so bluntly, the line they had taken up had been that France ought to have been given the alternative between the occupation of the Rhine and the guarantee of her territory. . . . He himself quite agreed in this. He believed British opinion on this was unanimous.

Clemenceau thanked Lloyd George for his blunt statement, and replied that he could not meet Lloyd George's view because of political pressure and public opinion in France.⁴²

Lloyd George, basing his arguments on the opinions of the British Empire delegation, had told Clemenceau

42. Ibid., quotation on p. 145, A. J. P. Taylor's The Trouble Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy: 1792-1939 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1957), discusses opposition to the Treaty terms in Britain, pp. 157-161.

that a French army on the Rhine was a threat to European peace. He had threatened Clemenceau with British withdrawal from the guarantee which he himself had proposed when the French plan for a buffer state was rejected. To force France to make concessions to Germany, the prime minister was using the greatest threat at his disposal: exploitation of French fear of being isolated in case of future German aggression. The concession he strove hardest for was granting Germany a favorable border with Poland.

On June 4, a committee was established by the Council of Four to amend the clauses of the draft treaty dealing with the German-Polish border. The committee was to study plans for the rectification of the German border to leave Guhran-Militsh, Konitz and Schneidmühl, and all of Pomerania to Germany, establish a plebiscite for territory to be transferred, and guarantee that the Germans could purchase coal on an equal basis with other nations if the territory was transferred after the plebiscite. They were also to modify the clauses of the Treaty as regards German property in Upper Silesia, and establish a procedure for the Polish government to indemnify German owners should Upper Silesia become Polish after the plebiscite.⁴³ In other

⁴³. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 4, 1919, FRUS., Vol. VI, p. 181; Appendix II to the Minutes of the Council of Four, June 4, 1919, 5:00 P.M., ibid., pp. 186-187.

words, all that Lloyd George had wanted changed at the June 2 meeting was about to be changed.

In the committee's deliberations and decisions, they followed Lloyd George's proposals during their meetings, June 6-9. The chairman, French General Henri LeRond, stated that the duty of the committee was to draw an ethnic border. LeRond began the second meeting by disagreeing with British committee member Headlam-Morley's proposal to prevent liquidation of German property in Poland without compensation to owners. There was no agreement. When LeRond tried to turn the discussion to the plebiscite, Headlam-Morley stated that he was not there to discuss whether there would be a plebiscite, but only the means of applying one. They could not agree on when the plebiscite should be held. Headlam-Morley reported this disagreement to Lloyd George, who reiterated his instructions that the committee should work out the details, leaving the decision to the Council of Four. On June 9, the committee agreed that Upper Silesia would be defined as the area assigned to Poland in the May 7 preliminaries. It would be stipulated that as soon as the Treaty went into affect, all German troops and natives of other regions would leave the area. The five Allied and Associated Powers were to establish a Commission which would hold a plebiscite within a year. The final

provision establishing the plebiscite stipulated that it would be held no sooner than six months, nor later than eighteen months, after the establishment of the International Commission.⁴⁴

Lloyd George had persuaded the Peace Conference to accept the views of the British Empire delegation on the German-Polish border and the status of Upper Silesia. With a victory over France on this question to his credit, the prime minister again met with the British Empire delegation to discuss further the draft treaty and seek their opinions about making a pledge not to obstruct German economic growth, which had been drafted to allay the intense fears the reparations and indemnities sections of the draft treaty had caused in Germany.

At the June 10 meeting of the British Empire delegation, Lloyd George reported the progress made on the changes they had suggested on June 1. The prime minister stated that the British view of the eastern frontiers of Germany had been accepted. He reiterated the premise that a fixed reparations sum was impossible. He

⁴⁴. Minutes of the Committee on the Eastern Frontiers of Germany, June 6, 1919, F. O. 608/126; Minutes of the Committee on the Eastern Frontiers of Germany, June 8, 1919, ibid.; Minutes of the Council of Four, June 9, 1919, 11:45 A.M., FRUS., Vol. VI, pp. 259-260; Minutes of the Committee on the Eastern Frontiers of Germany, June 9, 1919, F. O. 608/126; The Treaty of Versailles, Article 88, Annex 4, FRUS., Vol. XIII, pp. 217-218.

read a draft note to the delegation, written by Sumner and accepted by President Wilson, inviting the Germans to present their own suggestions for reparations, including proposing a fixed sum, and offering to undertake the work of reconstruction, or any total practicable plan within four months of signing the Treaty. He then read an additional passage from Sumner's draft,

The resumption of German industry involves access for German manufacturers to the necessary raw materials and provisions for their transport to German factories from overseas. The resumption of German industry is an interest of the Allied and Associated Powers, as well as an interest of Germany. They recognise this fact, and therefore declare that they will not withhold from Germany the commercial intercourse and assistance without which this resumption cannot take place . . . they are prepared to afford to Germany facilities in these directions for the common good.

Lloyd George considered this paper no more than an assumption by the Allies of a moral obligation not to prevent the reconstitution of German industry.⁴⁵

Lloyd George continued his report, stating that he believed the arrangements of the occupation would be satisfactory. Barnes reiterated his objection to a fifteen-year occupation. Lloyd George said he was pleased with the bargain struck with France limiting the cost of occupation, since a limitation on the cost in effect limits the number of troops. Barnes again expressed

45. Draft Minutes of a Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, June 10, 1919, CAB 29/28.

his feeling against the occupation.⁴⁶ Barnes could not inspire Lloyd George to reopen discussions of the occupation with the French, because the prime minister's threats had forced France into accepting many British objections to the draft treaty.

British objections to the draft treaty were similar to those of the Germans. Lloyd George strove to establish a German-Polish border as advantageous to Germany as possible during June because probable German resistance to the surrender of territory in the east had been known for some time.⁴⁷ Berlin considered Upper Silesia, the fixed sum, and admission to the League of Nations as the outstanding problems. The British government learned that the Germans would have signed in early May, but had begun to anticipate great concessions when they came to view England as the guide of the Conference.⁴⁸ The information that British generosity had

46. Ibid. Barnes also prepared a note explaining his views. He said that in December Foch had said he expected the occupation only to be necessary for one year. The only Labor member of the War Cabinet said that occupation of Germany was unnecessary since Germany was required to reduce her army and demolish fortifications. He considered French occupation of Germany a ridiculous thing for men who wanted peace because of the hatred between the two peoples. Period of Occupation of Germany, G. M. Barnes, June 10, 1919, F. O. 608/142.

47. Rumbold to Curzon, January 22, 1919, F. O. 371/3776.

48. Memorandum by Sir Ian Malcolm reporting a Conversation with M. Haguenin, June 10, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49750.

made Germany recalcitrant was not considered important enough to circulate to the government and bring to the prime minister's attention.

British desire to placate the Germans could only have been enhanced by the revelation of Allied weakness which emerged from a June 10 report on German troop strength. Balfour concluded that the Allies were militarily helpless east of the Rhine, and informed the prime minister of his assessment of the situation.⁴⁹ Total German troop strength was the key consideration in any decision to force Germany to sign, and this was more true for Britain than France, since the British had demobilized large numbers, and could only retreat from the promised schedule at great political risk.

During June, when the Council of Four was perplexed by the problem of what measures to take if Germany refused to sign, it was no accident that Lloyd George proposed renewal of the blockade in the event of a German refusal. When on June 13, Wilson expressed his opposition to the blockade because it starved women and children, and stated that he preferred military occupation, Lloyd George said he was apprehensive of the difficulties which would arise from a military occupation. The prime minister reasoned that

49. Memorandum by Balfour for Lloyd George, The Baltic Provinces, June 10, 1919, ibid.

. . . the mere noise of preparing a blockade would do more to make the Germans sign than a military occupation. There were important elements in the population such as the rich industries and wealthier classes of Berlin who would probably welcome an occupation as a means of ensuring order. The mere threat of a blockade, however would terrify the whole population.

Wilson remained opposed, even when Lloyd George made it clear that the Admiralty had to know if the blockade was to be resumed, the President remained adamant.⁵⁰

On June 16, Foch came before the Council to discuss military action in case of a German refusal to sign. Foch said that although the Allies would not be facing an organized military force, every adult male in Germany had military training, and was capable of fighting with extemporaneous organizations. Therefore, garrisons would be needed, as well as strategy to prevent a rising throughout Germany at the moment the Allied advance had been formulated. This strategy was based on a separatist policy of detaching the south of Germany from the rest of the nation. During the discussion, Foch continued to insist on a separatist policy. Lloyd George just sat there quietly. Finally, the Council decided that Foch should present his views in writing. The next day, Lloyd George insisted that if

50. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 13, 1919, FRUS., Vol. VI, pp. 370-374, quotation on p. 372.

military action was required, it have the sole object of taking Berlin in order to force the Germans to sign. Foch's note of June 17 contemplated an advance through the Main valley to separate northern and southern Germany.⁵¹

At a June 20 meeting, with military leaders of the principle Allied and Associated Powers present, it was agreed that a march on Berlin was impossible. Robertson and General Tasker A. Bliss had decided, and the French were forced to agree, that the Germans would be able to begin a new war after the passage of the Weser. The Allies did not have the men to fight an organized force while at the same time maintaining garrisons at all points west of the battle zone. In that case, said Balfour, some formula should be devised to seize the coalfields or some other objective. On June 23, the Allies took up the German request for a renewal of the Armistice. Because of Allied anger over the sinking of the German fleet at Scapa Flow, the request was denied.⁵² The Germans decided to sign.

When, on June 25, Clemenceau wished to punish the

51. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 16, 1919, ibid., pp. 501-509; Minutes of the Council of Four, June 17, 1919, ibid., pp. 523-524; Note from Marshal Foch, June 17, 1919, ibid., Appendix I, pp. 525-526.

52. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 20, 1919, ibid., pp. 543-550; Minutes of the Council of Four, June 23, 1919, ibid., pp. 613-616.

Germans for the Scapa Flow sinkings with the occupation of additional territory, explaining that this was the greatest in a series of incidents demonstrating German bad faith, Lloyd George refused. The prime minister stated that the interned ships had actually been under British care, and, therefore, any compensation must be related to the offense. Because the Treaty contained precise definitions of the areas to be occupied, Lloyd George considered that it would be an act of bad faith for the Allies to occupy any additional territory. After stating that the occupation of Essen, which the French suggested, could only be justified if Germany refused to sign, he reminded Clemenceau of basic trends in British opinion. He stated that this had been the country's first conflict with Germany, and the hatred now apparent was transitory. Already there was feeling against the Treaty in Great Britain. Lloyd George mentioned Lord Robert Cecil's opposition as a politically prominent example. This sentiment was pronounced among intellectuals, who saw not justice, but the trampling of a fallen foe in the Treaty's provisions.⁵³

Whether a German refusal to sign would have brought further concessions from Great Britain can be nothing more than conjecture since Germany signed the

⁵³. Minutes of the Council of Four, June 23, 1919, ibid., pp. 655-660.

Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. However, the fear of the political and military consequences of an occupation of Germany was so great in the minds of leading British government officials, that it is safe to say that they would have probably tried to force France into accepting greater changes in the Treaty before committing troops to an invasion that they did not want. The invasion would have been used to force Germany to sign a Treaty which all of the British delegation saw as an imperfect compromise, and which some elements in the community had already begun to oppose.

Lloyd George's discussions with Clemenceau and Wilson were honest and straightforward about the reservations in the minds of his colleagues and the British public. No greater portent for future Anglo-French discord, should the French insist on the letter of the Treaty, could have been given than the prime minister's words to Clemenceau when he spoke of reservations to the Treaty, and the doubts about the wisdom of French occupation of Germany which had already surfaced in Britain. His exposé of the views of the British Empire delegation cast great doubt as to whether Britain would ever fight for the Treaty of Versailles, and his reluctance to commit troops to force the Germans to sign was an accurate reflection of the view of his government. As seen from London, the Treaty of Versailles

was a compromise peace, a compromise between what the French would allow and what the Germans would accept.

Within the imperfect Treaty of Versailles rested the possibility of further alteration. The British government had acted to modify the Treaty in Germany's favor not only because they believed the draft treaty to be unjust, but also because they feared the consequences of using military force after having allowed their own army to become incapable of an invasion of Germany. Thus the events of June 1919 were the beginning of British appeasement of Germany.

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The fundamental aspects of British appeasement during the inter-war period existed when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. Among them were: British suspicion of French desires for security as aggressive designs; British willingness to grant Germany a strong role in central and eastern Europe; British repugnance over maintaining a high level of military expenditure; and British and Dominion opposition to continental entanglements. These fundamental aspects of British policy, which had evolved since 1918, were to develop fully during the early 1920's. British policy made the future viability of the Entente Cordiale doubtful. Anglo-French conflicts, from the Rhineland controversy to the disagreements of June 1919, rendered Anglo-French unity in enforcing the Treaty of Versailles questionable.

Lloyd George had tried to appease Germany working within the framework of the Entente Cordiale. However, he had attempted to alter the framework of the Entente by exploiting the French fear of isolation from Britain.

In pursuing the policy of appeasement, the prime minister and many of his colleagues had come to view France with a distorted perspective. Members of the British government spoke of France as the dominant power in Europe, all the while knowing that they could force France to compromise her vital interests because France feared the loss of the British alliance. This was both illogical and inconsistent. The British government feared that support of French policies to weaken Germany would lead them into another armed conflict once Germany was strong again. The days of the Entente as an alliance of two nations with consonant diplomatic and military objectives were numbered. The pre-war Entente was incompatible with British appeasement.

PART II

BRITISH APPEASEMENT AND THE COLLAPSE
OF THE ENTENTE CORDIALE

Between the signature of the Treaty of Versailles and the exchange of ratifications on January 10, 1920 the British government's commitment to appeasement grew. During the summer and fall of 1919, the government decided to reduce its military presence in Europe at the cost of allowing the army to become too weak to enforce the unexecuted Armistice provisions and the Treaty of Versailles. The British government took steps to rebuild a compatible relationship with Germany by repatriating German prisoners of war and preventing a war crimes trial.

By the late fall of 1919, the British government's previously expressed doubts about the wisdom of continuing the Entente had already become matters of policy. Britain refused to enter into a military alliance with France and Belgium, used American non-ratification of the Treaty of Guarantee to France as an excuse to escape her own pledge, and avoided economic involvement in French efforts to rebuild the devastated areas. The British government became filled with suspicion of French

ambitions, consistently failing to take into account the heavy toll which the war had taken of French economic and military potential.

After the Treaty of Versailles came into force, and normal relations among the powers were restored, the British government considered Germany sovereign within its own borders. London attempted to follow a policy of non-interference in German domestic affairs, coupled with concession where concession could strengthen the standing coalition of the center in the polarized world of German politics. Thus, when the German government wanted to maintain a larger army than the Treaty permitted because of the violent opposition of political extremists, the British considered the German position justified. The implications of a British policy allowing Germany to maintain a substantial land force could produce only fear in Paris.

The more steadfast Britain became in her desire to grant concessions to Germany, the more convinced France became that the security provided her in the military arrangements of the Treaty of Versailles had to be defended. Britain, on the other hand, was willing to allow extra German troops to enter the demilitarized zone to put down a revolt which it was believed threatened the survival of the Weimar Republic. Because of British policy, France was placed in a position where she could

either follow her ally to maintain the Entente, or act on her own accord to preserve her national security. After weeks of Anglo-French conflict and French government indecision, France chose the latter course, using military force to end a German violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland.

When France unilaterally applied military coercion to Germany, the Entente burst asunder. Although an effort was made to patch up the quarrel, a French army occupied five towns in western Germany while the British, who opposed their action came to believe that they had been deceived by the French government. This crisis, coming after Britain's rapid demobilization, Britain's failure to send the required numbers of troops to plebiscite areas, and the weakening of the British military presence in the Rhineland, marked the end of the Entente as a military alliance.

The Entente was not resurrected as an instrument of diplomacy, because the alliance had been altered beyond recognition. By the end of April, 1920, the Entente had become a device which France needed to prevent her isolation, but which Britain used to try to persuade France to accept the policy of appeasement. Britain exacted a high price from France to maintain the shadow of the Entente. The price was French concession to the British position of working to strengthen the Weimar

regime, and a repudiation by the French government of her right to resort to military force without British consent. Although it was doubtful that Britain would ever consent to military coercion, France was willing to accept this condition because a public British repudiation of French actions would have left France the only power committed to enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles.

CHAPTER IV

The Withering of the Entente Cordiale and the Establishment of a Basis of Appeasement: June 28, 1919 - January 10, 1920

During the months between the signature of the Treaty of Versailles and the exchange of ratifications on January 10, 1920, the basis for appeasement of Germany was firmly established. Previous areas of Anglo-French disagreement, such as the Rhineland and the Polish question remained, while new questions such as the repatriation of German prisoners of war and reparation for Scapa Flow emerged. British views and actions concerning these issues provide examples of a crucial misconception in British European policy: appeasement of Germany was necessary to Britain because France was emerging as a threat to the balance of power. In following this policy, Britain unilaterally repatriated German prisoners of war before the Treaty date, and reneged on her military obligations in plebiscite areas. She allowed demobilization of her forces to proceed

until appeasement of Germany became the only policy open to her. Thereafter, she feared renewal of her traditional commitment to Belgium and began to reconsider the Treaty of Guarantee to France, an obligation which many in the British government, and especially in the Dominions, had been reluctant to assume at the outset.

While reports of British military and civilian personnel in Germany urged appeasement, British policy at the Supreme Council in Paris, after Balfour's resignation, declined to one of drift. Balfour had the confidence of his government, spoke with the authority of a former prime minister and an elder statesman. At the Council of Ambassadors at Paris, he was replaced by a career diplomat, Sir Eyre Crowe, who had limited authority. In addition, Balfour had the confidence of Lloyd George. Curzon, his successor at the Foreign Office, enjoyed neither Lloyd George's full confidence nor a compatible personal relationship with him. In addition, the drift in British policy at the Peace Conference was due in part to the friction between the Foreign Office and the Paris Embassy. In December, the prime minister, seizing the initiative, forced France to make concessions, refused French requests for assistance, and made it clear that the wartime alliance no longer remained the cornerstone of British policy. As Britain sought to revitalize Germany and France sought

to weaken her, the Entente sank into a shadow of its former self.

The strength of British desire to conciliate the German government emerged after the Weimar Assembly ratified the Treaty of Versailles by a vote of 208 to 115 in early July. According to the conditions of peace, the blockade of Germany was to be officially lifted upon German ratification of the Treaty. On July 12 the announcement of the end of the blockade was made.¹

The formal raising of the blockade meant that Britain had abandoned her principal means of coercing Germany by reinstituting an effective blockade of foodstuffs and raw materials. Reports from Germany encouraged the hope that coercion was unnecessary. Lieutenant-General Neill Malcolm, head of the British Military Section in Berlin, reported after an interview with the German Minister of Defense, Gustav Noske, that he was confident of Noske's desire to carry out the peace terms. The German minister believed, however, that the amount of time given Germany to reduce her military strength was too brief, and Malcolm agreed with him. On July 6, Malcolm advised his government that Germany

1. Minutes of the Supreme Council, July 9, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy (hereafter cited as DBFP), First Series, Vol. I, E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler eds., (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1947), p. 47; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, July 15, 1919, ibid., p. 91.

could not cut her army down to 200,000 men within two months of ratification of the Treaty.² Despite the fact that the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control had been established to supervise the execution of the military terms of peace, within eight days of the signature of the Treaty the leading British military representative in Berlin, General Malcolm, had informed his government that the modification of the Treaty provisions for the reduction of the German army was desirable.

The retention of British forces in the Rhineland appeared to be necessary because of French ambition rather than because of German recalcitrance. On August 14, Balfour wrote to Curzon about British forces continuing to occupy the Cologne bridgehead. He considered that the French were anxious to secure a redistribution of armies which would give them the district because of its commercial importance. Such a French move would result in a loss of British prestige and influence, something which, "we cannot but contemplate with grave misgivings," because of the French policy of fostering unrest in occupied areas.³

British occupation of Cologne was the strategic

2. Report by General Malcolm, July 6, 1919, DBFP., Vol. VI, pp. 29-31.

3. Balfour to Curzon, August 14, 1919, ibid., Vol. V, p. 216.

key to blocking Rhenish Republican movements.

In the spring of 1919, reports from the Rhineland indicated that the natives would have liked some proposal for autonomy embodied in the Weimar Constitution, although complete separation would provoke a nationalist reaction. As to the viewpoint presented in this report, Balfour wrote, "The formation of a Rhenish state under Allied control, seems to me neither desirable nor practicable in present circumstances."⁴

French government policy fostered Rhineland separatism. On April 28, after the Rhineland compromise was already part of the draft treaty, the French President, Raymond Poincaré, wrote to Clemenceau urging him to continue the fight for the Rhine, which was the only true barrier against invasion. The president, a political foe of Clemenceau, criticized the Treaty for stipulating methods for control and demilitarization of the Rhineland, which he believed gave France an illusion of protection.⁵

When on Sunday, June 1, Herr Darten, a former magistrate devoid of political experience, proclaimed

4. The Formation of a Rhenish-Westphalian Republic, March 10, 1919, F. O. 608/136; Notes on Autonomous Rhenish-Westphalian State, March 24, 1919, with minutes by Balfour, ibid.

5. Poincaré to Clemenceau, April 28, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/51/1/20.

himself President of the Rhenish Republic, the French were not displeased. The French press generally saw this as a prelude to the end of German unity, which they believed to be the only hope of peace in Europe.⁶

It appeared that the French had laid the groundwork for the June 1 proclamation during May, when reports of French failure to comply with restrictions on trade in occupied territory first reached the Peace Conference.⁷ Finally, a report from the scene to the Peace delegation clearly indicated that Darten was placed in office by Frenchmen. The French occupation authorities had become involved in wholesale replacement of the German administration in the area.⁸ On June 27, the matter was taken up at Paris, and France was informed by the Council of Four that she acted unilaterally without the approval of Allied governments.⁹ The French, however, had not abandoned their support of Rhenish separatism

6. Grahame to Curzon, June 3, 1919, F. O. 371/3777.

7. Vernon to Turwick, May 31, 1919, Public Record Office, Peace Conference of 1919-1920; British Delegation Archives; Supreme Economic Council; Sir P. Waterlow's Private Papers, F. O. 608/280.

8. Saunders to Headlam-Morley, June 16, 1919, F. O. 608/136.

9. Balfour to Curzon, June 27, 1919, F. O. 608/143.

despite British disapproval in June.

The British chose to ignore all indications of local separatist sympathies and regarded the whole matter as a French plot. Germans who advocated separatism had been greeted with enthusiasm by their fellow citizens in the British zone. On August 5, the Army of the Rhine reported that about 60% of the people in the British zone were in favor of the movement. Military intelligence indicated that this popular expression was wholly indigenous. Among the major German political parties, only the Majority Socialists, who had close ties to Berlin, opposed the scheme. But by the end of August, reports endorsed by Sir Harold Stuart, British delegate to the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, indicated that the French were behind the movement. Although Stuart advised the British government to adapt an attitude of benevolent neutrality, the newly established Rhineland department of the Foreign Office, headed by S. Waterlow, believed that benevolent neutrality amounted to sanctioning French interference in German internal affairs.¹⁰

The fact that the Rhenish Republican movement was feared as a French move to establish economic unity

10. Prospects of a Rhenish Republic, July 21, 1919, F. O. 608/136; Twiss to Headlam-Morley, August 5, 1919, ibid; Harold Stuart to Undersecretary, August 28, 1919, with minutes, F. O. 371/3777.

between France and the occupied zone, which at that time was governed by a separate trade convention, emerged in a bitter dispute between France and Britain concerning the illegal passage of goods into occupied Germany. After a member of the French Chamber of Deputies, Emmanuel Drousse, accused British authorities of illegal trade practices, Waterlow prepared a memorandum describing how French military authorities had permitted and aided French trade in an attempt to link the economic life of the Rhineland to French industry.¹¹

Although trade considerations were sometimes critical to the British government, the view of French Rhineland activities as a threat to the balance of power underlined British resistance to Rhenish separatism. The British government failed to realize that German devastation in France and Belgium had destroyed the economic balance of power in Europe, thereby giving Germany a potentially greater economic role than she had enjoyed prior to 1914.

The French also encouraged British distrust by opposing British efforts to diminish the hatred caused by the war. The British advocated the rapid repatriation of German prisoners of war, and the limitation of the

11. Waterlow to Curzon, July 16, 1919, F. O. 608/280; Stuart to Waterlow, July 15, 1919, ibid; Memorandum by Waterlow, July 24, 1919, ibid.

numbers of Germans to be tried by the Allies for violations of the laws of war, on the grounds of expediency and because of the Allied need to win German public opinion to acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles.

On July 31, the War Office informed the Foreign Office that more than 5,000 British troops were employed guarding prisoners of war, and requested a decision on repatriation as early as possible. Crowe noted Balfour's decision that, failing an arrangement with the French, the British government should unilaterally proceed with preparations for repatriation. Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Morgan informed Crowe that there were in fact 50,000 troops guarding German prisoners. Morgan also pointed out that the preparatory steps toward repatriation would involve the superseding of the Inter-Allied Commission on Prisoners of War unless the French government could be persuaded to do the same.¹²

On August 17, Balfour informed Churchill that the French intended to keep the German prisoners by refusing to make the necessary preparations to transport them back to Germany. Therefore, any British action to repatriate the German prisoners before the Treaty went

12. British Troops Employed Guarding German Prisoners of War, War Office to Foreign Office, July 31, 1919, minutes by Crowe of same date, F. O. 608/136; Morgan to Crowe, August 8, 1919, ibid.

into effect would have to be taken without the consent of the Allies. The secretary of war replied on October 23, stating that the British Army of the Rhine was being reduced, "in fact almost abolished," and the trains bringing the British troops to Calais and Bolougne should be filled with some of the almost 200,000 German prisoners on the grounds of administrative expediency alone. Churchill then explained why he believed that Britain should remain in Cologne and not allow her troop strength to drop below 10,000 men. A British presence must be maintained for, "The intrigue of French policy is to secure all the positions of influence on the Rhine and to keep England and America in the background as draught animals to be whipped and put into the collar when required."¹³

At the August 23 meeting of the Supreme Council, Balfour informed Clemenceau that the German prisoners of war were to be repatriated upon ratification of the Treaty. He began to criticize France and Italy for their failure to ratify the Treaty as rapidly as Great Britain had. Clemenceau replied that France needed the 350,000 prisoners of war in her hands as laborers in devastated areas. However, the British government already had

13. Balfour to Churchill, August 17, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49694; Churchill to Balfour, August 23, 1919, ibid.

decided on unilateral action.¹⁴

On August 23 the War Office ordered repatriation of German prisoners of war to begin on August 25 at the rate of 2,000 per day using the same trains which transported homeward bound British troops from the Rhineland to Calais. The rate was to be increased by the utilization of sea transport and additional rolling stock as soon as arrangements could be made.¹⁵

Clemenceau's anger at this unilateral action emerged on August 27 when he informed the Supreme Council that British action had deprived the Allies of the only hold they possessed over Germany. Balfour simply evaded the issue, stating that the Treaty would be ratified shortly and it was therefore wise to begin this slow process at once. On August 28, Clemenceau, faced with British refusal to alter their decision, accepted Balfour's draft declaration regarding repatriation of German prisoners of war. This short document stated that

14. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 23, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 491-493.

15. War Office to Astoria, Headquarters of the Army of the Rhine, repeated to Berlin, August 23, 1919, F. O. 608/136. Both the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Guarantee (Defense of France Bill) were passed by the House of Commons after July 21, 1919 debate early in the morning of July 22. During a short debate on the Defense of France Bill, which took place between 2:25 and 3:40 A.M., speakers expressed opposition to the Bill as creating a Triple Alliance within the League of Nations and therefore not in the spirit of peace. Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons, Fifth Series, Vol. 118, cols. 951-1128.

the Allies intended to begin repatriation immediately in order to diminish sufferings resulting from the war as rapidly as possible. It concluded with the statement that Allied benevolence depended on German fulfillment of obligations. In a despatch to Curzon, repeated to the prime minister and Churchill, the British delegation in Paris reported that Clemenceau had conceded to the British view with the stipulation that the declaration be made as a decision of the Allies which depended on the goodwill of the German government. The despatch concluded with the hope that, " . . . every effort will be made to meet M. Clemenceau on points of form, as he has given way on principle."¹⁶

The Anglo-French conflict over German prisoners of war was not ended. On September 1, Balfour accused the French of using the Inter-Allied Commission as a device for placing every possible obstruction in the way of repatriation. Clemenceau would not pledge to expedite the transport of German prisoners of war. He refused to repatriate civilian German prisoners held by

16. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 27, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 555-556; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 28, 1919, ibid., pp. 561-562; Balfour's draft with regard to Repatriation of German Prisoners of War, August 28, 1919, ibid., Telegram to Curzon, repeat to Prime Minister and Secretary of War, Unsigned, August, 1919, F. O. 608/136. From the wording of this telegram, one can almost be certain that this despatch was dictated by Balfour after the August 28 session of the Heads of Delegations.

the French government.¹⁷

The question of repatriation of prisoners of war and the German surrender of those accused of violations of the laws of war were intimately related in both British and French minds. However, the views of the two nations were diametrically opposed. The British saw the retention of prisoners and the demand for surrender of German leaders for a war-crimes trial as a perpetuation of wartime passions, and, therefore, a detriment to the spirit of conciliation. The French, on the other hand, wished to utilize a war crimes trial as a method of bringing defeat home to the German people. However, the demand to surrender German nationals to be tried by foreign courts was seen by the British as a stumbling block to appeasement.

Berlin contended that the surrender of German officers for trial in foreign courts could result in the fall of the German government and its replacement by either a communist or militarist regime. General Malcolm's opinion of the accuracy of this viewpoint was sought on August 2. Malcolm informed Balfour that he had spoken with General Walther von Luttwitz, a man whom he considered to be honest. Luttwitz had said that

17. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, September 1, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 591-592.

the army had decided not to hand over the Kaiser and other leaders for trial, and had further decided to oppose the government if it should decide to do so. Malcolm commented that the Allies must show that they sought no revenge. After meeting with Malcolm, Balfour informed Curzon that the Allies could not demand the surrender of leading figures such as Ludendorff and Hindenburg because the German government would lose the support of the army. Germany would then be prey to chaos. Following Malcolm's suggestion, Balfour stated that a persuasive case must be made against any individual being tried because Germany would never acquiesce in the trial of leading soldiers simply because they were good soldiers. On August 20, Lloyd George informed Balfour that he and the Cabinet committee which had studied the issue concluded that only a small number of men who had individually committed atrocities should be tried.¹⁸

The British government considered the views of the German Army as a force in formulating policy less than one year after the end of a war in which 3/4 of a million men were killed in order to defeat German militarism. The continued existence of a politically powerful German military establishment, capable of

18. Crowe to Malcolm, August 2, 1919, F. O. 608/146; Malcolm to Balfour, August 5, 1919, ibid.; Balfour to Curzon, Marked Following for Prime Minister, August 12, 1919, ibid.; Lloyd George to Balfour, August 20, 1919, ibid.

bringing down the Berlin government even during the period of Germany's greatest military weakness, was not seen in London as a threat to peace. Instead, a war-crimes trial which would embitter the German Army was seen as a threat to appeasement.

The policy of appeasement developed, it has been demonstrated, through actions such as the consideration of German proposals during the Peace Conference, opposition to French Rhineland ambitions, early repatriation of German prisoners of war, the expressed desire to strengthen German democracy, and in the most meaningful way of all--the weakening of the British military presence in Europe.

The British government was aware of the implications of military weakness. Having represented Britain on the Supreme Council for a month after the signature of the Treaty, Balfour recorded his reflections on the events of the previous eight months. He thought that it was obvious to anyone who had followed recent Allied diplomacy that it was hampered by military weakness, because since the end of the war the powers had been in a race to see which could demobilize the fastest. He added that he had no desire to justify rapid demobilization for, "it has the best of all justifications - it is inevitable," but the Allies must face its consequences. The only weapon left to Britain was the threat of

deprivation of the peoples of Europe through the failure to send supplies and the resumption of the blockade, means of coercion which were far inferior to military force. Balfour expressed what he considered to be the greatest consequence of demobilization, "Even the threat of action is denied us; for so notorious is our impotence that we cannot afford to bluff."¹⁹

In August 1919, Balfour again recorded his view of the military situation in Europe. The British Army of the Rhine was rapidly being reduced to not more than one brigade of infantry and a regiment of cavalry equipped with only light arms. Field Marshal Wilson had told Balfour that no troops could be spared from the Army of the Rhine for the plebiscite areas, and, therefore, the British government would be obliged to inform the Supreme Council that they could not supply forces in plebiscite areas. Balfour concluded, "My contention therefore that diplomacy is hampered by lack of physical force not only holds good, but we are even in the position of not being able to fulfill our moral obligations under the treaties we have made and are making."²⁰

19. Armies and Economics: Being Reflections on Some Aspects of the Allied Situation, Balfour, July 27, 1919, CAB 24/85, G. T. 7846; see also Balfour MSS, 47950.

20. Memorandum on the Military Situation, August, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49751.

In his astute assessment of the military situation, Balfour realized what no other British statesman had come to understand. In less than one year, the policy of appeasement had placed Britain in a position where she did not have the military strength to abandon it without fear of the consequences.

There were reasons for concern over the reduction of British troop strength. On August 1, Clemenceau informed the Supreme Council that Germany had 800,000 men under arms and that the students of Munich were arming. In addition, the government of Germany tolerated reactionary groups such as the "National League of German Officers," which were already talking about a war of revenge.²¹ Yet, events showed that this sort of information could not have been taken very seriously in London. On August 12, Churchill told the House of Commons that the British government had arranged with the French to cut the Rhine force down to the dimensions of a strong brigade by October 31.²²

A statement on British military policy was in the guidelines for the War Office approved by the

21. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 1, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 273-274; Telegram from French Military Observers, ibid., Appendix B, pp. 284-286.

22. Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons: Fifth Series, Vol. 119, col. 1182.

Cabinet on August 15. The War Office was to work on the assumption that the British Empire would not be involved in a great war for at least ten years, and, therefore, no expeditionary force was required. There was to be a freeze on new naval construction and an effort was to be made to stop construction of vessels which had no value for mercantile purposes. The principal function of the army and air force was to provide garrisons for India, Egypt, the new mandates, and for all other non-self governing parts of the Empire. Although a greater force was needed in Ireland at that time, it was to be cut within one year, and the maximum figures of expenditure were to be £60 million for the navy and £75 million for the army and air forces.²³

Throughout the fall of 1919, reports of German military strength which flowed into London were greeted with indifference. As of November, the Germans admitted to having 400,000 men in their regular army, yet the British representative in Berlin saw no cause for alarm because, it was argued, the German government needed an army to preserve domestic peace. German forces remained in the Baltic States during the fall of 1919, often in unauthorized formations, but with the knowledge of the German government. Their presence was a violation

23. Draft Conclusions of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, August 15, 1919, CAB 23/15, W. C. 616A.

of the Armistice terms, yet foreign secretary Curzon's study of the situation argued that only the Poles could be employed to fight them, and this was unacceptable because of the need to mitigate German-Polish hostility. He concluded that the British government must continue to hope that the moderate parties of Germany would gain complete ascendancy internally and make it impossible for the militarist reactionaries to defy the government. On November 27, Malcolm reported from Berlin that rumors of a large German army were childish fears. The Political Intelligence Department of the Foreign Office concluded that the armed police formations, some of which were housed in barracks, existed solely for the purpose of maintaining internal order. The total strength of the British army at this time, including forces scattered throughout the Empire, was 509,800 men as of November 15, 1919.²⁴ At this time the German government admitted to having 400,000 men in their regular army alone!

24. Memorandum on the German Government and its Military Forces in the Interior, November 4, 1919, CAB 24/92, C. P. 84; Memorandum on the Baltic States and Germany, by Curzon, November 15, 1919, CAB 24/94, C. P. 209; Report by General Malcolm, November 27, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 426-428; Foreign Office Memorandum on reports of royalist schemes and secret military preparations in Germany; the so-called Special Police Forces, December 2, 1919, ibid., pp. 457-465; see also CAB 24/94, C. P. 262; Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War on the Strength of the British Army, December 11, 1919, CAB 24/94, C. P. 282.

Appeasement of Germany based on generosity was evolving into appeasement based on the inability to determine the course of events without assuming unacceptable risks. British desire to placate Germany had been born at a time when Britain had a strong army in Europe. However, rapid demobilization during 1919 caused Britain to revert to her traditional role of a sea power incapable of quickly and effectively using her military might to coerce a nation with a large land force. By demobilizing while Germany retained a large army, the British government had placed itself in a position where they could come to fear German refusal to comply with Allied demands.

By the late fall of 1919, the process of British military disengagement on the continent had progressed to the point where it had become irreversible. Yet the Treaty of Versailles committed Britain to involvement in plebiscite areas, while western European stabilization required continued cooperation with France and Belgium. British response to the need for troops in Upper Silesia, and the possibility of a new treaty guaranteeing Belgian neutrality, showed the desire to evade military commitments where required by Treaty and a refusal to assume any fresh undertakings.

Upper Silesia remained an area of tension and violence, in danger of exploding into a war between

Germany and Poland. The passion and hostility involved was inherent in the situation, for the Poles, oppressed for centuries, marked the rebirth of their nation with a militant chauvanism, while the Prussians considered both the plebiscite areas and the areas ceded to Poland as part of their ancestral lands. The Allies collectively shouldered the responsibility for keeping the peace. Yet France worked in the interests of Poland, whereas Britain, under the guise of neutrality, hoped to see Upper Silesia remain German.

On August 8, the Supreme Council began to discuss the need for an army of occupation in Upper Silesia and Danzig. Balfour stated that it would be easier for Britain to send a larger force to Danzig, which was on the coast, and maintain only a token force in Upper Silesia. On August 20, when the Supreme Council was faced with a plea from the Polish government to send troops to protect the Poles from intimidation by the Germans, Balfour suggested a reply reminding the Poles that Germany had the right to maintain order until the Inter-Allied Commission took charge after exchange of ratifications. The British feared that the French suggestion to let the Silesia provisions go into effect before the ratification of the Treaty would force a major military campaign, for the German government did not have the power to prevent their own army from acting.

On September 5, Clemenceau raised the question of sending troops to Silesia, citing a report that German soldiers and Freikorps were terrorizing the population of the area, but Balfour stated that nothing could be done until the Treaty was ratified.²⁵

In early October, Clemenceau strongly urged support of the Polish army, which he considered to be an effective instrument to aid the Allies in enforcing the Treaty. On October 16, the Cabinet discussed the request of the newly appointed head of the British delegation in Paris, Sir Eyre Crowe, for a statement of policy which he could present to Clemenceau. The Cabinet decided that the responsibility to help Poland rested with the Allies generally, "and only to a very minor degree with Great Britain." They were ready to examine the question and help the Poles, provided that France and the United States did their share. The French and Poles were also to be informed that only non-marketable munitions would be given to Poland free of charge, and that the British government would not assume

25. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 8, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 375-380; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, August 20, 1919, ibid., pp. 450-451; Dupont to Nudant, August 26, 1919, with minutes, F. O. 608/140; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, September 5, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, p. 633; Dupont to Clemenceau, September 1, 1919, ibid., p. 614.

responsibility for the transport of stores.²⁶

On January 20, 1920, ten days after the exchange of ratifications of the Treaty of Versailles, Foch stated that ten British battalions destined for plebiscite areas were missing. He was especially concerned with the absence of British troops in Danzig, for the British government had assumed primary responsibility for Danzig. When Lloyd George promised two battalions, Foch angrily stated that the Allies must enforce the Treaty or admit that they could not. The Marshal declared, "Yesterday Great Britain withdrew nearly all of her contribution in troops to the whole task of occupation; to-day she gives us two battalions, making three in all, and then tells us to do the best we can." Lloyd George neither argued nor conceded, but simply said that certain plebiscite areas, such as Allenstein and Marienwerder need not be occupied according to the Treaty.²⁷

Lloyd George's verbal support of German objections to the proposed changes in her eastern frontiers, and

26. Delegation in Paris to Foreign Office, October 3, 1919, Delegation in Paris to Foreign Office, October 2, 1919, marked circulated to the King and War Cabinet, CAB 24/89, C. P. number illegible; Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, October 16, 1919, CAB 23/12, W. C. 631.

27. Notes of a Meeting held in M. Pichon's Room, Quai D'Orsay, January 20, 1920, DBFP, First Series, Vol. II, pp. 938-949, quotation on p. 948.

the uneasiness within the British government over the creation of a German irredentia in Poland which emerged during the Paris negotiations, had been translated into action. Great Britain was not to fulfill her obligations in enforcing the eastern frontier provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and would come into conflict with France in the future because of French efforts at enforcement.

Every discussion of British appeasement placed emphasis on eastern European policy. Even in this early period London had accepted Germany as the greatest power in that part of Europe. However, the first steps toward the acceptance of a revitalized Germany playing a powerful western European role also emerge at this time, both out of the conscious effort to avoid European commitments, and out of the growing fear of French dominance. During the fall of 1919, Britain did not consider a strong guarantee of Belgium as an essential element of her own security, but rather as an undesirable commitment, a device through which France could extend her influence and prestige.

On September 22, 1919, the British government learned that the French desired an alliance with Belgium which would operate in case of an unprovoked attack on the latter. British diplomats felt that the French did not desire to provide security for Belgium. They

viewed this arrangement as part of a series of alliances which would enable France to have greater security than that provided by the Treaty of Versailles. Believing that France was the greatest power in Europe, while Germany, defeated and stripped of valuable territory, was a shadow of her former self, it was concluded that an alliance between France and Belgium could only enhance French power.²⁸

By November, the question of such an alliance had progressed from a subject of discussion to a serious possibility. Curzon suggested that the British government should, together with France, undertake to guarantee the integrity of Belgium until such time as the League of Nations had provided fresh guarantees, but in no case for a period of longer than five years. It was the foreign secretary's opinion that a short-term guarantee was acceptable since it involved no dangerous undertakings. When the members of the Cabinet met to discuss this question on November 18, it emerged that Curzon's suggestion of a guarantee involving no military commitment unless Germany began a war within five years was further than his colleagues were willing to go. Curzon then proposed a three to five year guarantee, but the Cabinet members disapproved because they considered it unwise

28. Grahame to Curzon, September 22, 1919, ibid., Vol. V, pp. 264-267.

to enter into any arrangement while the fate of the Tripartite Guarantee of France was in doubt because of American non-ratification. They concluded that the whole question of the guarantee of France might have to be reconsidered, and that this would further complicate any reassessment which might become necessary.²⁹

On the same day of the Cabinet conference, Curzon informed Crowe of the views of the Cabinet, and instructed him to postpone the question at Paris. The foreign secretary expressed his own opinion that future acceptance of the proposed guarantee to Belgium was unlikely. On November 19, Curzon asked Sir Edward Grey in Washington his opinion of the probable fate of the guarantee in the American Congress. Grey replied that passage was almost impossible. On November 25, Curzon met with French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, and informed him that Britain would not enter into a guarantee of Belgium.³⁰

The question of the Belgian guarantee clearly indicated a strong desire for disengagement. It suggested

29. Memorandum for the Cabinet by Curzon, November 10, 1919, CAB 24/93, C. P. 119; Conclusions of a Conference held at #10 Downing Street, November 18, 1919, CAB 23/18, Cabinet 9.

30. Curzon to Crowe, November 18, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. V, pp. 799-800; Curzon to Grey, November 19, 1919, ibid., p. 823; Grey to Curzon, November 23, 1919, ibid., pp. 851-852; Curzon to Derby, November 25, 1919, ibid., p. 856; c.f. Gilbert, pp. 68-69.

an absence of any fear of German aggression in the west. However, there was an underlying premise in the Belgian guarantee controversy. It was the same mistaken premise which had shaped British policy in the Rhineland since the Armistice: the fear of French hegemony because of German weakness, the Rhineland occupation, and growing French influence in the Low Countries. Doubts concerning the wisdom of the Treaty of Guarantee to France had surfaced at the meetings of the British Empire delegation during June 1919, but as France appeared more and more dominant, the Treaty of Guarantee began to appear as a device to tie Britain to French ambitions. The Entente was disintegrating, for it was becoming an alliance between two countries mutually suspicious of one another. The crisis over ratification, which developed in the late fall of 1919 because of American failure to ratify the Treaty, led to a period of conflict between Britain and France which was more serious than the conflict they had experienced during the previous June.

Prior to the exchange of ratifications, the Allied and Associated Powers insisted that Germany sign a special protocol recognizing her obligation to carry out Armistice terms hitherto unfulfilled. On November 1, the Supreme Council approved a note to the German government which informed them that the Treaty would not come

into force until German obligations under the Armistice convention and other agreements had been carried out. In order to avoid further delay in the Treaty going into effect, the Allies requested that the German government authorize their representative to sign the Protocol on the occasion of the exchange of ratifications. The Protocol, which was enclosed with the note to the German government, listed German obligations to deliver rolling stock to the Allies, to deliver documents concerning private property held by Germans in invaded territories, to return works of art to France and Belgium, to evacuate all Russian territory and the Baltic States, to deliver all submarines to the Allies, and to place the German merchant fleet at Allied disposal. A second section of the Protocol dealt with reparation for the sinking of the German fleet at Scapa Flow.³¹

31. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, November 1, 1919, 10:00 A.M., DBEP., First Series, Vol. II, pp. 131-137; Note to the German Government, November 1, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 143-144; Protocol, *ibid.*, pp. 144-146. The best work on the sinking of the German fleet at Scapa Flow is the concluding section of the last volume of Arthur J. Marder's From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919, Vol. V (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 270-296. Under the Armistice, the German high seas fleet was to be interned under British supervision. Interned were 11 battleships, 5 battle cruisers, 8 light cruisers, and 50 destroyers. By June 1919, the total number of men on the ships was 1,800, living in idleness, for although they were not prisoners of war they were forbidden shore leave. They expected to be seized as prisoners when the Armistice expired on June 23. The Armistice did not expire, but Admiral von Reuter, who probably had the

During the remainder of November, the Supreme Council continued to discuss reparation for Scapa Flow, problems resulting from German failure to withdraw her troops in the east, and general lack of compliance with the Armistice terms. French impatience over delay in the exchange of ratifications grew in part because of the French need for coal deliveries which were set down in the Treaty. However, their proposal to apply pressure by denying Germany credit for the purchase of foodstuffs fell on deaf ears.³²

Although one can attribute a portion of this delay to America's failure to ratify the Treaty, Anglo-French relations continued to deteriorate as France became aware of future British disengagement in Europe,

sinking in mind as early as January, gave the order in the morning of June 21. The British were about eight miles away, and although 10 Germans were killed and 16 wounded in the British attempt to save some of the ships, by the late afternoon of June 21 the German fleet had sunk to the bottom of the sea. French reaction was hostile. All Frenchmen criticized the lack of security, and some in Paris believed that the British knew about it in advance and had done nothing to prevent it. Marder believed the action was von Reuter's and not taken on orders from the German government. The British, who believed this at the time, resisted French suggestions to occupy additional German territory or cripple German harbors through the seizure of equipment as reparation to punish the Germans for Scapa Flow.

32. Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, November 1, 1919, 3:00 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. II, pp. 154-155; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, November 20, 1919, ibid., pp. 362-363; Minutes of the Heads of Delegations, November 28, 1919, ibid., pp. 406-408.

specifically the fate of the Treaty of Guarantee, which had been established as the cornerstone of French security at the Peace Conference in April of 1919.³³

Another source of delay and bitterness at Paris can be found in the effect of personality conflicts on the British government's conduct of foreign relations at this time. The personal relationships among those who formulated British policy were cursed by petty jealousies and lack of confidence. As soon as Balfour's impending resignation, and the fact that career diplomat Sir Eyre Crowe was to replace him in Paris, became known, Derby, the ambassador to France, expressed his agitation over the announcement that Crowe would receive ambassadorial rank. After failing to convince Derby that this would be no slight to him, Curzon was forced to yield to Derby's feelings to prevent his resignation. The relationship between the foreign secretary and the ambassador in Paris was poor on the personal level. In a letter to Bonar Law, Derby, apologizing for leaving a gathering, wrote that he left because he could no longer listen to Curzon speak and did not wish an altercation. The letter concluded, "He is one of the

33. An example of French feeling at this time can be found in a letter from Derby to Curzon, in which Derby complains of the bitterness of the attacks on Britain in the French press, and suggests that the French government viewed them with complacency. Derby to Curzon, November 27, 1919, ibid., Vol. V, pp. 864-865.

meanest men I know. He was a tenant of mine at one time and I have good reason for knowing it."³⁴ In addition to these rivalries and animosities, Lloyd George's attitudes served to augment hostility within the government.

Lloyd George lacked confidence in his foreign secretary, his ambassador to France, and especially Crowe. When Crowe reported on December 1, 1919, that Foch believed the Allies were still strong enough to force their will on a recalcitrant Germany, Curzon, in a reply marked urgent, said that Lloyd George was becoming alarmed at the uncompromising and exasperating attitude of the French. However, Curzon had no instructions from the prime minister to guide Crowe in dealing with the French on so critical a question.³⁵ This was not surprising for in response to a note from Curzon praising Crowe's actions in Paris and stating that Derby shared his viewpoint, Lloyd George replied that the situation in Paris had been pushed to a crisis by Crowe's blunders.³⁶

34. Balfour to Curzon, September 20, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49734; Curzon to Derby, September 21, 1919, ibid.; Cambell to Crowe, September 26, 1919, Crowe Papers, F. O. 800/243; Derby to Bonar Law, March 5, 1917, Bonar Law Papers, 81/4/4.

35. Crowe to Curzon, December 1, 1919, F. O. 608/147; Curzon to Crowe, December 4, 1919, F. O. 800/153.

36. Curzon to Lloyd George, December 9, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/2/10; Lloyd George to Curzon, December 10, 1919, ibid., F/12/2/11.

In Lloyd George's reply to Curzon's note, he declared that he considered Curzon's and Derby's assessment of the performance of one of their own subordinates as invalid. At the height of the crisis with France, Lloyd George sent Philip Kerr to Paris. Before Kerr left for Paris, the Cabinet met to decide what policy he should present to Clemenceau.

On December 6, members of the Cabinet conferred. Curzon explained that the Germans were attempting to use United States withdrawal from the Supreme Council as an excuse to invalidate aspects of the Treaty, and had refused to sign the November 1 Protocol on unfulfilled Armistice conditions and reparation for Scapa Flow. The Cabinet decided that the impasse with Germany could be bridged by yielding to Germany on the following: acceptance of an American suggestion to insist on compensation for Scapa Flow in principle but leave the specific terms to the Reparations Commission, and informing the French that Britain was opposed to the threat of military action included in the Protocol. This decision was based on the belief that the German government honestly wished to carry out the Treaty. It was reinforced by the opinion of Field Marshal Wilson that Allied forces were inadequate to carry out military action.³⁷

37. Draft Conclusions of a Conference held at #10 Downing Street, December 6, 1919, CAB 23/18, Cabinet 12 (19), Appendix VI.

Lloyd George sent Kerr to Paris at this time, and on the evening of December 7, after a meeting with Kerr and Crowe, Clemenceau conceded to the omission of the second sentence of the conclusion of the Protocol. The deleted sentence had read,

In case Germany should not fulfill these obligations within the time above specified, the Allied and Associated Powers reserve the right to have recourse to any coercive measures, military or other, which they may deem appropriate.

At that meeting, Clemenceau also agreed that Armistice conditions, including the right to resort to military force, would end when the Treaty of Versailles comes into force. Since the head of the American delegation, F. L. Polk, was to return to the United States in two days, the revised note to the Germans was despatched the next day.³⁸

British pressure had once again forced France to concede to German wishes on all essentials. The British had insisted that the Allies abandon their right to resort to military force in spite of Germany's continued failure to execute all Armistice provisions. The French government was left with little choice, for Frenchmen knew that France alone could not long impose her will on Germany. Yet, despite the concessions exacted

³⁸. Crowe to Curzon, December 7, 1919, F. O. 608/147; Quotation from November 1, 1919 Protocol, DBFP., First Series, Vol. II, p. 146.

from France, Lloyd George remained dissatisfied with the anti-German spirit in France, a spirit which was inimical to his government's desire to appease Germany.

In a December 10 letter to Curzon, Lloyd George, who rarely divulged his honest sentiments to the foreign secretary, expressed exasperation with French policy makers and with the dangers he considered inherent in French policy. The prime minister complained that Paris itself was an undesirable location for a peace conference because any opinions contrary to the narrow views of the Quai d'Orsay led officials to launch press campaigns against their Allies. He concluded, " . . . we must break up that dangerous enclave where the foreign policy of the world is run by the nation which is least fitted by temper, temperament, and tradition to run it at the present time."³⁹

When Lloyd George and Clemenceau conferred in London December 11-13, the prime minister made the British position clear on almost every point of contention. During the first session, Lloyd George said he expected Parliament to oppose a separate guarantee to France. When Clemenceau raised the question of aid to Poland, Lloyd George said the Poles were a troublesome people who were not needed as a buffer against Germany because

39. Lloyd George to Curzon, December 10, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/2/11.

Germany wanted peace. On December 12, the French asked for British aid in meeting a coal shortage which was due in part to the failure of German deliveries, but the French request for a priority on the purchase of British coal was denied. The next day, Lloyd George absolutely refused to consider allowing the rebuilding of devastated areas to receive a priority similar to the one granted to Belgium. At the last session of these conferences, the prime minister expressed his belief that the greatest danger to peace in Europe was the collapse of the present democratic government of Germany.⁴⁰

By the time the Treaty of Versailles came into force on January 10, 1920, the maintenance and strengthening of a democratic regime in Germany was the major goal of British foreign policy. This goal, frequently alluded to, and finally openly stated by the prime minister at a summit meeting, was the natural result of the events and ideas which had shaped British policy since the Armistice.

At the same time, Britain considered Germany

40. Notes of a Conference held at #10 Downing Street, December 11, 1919, CAB 23/35, S-5; Notes of a Conversation held at #10 Downing Street, December 11, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. II, pp. 736-737; Notes of an Anglo-French Conference held at #10 Downing Street, December 12, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 748-753; Notes of an Anglo-French Conference held at #10 Downing Street, December 13, 1919, *ibid.*, pp. 753-764.

prostrate and France strong. Consequently, in British thinking, the French insistence on compelling German demilitarization, guaranteeing Belgium, detaching the Rhineland from Germany, and garrisoning the plebiscite areas all pointed to France as the source of European unrest.

Appeasement of Germany therefore evolved into the political and economic prelude to European stabilization. Britain and France remained the only two great powers which were to enforce the Treaty of Versailles. But with Britain already doubting the wisdom of the Treaty, the Entente Cordiale had become an anomaly--an alliance of two nations with diverse policy goals. Therefore, after the Treaty of Versailles came into force and diplomatic relations between Britain and Germany were restored, the British government began to practice appeasement within the normal framework of diplomacy, thus exposing the weakness of the Entente to the Berlin government.

CHAPTER V

British Appeasement of Germany: French and German Reactions to British Policy: January - March, 1920

During the first three months of 1920, the British government demonstrated its willingness to accept a mitigation of Germany's burdens under the Treaty of Versailles. British appeasement of German objections to the Treaty, especially the failure to demand execution of the military clauses, led to the hope in Berlin that Britain would grant further concessions. In Paris, appeasement increased fears that French security was in jeopardy. The division within the Entente deepened as Britain pursued a policy of appeasement during her first official contacts with the German government since August, 1914.

Diplomatic relations among the powers were resumed after the January 10, 1920 exchange of ratifications of the Treaty of Versailles. On January 16, Lord Kilbarnock, the newly appointed British chargé d'affaires in Berlin,

was received by the German government amid speeches expressing the desire of all parties to build a permanent peace.¹

On February 21, the German chargé d'affaires, Dr. Friedrich Sthamer, was received by Lord Curzon. After stating that adherence to the Treaty of Versailles must be the "basis of our relations during the immediate future," Curzon assured Sthamer that the German government, if faced with economic or political difficulties, should not try to evade the Treaty, but appeal to the Allies. "The British Government," he declared "would always be willing to consider any representations that might be made to them in a spirit of frankness."² Thus in the first official meeting between German and British diplomats, foreign secretary Curzon promised that the British government would consider Germany's problems should Germany face insurmountable difficulties in the execution of the Treaty.

At the same time, political developments in France pointed to an even harsher attitude toward Germany and a greater unwillingness to comply with the conciliatory policies of the British government. Clemenceau

1. Kilmarnock to Curzon, January 16, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. IX, pp. 5-7.

2. Curzon to Kilmarnock, February 21, 1920, ibid., pp. 84-86, quotations on p. 84 and p. 86 respectively.

fell from power when the French Senate elected Paul-Eugène-Louis Deschanel as president on January 19, Derby informed Lloyd George that Alexandre Millerand had finished forming his government and would take office the next day. Many members of the government were suggested by Poincaré. Derby considered the government weak and a prelude to Poincaré's coming to power.³

The political changes in France were a potential source of Anglo-French discord. They had augmented the influence of the extreme Germanophobe faction at a time when the British government began to consider permitting Germany temporarily to keep a larger armed force than the Treaty allowed.

While the Treaty was being negotiated, the British had expressed the opinion that the terms for disarmament were too harsh. Later, reports from Germany showed that the German government was too weak to maintain internal order.⁴ A February 5 memorandum by the British General Staff outlined the grave difficulties which the German government had to face to maintain order. The General Staff concluded that the armed police of Germany, the Sicherheitspolizei, who were heavily armed and were

3. Derby to Lloyd George, January 17, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/6; Derby to Lloyd George, January 19, 1920, ibid., F/53/1/7.

4. Stuart to Curzon, January 21, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. IX, p. 12.

uniforms similar to those of the regular army, were necessary to law and order in the towns, while the right-wing civilian para-military groups, the Einwohnerwehr and the Zeitfreiwillige, should be abolished. The General Staff feared extreme left or right-wing rule if the German government fell. In addition, the General Staff feared that Noske could never retain control of the situation if he cut the Reichswehr to 100,000 men by April 1, 1920. The General Staff concluded that the Reichswehr should be kept at a strength of 150,000 to 200,000 men for the remainder of 1920. In addition, 40,000 to 60,000 Sicherheitspolizei were needed to maintain internal order and control of frontiers, but, with this alteration, "all the military terms of peace to be carried out rigidly."⁵ The British military had abandoned the view that the rapid reduction of German land forces was necessary to prevent future German aggression and an essential prelude to the relaxation of European tension. Within one month of ratification of the Treaty, they had advocated serious revision of the military terms in an effort to meet what they considered to be a justified complaint of the German government.

5. Memorandum by the General Staff, February 5, 1920, ibid., pp. 40-46, quotation on p. 45. The memorandum estimated the total strength of German para-military organizations to be between 520,000 and 710,000 men. This was in addition to the Reichswehr and Sicherheitspolizei.

Lloyd George had taken the views of the General Staff into account when he pressured the French into accepting the British position. On February 18, the prime minister informed the German government that the Allies had decided to permit Germany to delay the process of demilitarization. German forces were to be reduced to 200,000 men by April 10, 1920, and to 100,000 men by July 10, 1920.⁶ Lloyd George's despatch omitted any mention of the armed police or para-military formations, which, in total, numbered at least one half million men who had military training and combat experience.

By March 1, Kilmarnock informed Curzon that the Germans had become convinced that they could rely on Britain to resist French demands. Kilmarnock then conveyed private information to Curzon indicating that his French colleagues believed some of the military officers in the British Mission at Berlin by their actions were encouraging the Germans to develop this view. General Malcolm's influence with Lloyd George was especially resented by the French.⁷

The February 5 memorandum by the General Staff, which had encouraged alteration of the military clauses of the Treaty and had influenced Lloyd George to concede

6. Lloyd George to Sthamer, February 18, 1920, ibid., Vol. X, p. 21.

7. Kilmarnock to Curzon, March 1, 1920, ibid., Vol. IX, p. 111.

to German wishes, had been heavily influenced by Malcolm's reports.

The French were outraged that the British government had again jeopardized their security by conciliating Germany. The anti-British feelings expressed publicly by French politicians and in the French press were so voluminous and diffuse that Derby could hardly begin a full report. After mentioning a public statement by Aristide Briand, asserting that France was the nation making the greatest sacrifices, Derby concluded:

It is scarcely conceivable that Frenchmen who have opportunities of forming an accurate knowledge of the real situation can really believe that France had got nothing by the Treaty of Versailles, and is exposed to a 'Revanche' through a 'camouflaged' army. The probability is that they wish, for purposes of negotiations with the Allies, to be able when necessary to point to a strong movement of public opinion in France, and to be thus fortified when putting forward various demands.⁸

French frustration, however, aroused suspicion, rather than understanding, within the British government.

The Germans were beginning to appreciate the advantages that they could gain because of Anglo-French differences. A March 9 German political report, intercepted by the Army on the Rhine and sent to the Foreign Office by military intelligence, shed light on the German view of British policy. According to the report

⁸. Derby to Curzon, February 21, 1920, ibid., pp. 86-87, quotation on p. 87.

the coolness between England and France had grown as Anglo-German rapprochement increased; already Anglo-German relations were closer than they appeared. The document made it clear that the coolness toward France on the part of Curzon, Churchill, Cecil, and even Lloyd George himself was known in Berlin. The report cited Kilmarnock's repeated assurances that Great Britain would not abandon the German government. The Germans considered that they must look to England as a future ally because Anglo-French differences, not only in Europe but world-wide, had drawn the interests of Britain and Germany closer together.⁹

The German government's view of British policy may have been given greater encouragement when the British General Staff concluded that the further reduction of the German army below 200,000 men, after April 10, 1920, should be reconsidered because of Germany's need of forces to preserve order. Kilmarnock was instructed not to commit his government to this proposal, but he was not told to keep it a secret. German knowledge of the suggestion itself may have encouraged those Germans who were beginning to think of Britain as a lever against France.¹⁰ At the same time, Lloyd George decided that the

9. German Political Report Intercepted by the British Army on the Rhine, March 9, 1920, F. O. 371/3781.

10. Curzon to Kilmarnock, March 11, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. X, pp. 34-35.

center of European diplomacy must be shifted from the Germanophobic atmosphere of Paris to the conciliatory atmosphere of London.

Paris had been the center of Allied diplomacy since the end of the war. However, Lloyd George considered French Germanophobia to be detrimental to British policy. Another prolonged peace conference was needed in 1920 to deal with the future of Turkey. Expecting issues dealing with the execution of the Treaty of Versailles to come under discussion during the conference, the prime minister insisted that it be held in London instead of Paris. On February 2, Lloyd George instructed Derby to inform Millerand that he firmly desired not to leave London for a prolonged period of negotiations in Paris, and Millerand yielded to Lloyd George's request to hold the conference in the British capital.¹¹ The prime minister wanted the conference to be held in London instead of Paris to demonstrate to both France and Germany that Great Britain had seized the initiative.

British appeasement of Germany and conflict with France had been stimulated by fear of European instability resulting from revolution in Germany. As if to furnish

11. Lloyd George to Curzon, December 10, 1919, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/2/11; Lloyd George to Derby, February 2, 1920, ibid., F/53/1/15; Derby to Lloyd George, February 4, 1920, ibid., F/53/1/17.

proof that all of the concessions made to Germany because of the weakness of her government were justified, on March 12, news of a revolution in Germany burst upon the conference in London. In this instance an attempted right-wing coup that has gone down in history as the Kapp Putsch, startled the conference.

During the March 15 meeting of the Conference of London, the prime minister and Curzon discussed the situation in Germany with the French Ambassador to Great Britain, Paul Combon. They decided that official relations would only be maintained with the duly elected government of Germany and not with the Kapp government.¹²

However, British attitudes toward Germany in the previous months may have played a part in encouraging the outbreak of the putsch. Kilmarnock, in a March 14 despatch, wrote that the Kapp government appeared to be counting on British support. Reportedly, a high British officer had announced that England would allow Germany to keep an army of a quarter of a million men. Kilmarnock reported that he had denied this to everyone he had spoken with, but not the members of the Kapp government since direct communication with them was un-

12. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at #10 Downing Street, March 15, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 492-494.

desirable.¹³

Kilmarnock himself was held by the Germans to have promised British support. Kapp's associate, Luttwitz, intended to assert that he had received encouragement from the British in defense of his actions. As evidence that British officials did not encourage the attempted coup, Malcolm had assured a Colonel Bauser that any military action to establish a government to deal more firmly with the Bolsheviks would be met with grave disapproval.¹⁴

General Malcolm did work to restore the legitimate government of Germany. On March 16 he told Luttwitz to accept the government's terms and surrender. After the interview with Malcolm, Luttwitz went off to see Kapp. Kilmarnock speculated that Kapp would surrender if assured of his personal safety.¹⁵ His assessment of the situation was correct, for the legitimate government of Germany was restored the next day.

The German reactionaries lied about any promise of British support. They altered the truth when they

13. Paraphrase of a Telegram from the British chargé d'affaires at Berlin, March 14, 1920, ibid., p. 499.

14. Kilmarnock to Curzon, March 25, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/3/22. This paper from R. H. Cambell of the Foreign Office to Davies of the Secretariat directed the prime minister's attention to the rumors of British implications in the Kapp putsch current in Berlin.

15. Kilmarnock to Curzon, March 16, 1920, F. O. 371/3780.

asserted that Great Britain had given Germany permission to maintain an army of 250,000 men on a permanent basis. However, the sympathies of men such as Kilmarneock and Malcolm, their concern for German difficulties, the lack of close cooperation with the French, and the fear of the red menace, as well as their frequent contacts with German men of the right, made the hope of British support appear as a possibility. The mere fact that a German military man would feel out Malcolm's views on the establishment of a right-wing government illustrated how confident certain elements in Berlin had become that Britain would acquiesce in Germany's actions.

Appeasement of Germany had developed to the point that the German right saw fit to put it to the test and failed, but the British government continued to appease the legitimate government of Germany.

CHAPTER VI

The Frankfort-Darmstadt Affair: March 17 - April 11, 1920: The Collapse of the Entente Cordiale as a Military Alliance

The British commitment to appeasement of Germany was deepened by the Kapp Putsch. It had confirmed British fears of German political instability resulting in a military revival. The restored Weimar government immediately found itself faced with a threat from left-wing extremists. The British government responded by supporting temporary German violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland, as stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles. France, faced with German troops in the Rhineland, applied military sanctions to Germany in defense of her national security. Thus, when the legitimate government of Germany challenged the Entente, they were able to achieve an immediate and short-lived success which temporarily destroyed the Entente and permanently ended coordinated military action by the Allies in western Germany.

On March 17, when the German government was restored to power, it formally requested the authority of the Supreme Council to send additional Reichswehr troops into the Ruhr district where a Soviet had allegedly been proclaimed. The French government decided to refuse to allow the additional German troops into the Ruhr valley, and to ask permission for immediate despatch of Allied troops to the Ruhr.¹

An Anglo-French crisis was about to develop. This crisis was complicated by the confusion resulting from the fact that the Supreme Council was meeting in London while the Council of Ambassadors permanently sat in Paris.

The discussion of the Ruhr crisis by the Allies began in both London and Paris on March 18. At a meeting of the Council of Ambassadors, presided over by French Premier Millerand, Foch stated his reasons for opposing the German request to send additional troops into the Ruhr. The Marshal reasoned: there was no greater

1. Derby to Curzon, March 16, 1920, ibid. On August 8, 1919, Germany was authorized to maintain a limited number of troops in the neutral zone to maintain internal order. The total number of men in the German force was to be approximately 17,500, and the figure was approximate because of the fact that German demobilization and army re-organization resulted in units actually being below their strength on paper., Foch to President of the Peace Conference, August 4, 1919, DBFP., First Series, Vol. I, pp. 384-385; Ratified August 8, 1919, ibid., p. 374.

disturbance in the Ruhr than in any other part of Germany, the Germans already had more troops in the neutral zone than they were permitted under the August 8, 1919 agreement, and the disbanding of troops which ought to have been completed by March 10, 1920, had never taken place. When Foch advised that the Allies occupy the Ruhr, Derby replied that he must seek the instructions of his government.²

Derby believed that the Council of Ambassadors existed to see that the terms of the Treaty were carried out, and, therefore, did not have the authority to give Germany the requested permission. The argument that German troops were not needed in the Ruhr because the region was no more disturbed than the rest of Germany applied with equal force to the French request for an Allied occupation. Millerand accepted Derby's view of Foch's argument. He asked that the German chargé d'affaires be immediately informed that permission was denied. Derby agreed, but arranged that the communication not be made with the German government until 7:00 P.M. that evening to allow him time to consult his government.³

2. Derby to Curzon, March 18, 1920, sent 4:10 P.M., received 6:00 P.M., F. O. 371/3781. A telephone message was also sent to the Foreign Office to inform Curzon of the events of the morning meeting of the Council of Ambassadors, F. O. 371/3780.

3. Ibid.

On the afternoon of the same day, the Supreme Council was to meet in London with Lloyd George presiding. That morning, Hankey had written a note for the prime minister summarizing the situation and giving his advice. The Germans were so anxious for an early reply that their chargé d'affaires had called on Curzon the previous midnight to urge the importance of a rapid decision. Hankey wrote that Field Marshal Wilson opposed the French proposal for an Allied advance into the Ruhr because the British troops on the Rhine were not properly mobile or fit to carry out their share of the operation. The cabinet secretary believed that French motives were based on two selfish considerations: their wish to trample on Germany and their desire to secure coal for themselves.⁴ Lloyd George's actions that afternoon illustrated his trust in Hankey's advice.

At the meeting of the Supreme Council beginning at 4:00 P.M. on the afternoon of March 18, 1920, Lloyd George, Curzon, and Cambon thoroughly discussed the situation. Curzon stated that if the Allies agreed that the Friedrich Ebert government was at present the only stable government in Germany, and that its existence would be compromised by the entry of Allied troops into

4. Hankey to Lloyd George, March 18, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/24/2/19.

the Ruhr, Allied occupation was undesirable and, therefore, the granting of permission for the German government to use its own troops on its own soil was the proper course. Curzon concluded that if fighting was done by German troops, the Allies should trust them to keep their pledge to withdraw after fifteen days. Cambon expressed the wish to consult Foch, but Lloyd George said it was unnecessary. He argued that Allied military action was out of the question because both Ebert and Bauer had stated that Germany herself could master the situation. Cambon said that Foch must be consulted if only because of French public opinion. Whatever the assurances from Berlin, he believed it was dangerous to allow German troops into the neutral zone. Lloyd George became upset, called the situation impossible. To the French and Belgian delegates, he held up the spectre of red revolution on their own borders. He concluded,

His Majesty's Government were very adverse from [sic] any Allied occupation, and were in favor of permitting the Germans to occupy the disturbed region for a short period, in order to scatter the Bolshevik elements, subject to such guarantees as Marshal Foch might deem it wise to propose.

Cambon replied that he would seek instructions from Paris as quickly as possible because he knew that Curzon was most anxious to reply to the German chargé d'affaires.⁵

5. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at #10 Downing Street, March 18, 1920, 4:00 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VII, pp. 542-547, quotation on p. 547.

After the meeting, Curzon returned to his office to find Derby's account of the morning's events in Paris, where a decision had been reached exactly opposite to the one urged by the British government in the afternoon. The foreign secretary explained to Derby the position taken by the British government in London. Curzon informed Derby of the request he had received from the German chargé d'affaires the previous midnight, that he considered it a matter for the Supreme Council, and, therefore, had counted on Derby not to discuss the matter at Paris. Derby was told that the British government not only wished to see the rebellion suppressed by German troops, but also wanted to support the German government by all means within its power. Moreover, the British government opposed Allied involvement in German domestic disputes and would grant the German request after German acceptance of suitable guarantees drawn up by Foch. Curzon concluded that Cambon was to inform the French government of the British position.⁶

In the evening of March 18, the German request for permission was neither granted nor denied by the Council of Ambassadors as had been decided at Paris in the morning. The Germans were informed that no answer could be given without further deliberations by the Allies.

6. Curzon to Derby, March 18, 1920, F. O. 371/3780.

Confusion reigned supreme.

The reports of British observers in Germany all urged the need for pacification of the Ruhr. By March 15, the Ruhr was completely controlled by the communists. The Reichswehr troops had fallen back with heavy casualties. The British army would have needed reinforcements if there was an outbreak in their zone of occupation. The Germans feared that France would use the revolution to take over the Rhineland. At a meeting of German political parties in Cologne, delegates had drawn up plans to proclaim themselves an independent federation should a French invasion occur. Kilmarnock and Malcolm thought it was important for permission to send the additional troops to the Ruhr to be granted the German government. The asserted weakness of German forces in the Ruhr was confirmed when on March 19, 1,500 Reichswehr troops entered the Cologne bridgehead where they surrendered to British military authorities and were disarmed and interned.⁷

In the morning of March 19, the French premier informed Derby that he could not agree to German troops entering the Ruhr and had telegraphed Cambon

7. Foreign Office to War Office, from Stuart, March 15, 1920, F. O. 371/3781; Stuart to Foreign Office, March 18, 1920, ibid.; Kilmarnock to Foreign Office, March 19, 1920, ibid.; Stuart to Foreign Office, March 19, 1920, ibid.

accordingly. Derby inquired as to what to tell the Germans. Millerand stated that the only reply France could give was a negative one. When Derby refused to consent, it was decided that no reply at all be communicated to the Germans. Because Millerand had been informed that German troops had already entered the district without permission, he wanted the Allies to decide on a course of action. The French premier considered the British proposal to grant Germany permission to be an authorization to violate the Treaty.⁸

On March 20, Sthamer renewed his government's request to send troops into the Ruhr. He informed Curzon that Essen had fallen to the reds; complete anarchy prevailed. Curzon then tried to impress on Cambon the British view that Germany be allowed to send troops. The ambassador suggested that Allied officers might be sent with the German troops if permission was granted to the Germans. Curzon did not object to Cambon's suggestion, and urged Derby to approach the French government to try to convince them to accept the British position.⁹

Derby's reply, later that day, was of no encouragement to Curzon. At the Conference of Ambassadors meeting in the morning, Millerand and Foch had pressed

8. Derby to Curzon, March 19, 1920, ibid.

9. Curzon to Derby, March 10, 1920, ibid.

to present the German government with a list of violations of the Treaty, especially their failure to reduce the size of their army on schedule. The discussion had been a heated one, but the issue had been German violations of the Treaty rather than the Ruhr.¹⁰ The crisis remained unresolved.

Back in London, during a March 22 meeting of the Supreme Council, Lloyd George again urged acceptance of the British proposal, citing the strength of the Spartacist movement in the Ruhr. The prime minister reiterated his belief that the French proposal for a simultaneous occupation of German territory by Allied and German troops was unwise. Curzon stated that the Germans should be allowed to enter the area for a limited amount of time and under specific conditions. The foreign secretary then read a statement from Derby summarizing Millerand's position. The French premier would only permit a German advance if the Allies also occupied additional German territory. Cambon stated that the condition which Millerand presented was only a suggestion. He believed discussion of it should be dropped at once because of Lloyd George's strong opposition. Cambon, agreeing with the British contention that Allied forces were too weak to suppress the

10. Derby to Curzon, March 20, 1920, ibid.

disturbance, accepted Curzon's suggestion that Germany be allowed to send troops in limited numbers and for a short period of time, subject to Inter-Allied General Staff supervision. All present concluded that this was compatible with Foch's views. In all essentials, the British position had been accepted by the conference.¹¹

Cambon's acceptance of the British viewpoint at the March 22 sitting of the Supreme Council encouraged the British to believe that a compromise had been reached. This was a completely erroneous belief, for events in Paris and discussions in London continued to take opposite courses.

On March 21, Derby had informed Curzon that Millerand had clearly stated his position: Germany could only enter the Ruhr on the condition that Allied troops occupy other portions of Germany. After the Supreme Council meeting of the next day, Derby was informed of the position taken by Cambon in London, of the fact that Cambon considered Millerand's position to be only a suggestion, and of the conclusions of the Supreme Council sitting. On the 23, Derby, realizing that his impressions of French policy had been erroneous, informed Curzon that Millerand planned to occupy certain

11. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held in Curzon's room at the Foreign Office, March 22, 1920, 4:15 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VII, pp. 584-590.

German towns before granting permission for additional German troops to enter the Ruhr. He surmised that the French premier believed that the towns could be held as security afterwards to ensure that the Treaty was carried out.¹²

Cambon forwarded a resume of a despatch from Millerand to Curzon on March 23. The ambassador explained that allowing additional German troops to enter the Ruhr was a violation of the Treaty provisions which established a demilitarized zone in that area. Therefore, Foch was prepared to occupy Frankfort and Darmstadt, a proposal which Millerand had accepted as a guarantee to the Allies against new violations of the Treaty.¹³

12. Derby to Curzon, March 21, 1920, F. O. 371/3781; Curzon to Derby, March 22, 1920, ibid; Derby to Curzon, March 23, 1920, ibid.

13. Cambon to Curzon, March 23, 1920, resumé of a despatch from Millerand to Cambon, ibid. The French position was based on upholding the demilitarization of the Rhineland provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, articles 42-44. Article 42 defined the demilitarized zone as extending 50 kilometers east of the Rhine. This German action was held to violate Article 43 which stated, "in the area defined above the maintenance and assembly of armed forces, either permanently or temporarily, and military manoeuvres of any kind, as well as the upkeep of all permanent works for mobilization, are in the same way forbidden," and Article 44, which stated, "In any case Germany violates in any manner whatever the provisions of Articles 42 and 43, she shall be regarded as committing a hostile act against the Powers signatory of the present Treaty and as calculated to disturb the peace of the world." Articles 42-44 of the Treaty of Versailles, FRUS., Vol. XIII, p. 159; Article 44 of the Treaty of Versailles, ibid., p. 161. These provisions

At the March 24 meeting of the Supreme Council, Curzon announced that Great Britain could not agree to the occupation of Frankfort and Darmstadt. The conference ended in a deadlock after Curzon reiterated that the British government wished to strengthen rather than embarrass the German government. Curzon reported the events of the meeting to Derby, and suggested that Millerand come to London on April 7 to present his arguments in person.¹⁴

In the evening of March 29, French Bureau Chief at the Quai d'Orsay, Maurice Paléologue, communicated the following to the German government by telephone,

If the German government insists upon her demand to enter German troops into the Ruhr basin, M. Millerand will be disposed to consent under the condition that the troops would be withdrawn from the neutral zone within a period of two or three weeks. At the end of this period, Allied

were part of a compromise proposed by the British government to give France security without allowing her territorial annexation which would have established the Rhine frontier.

14. British Secretary's Notes of a Conference of Ambassadors and Foreign Ministers held in Lord Curzon's room at the Foreign Office, March 24, 1920, DEFP., First Series, Vol. VII, pp. 606-610; Curzon to Derby, March 24, 1920, F. O. 371/3781. On March 29, Derby was informed by the American ambassador to France that the United States considered the Ruhr rising to be an internal matter in Germany. Upon learning of this, Waterlow remarked that if the French position was accepted, total United States withdrawal was almost certain to follow. Derby to Foreign Office, with minutes, March 29, 1920, ibid. American objections to the French proposals could only have presented additional reasons for the British to maintain their position, for France was isolated among the great powers.

troops would have the right to immediately occupy Frankfort, Hanau, Homburg, Darmstadt, and Diebourg under the conditions specified by the note of March 28.¹⁵

The Paléologue message served to complicate events further. The French action appeared to have been a result of Millerand's political difficulties, for the French premier was under pressure from the right wing. Millerand had been forced to take strong action when the French press had gained the impression that if Great Britain would not act, France would act alone. At the same time, the German government had taken the Paléologue message of March 29, which gave Germany permission to enter the Ruhr for two or three weeks before the Allies would occupy any additional territory, as a statement of the Allied position. After this had been announced in the Reichstag, the German government received a letter from Millerand withdrawing the permission.¹⁶

Once the German government had publicly announced their intention to send troops into the Ruhr, they could not yield to French pressure without a loss of credibility. The further weakening of the German govern-

15. Confirmation d'une Conférence Téléphonique, 29 mars, 8 h., F. O. 371/3782. The message was given to Derby by a member of the German delegation in Paris.

16. Derby to Curzon, April 1, 1920, *ibid*; Derby to Curzon, April 1, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/22.

ment was the last thing the British government desired.

The British government believed that they had been deceived by the French. On April 1, Curzon reminded Cambon that he had said the day before at a meeting of the Supreme Council that the publicity given to the possibility of French unilateral action was rumor. Curzon stated that what Cambon had considered an impossibility, French action without the Allies, had actually occurred, consequently, Great Britain might have to abandon her policy of cooperation, consider withdrawal from the occupied area, and decline to share responsibility for any situation which might develop as a result of actions taken without her consultation and approval. The French Ambassador could not explain the situation, for he had not been properly informed.¹⁷

On the same day, April 1, the German government urgently requested Allied permission to send troops into the neutral zone because the situation had deteriorated into complete anarchy. Although Curzon believed German reports to be much exaggerated, and was not prepared to press further for authority to be granted the German government, he felt that the British government

17. Curzon to Derby, April 1, 1920, F. O. 371/3782, see also CAB 24/103, C. P. 1026. For Cambon's statements of the previous day referred to by Curzon, see British Secretary's Notes of a Conference of Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors held in Lord Curzon's room at the Foreign Office, March 31, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VII, pp. 683-685.

had been placed in an impossible position by French unilateral action.¹⁸

On the instructions of his chief, Derby went to see Millerand. The premier, surprised at Cambon's failure to keep the British government informed, stated that French observers reported that the Ruhr crisis did not warrant further German armed intervention. Millerand asserted that the presence of 100,000 German troops in the Ruhr valley was a danger which France could not accept, but again declared that he had no intention of acting independently.¹⁹

When the Foreign Office studied the events of March 29 through April 1, dissatisfaction with Derby emerged. Crowe thought Derby had failed to make it clear to the British government that the Germans had been deceived by the French. The under-secretary believed that Millerand owed the British government an explanation, for, unless Paléologue's action was unauthorized, both the British government and Cambon had been deliberately kept uninformed. Crowe suggested that Sir George Grahame might succeed in making the gravity of the situation clear to Millerand. Curzon accepted that

18. Kilmarcock to Curzon, April 1, 1920, F. O. 371/3782; Curzon to Derby, April 1, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/26.

19. Derby to Curzon, April 1, 1920, F. O. 371/3782. See also Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/22.

suggestion.²⁰

On April 2, Grahame saw Paléologue and protested French actions. Paléologue claimed there had been a misunderstanding because German troops had already entered the demilitarized zone without authorization, and the German chargé d'affaires had been requested to inform his government that they must be withdrawn at once. Paléologue argued that authorization for German action could only be given if French troops entered the area as well.²¹

On April 3, Grahame forwarded a letter from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the German chargé d'affaires stating that, in view of German violations of the Treaty of Versailles, Foch was studying military measures, "which can now neither be avoided or delayed." The Germans had not yet withdrawn. When Grahame saw Millerand on April 5, he failed to induce the French premier to postpone action. Millerand declared that because France had been defied, public opinion compelled him to act.²²

Millerand had been candid with Grahame in stating

20. Minutes relating to Derby's despatches of March 30-April 2, F. O. 371/3782.

21. Grahame to Curzon, April 3, 1920, ibid.

22. Grahame to Curzon, April 3, 1920, ibid., Grahame to Curzon, April 5, 1920, ibid.

his unwillingness to postpone action. As early as April 4, the French commissioner on the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission informed the Commission that he had received orders to prepare for an advance to Frankfort and Darmstadt because Germany had sent extra troops into the Ruhr. The French contention was true, for Robertson reported from Coblenz that the Reichswehr had occupied Duisburg and Hamborn. Robertson, however, advised that the French advance would only compound the confusion and play into the hands of the German extremists.²³

On April 5, Cambon was received by Bonar Law, who, acting in the absence of Lloyd George and Curzon, was presented with a French request for British acquiescence in the occupation of the five German towns. Bonar Law condemned it as a dangerous act on France's part because Germany had not violated the Treaty of Versailles. The demilitarization of the Rhineland was only intended to prevent the threat of an invasion of France. After reminding the ambassador that he spoke with the authority of the prime minister, Bonar Law asked Cambon to request that his government agree to the authorization of

23. Minutes of the 19th. Sitting of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, April 4, 1920, Public Record Office, Germany: Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, F. O. 894/2; Robertson to Foreign Office, F. O. 371/3782.

a limited number of German troops remaining in the neutral zone for two weeks to restore order. Although Cambon promised to convey the message at once, he did not believe that Millerand could accept the proposal.²⁴

During the morning of April 6, Cambon again called on Bonar Law. After a lengthy explanation of why France could not allow German troops to remain in the Ruhr, he reported that Foch had been authorized to occupy the five towns that morning. Bonar Law replied that this was a grave action, for it was the first time since the outbreak of the war that an ally had, in an important matter, acted in a manner directly contrary to the wishes of another. The Conservative leader explained that France had presented the British government with a fait accompli, forcing Britain into a position where she had either to declare to the world that the alliance was broken, or support an action which she considered to be wrong and dangerous. When Bonar Law reminded Cambon that Germany had acted after Paléologue's message, Cambon replied that Millerand had never given his consent. Bonar Law concluded by stating that the matter would be studied by the Cabinet on April 8. He repeated emphatically that he considered the French action to be a most serious breach of faith. Cambon

24. Curzon to Grahame, April 5, 1920, ibid.

tried to win Bonar Law's sympathy by impressing the excited state of French public opinion on the Conservative leader.²⁵

In justifying the occupation of the five towns on April 7, the French government asserted that France had fully consulted with her Allies and repeated the story of German defiance, concluding that France was therefore within her rights in the occupation of Frankfurt, Darmstadt, Homburg, Hanau, and Dieburg.²⁶

The French government's justification of their actions could not heal the deep breach with Britain caused by the decision to occupy the five towns. Curzon, believing that France had acted in opposition to Britain in so many other areas of the world, was unenthusiastic about rebuilding close relations. Curzon advised that Derby take no part in the Council of Ambassadors, but he acknowledged that the larger issue of relations with France must be decided by the Cabinet.²⁷

Because foreign secretary Curzon, who held much of the initiative over the course of British action

25. Curzon to Derby, April 6, 1920, F. O. 371/3782, see also Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/30.

26. Derby to Curzon, enclosed text of communiqué, April 7, 1920, F. O. 371/3783.

27. Minutes by Curzon after Bonar Law's Meeting with Paul Cambon, April 6, 1920, F. O. 371/3782.

during late March and early April, thought in terms of Imperial problems, he allowed middle eastern conflicts with France to loom large in his mind. His view of this crisis of the Entente was colored by the fact that he did not realize that French security was the basis of peace in Europe, and conversely, a threat to France, real or imagined, was a threat to stability, and therefore the peace and security of the British Empire.²⁸ Philip Kerr, who was closer to the prime minister, was already in April of 1920 " . . . struck by the unwisdom of the French treatment of Germany."²⁹ With growing frequency, Lloyd George himself had spoken and written of his dismay with the French alliance. The diary of his close associate, Lord Riddell, records the prime minister as having blamed the outbreak of the German revolution in March on the French because they had presented impossible demands which made the position of the German government untenable.³⁰

When the Cabinet met on April 8, a mood of disgust with French policy was already present. Lloyd George began the Cabinet meeting by stating that the

28. Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase: 1919-1925 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939).

29. Butler, p. 78.

30. Riddell's Diary, March 20-21, 1920, Riddell, p. 177.

failure of a government to send troops to preserve order was an abdication of the function of government. Although the information as to events in the Ruhr was filled with conflicting data, it was the French action which the prime minister believed was the critical problem before the Cabinet. Great Britain had given France all the positions of honor: Foch as the head of Allied forces, Nollet as President of the Military Mission in Berlin. The French response had been to risk involving Britain in a new war with Germany because of her rash actions. In an outpouring of his disgust with France, the prime minister declared: "They have sent black troops to Frankfort. If the Germans sent niggers from Africa to Newcastle? Frankfort is a proud city!" He was convinced that French actions would drive Germany into the desire for revenge. Lloyd George considered Millerand to be following Foch's every whim.³¹

Curzon then raised the issue of the Ambassadors Council and the standing arrangements to meet with France at San Remo, beginning on April 19, to finish the Turkish treaty and formally end the Peace Conference. The foreign secretary stated that the French were creating difficulties on every issue. He accused Millerand of

31. Extract from a Cabinet Minute, April 8, 1920, Tom Jones' Diary, Middlemas, ed., p. 107-108, quotations on p. 108.

acting as a dictator to the Allies in his capacity as President of the Peace Conference. All present vehemently expressed disapproval of French actions. They were indignant at French use of black troops. Lloyd George objected to the fact that "The French think they can whistle for us and call us up if war breaks out."³²

Lloyd George's comment revealed that he was unaware of the inconsistency of his own attitudes and policies. He had frequently written and spoken of France as the dominant power in Europe, and Germany as a prostrate nation. Yet, in the heat of anger, he admitted that France would need British military aid if Germany resisted her occupation. French actions were opposed because they were a source of potential armed conflict with Germany. Bearing this rarely admitted fact in mind, the British Cabinet was to attempt to threaten France into acceptance of the British position on the Ruhr crisis.

British fears of an armed conflict emerged when the Cabinet concluded that the Conference of Ambassadors must be ended after work on the Turkish treaty was completed because the mere existence of that body could cause another military venture. They decided that Derby should no longer attend the Conference of Ambassadors

32. Ibid., pp. 107-111, quotation on p. 110.

until receipt of further instructions. Curzon was instructed to prepare a statement of protest against French actions.³³

Curzon communicated the decision of the Cabinet to Cambon that afternoon. He told the ambassador that the French statement, asserting full consultation with the Allies, had only served to aggravate the situation, and, therefore, no British representative would sit on the Ambassadors Council in Paris until the British government could be sure that no such incident would occur again. Curzon reminded Cambon of his many assurances that France would not act unilaterally. The ambassador could not deny the fact that his government had acted contrary to his statements and in isolation without proper warning to the Allies. Curzon stated bluntly that Great Britain did not wish to disrupt the Alliance, but independent action of this sort was in fact the destruction of the Alliance. Curzon concluded with a statement of sympathy for Cambon, who, despite his long years of service and experience, had been deceived by his government. In the whole of Cambon's service in England this was the most painful experience he had faced.³⁴

³³. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, April 8, 1920, CAB 23/21, Cabinet 18 (20).

³⁴. Curzon to Derby, April 8, 1920, F. O. 371/3783. Curzon's expressed sympathy for Cambon was well

Later on April 8, Curzon sent Derby a despatch criticizing French actions, drawn up on the instructions of the Cabinet. The document was a detailed accusation showing how the French government had acted independently without prior consultation with the Allies.³⁵

On April 9, in reply to the British accusation, Millerand reasserted the French justification for the invasion, but he implied that the French government did not contemplate similar action in the future. At a meeting of the Cabinet the next day, a reply to Millerand's note was approved. The reply stated that nothing would be gained by further review of the events leading up to the crisis. It concluded that the British government could not view the fact that France still defended her actions with anything but regret, for the French government still maintained the right to act unilaterally.³⁶

On April 10, Cambon paid an urgent visit to

founded, for to the French Ambassador, the building and maintenance of the Entente was the greatest achievement of his life. See Keith Eubank, Paul Cambon: Master Diplomatist (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960), for this crisis and Cambon's reactions, pp. 198-199.

35. Curzon to Derby, April 8, 1920, F. O. 371/3783.

36. Derby to Curzon, from Millerand, April 9, 1920, CAB 23/35, S-14, Appendix I; Notes of a Conference held at #10 Downing Street, April 10, 1920, ibid., S-14; Curzon to Derby for Millerand, April 10, 1920, ibid., S-14, Appendix II, see also F. O. 371/3783.

Curzon, who, although sick in bed, was trying to resolve the crisis. Because Millerand was to speak in the Chamber of Deputies shortly, Cambon was anxious that the serious dispute between Britain and France did not become an issue of political and public passion. He asked if the best solution would be to have France withdraw her troops as quickly as possible on the condition that Germany do the same. Curzon replied that such action would not resolve the crisis of the Entente. He suggested instead that the French government admit it made a great mistake in acting in opposition to the Allies. Cambon complained that such a statement would wound national pride. Curzon replied that he wanted such a statement to be private, and had never had a public declaration in mind. Curzon hoped Millerand would formulate a reply which would enable the British government to state that the Entente remained unimpaired.³⁷

When Derby saw Millerand on April 11, the premier assured him that France would not act unilaterally again. Because Derby considered the interview to have been so satisfactory, he urged the government not to ask for a reply in writing.³⁸

37. Curzon to Derby, April 10, 1920, F. O. 371/3783.

38. Derby to Curzon, April 11, 1920, F. O. 800/154. In an April 12 discussion with Derby, Millerand

The immediate crisis of the Entente was ended when Millerand pledged that France would not act alone again. However, the series of events which had passed from mid-March to mid-April 1920 marked the end of the Entente as a military alliance. Given British unwillingness to use force, a French pledge to refrain from doing so meant an abrogation of the Allied right to military action. The British government had used every means of pressure to isolate France, including the threat of prematurely ending her token occupation in the Rhineland. On April 13, after French General Degouette requested permission to send French aviators into the British zone of occupation, Derby was advised that, "Whilst admitting that General Degouette is technically within his rights as Commander-in-Chief, you should suggest to the French Government that it would be much better that the forces of the Allies should not intrude upon each other's areas."³⁹

Curzon's advice to Derby accurately reflected the position of the British government. The British government had no desire to become implicated in the current French military action, which they abhorred.

reserved the right to raise the issue of German troops in the neutral zone at the San Remo Conference. Derby to Curzon, April 12, 1920, F. O. 371/3783.

39. Curzon to Derby, April 13, 1920, ibid.

Moreover, they did not want any possible future French action to create a situation which represented their worst fears: taking the nation into armed conflict to enforce the Treaty of Versailles. The British had made it clear that French acceptance of the conciliatory attitude toward Germany, which prevailed in London, was the price of maintaining the Entente as an instrument of diplomacy.⁴⁰

40. C. f. Gilbert, pp. 71-74.

CHAPTER VII

The Aftermath of the Frankfort-Darmstadt Affair: April 18 - April 29, 1920

The Frankfort-Darmstadt affair had strengthened Britain's commitment to appeasement of Germany. In addition, the French unilateral action in the occupation of the five German towns demonstrated the need for Britain to force France to accept her policy of appeasement. The British government decided to present France with the alternative of either an open breach in the Entente or French acceptance of British proposals to conciliate Germany. It was Lloyd George's task at San Remo to exploit French fear of isolation to the utmost in order to receive French acquiescence in the British desire to grant concessions to Germany.

When Lloyd George traveled to San Remo for a Conference with Millerand, his mood was strongly anti-French.¹ Although the primary purpose of the April 18-26

1. Riddell's Diary, April 24, 1920, Riddell, p. 188.

Conference was to complete the treaty with Turkey, Lloyd George, upon his arrival, and before the first formal meeting of the Conference, met unofficially with Millerand. Hankey was the only other individual present. Lloyd George described the German government as a weak body composed of second-rate men which could not enforce its own orders for disarmament in Saxony and Bavaria. Therefore, the prime minister reasoned, there was no use in making demands on the German government. Millerand agreed that the German government was weak. He argued that since the nation was ripe for a military takeover, it would be best to inform them that French troops would withdraw when they carried out their Treaty obligations. Lloyd George did not wish to consider the military spirit in Germany. He believed that occupation of German territory was of no use in getting a half-starved and turbulent nation to fulfill Allied demands. Therefore, he wished to meet the Germans face to face to discuss problems. Millerand said that a conversation with the Germans would have no result, but an Allied occupation of the Ruhr would ensure enforcement of the Treaty. After Lloyd George's negative response, Millerand said he would be willing to meet the Germans if the Allies had previously agreed as to the demands to be made and the actions they would take in the event of Germany refusing to accept

their demands.²

Later that afternoon, when the full Conference met, Lloyd George made it clear that he would not entertain the idea of an Allied occupation of the Ruhr, which Millerand had suggested as a condition of French withdrawal from Frankfort and Darmstadt. Lloyd George, with Italian Premier Francesco Nitti's support, pressed for a conference with the Germans. He insisted that asking the Germans to make their own proposals for enforcing the Treaty was not a revision of the Treaty since an Allied letter authorizing Germany to make an offer in regard to reparations had been sent to the German delegation in Paris in June of 1919. Lloyd George did not doubt the good-will of the German government but only their capacity to pay. In order to strengthen the German government's position in upcoming elections, Lloyd George proposed that notice of an invitation to a summit Conference be given the Germans at once. When Millerand continued to raise objections, Lloyd George concluded by stating that if Britain and France "were to separate at San Remo without agreeing, it would be one of the most serious incidents

2. Notes of a Conversation between the Prime Minister and M. Millerand, April 18, 1920, 9:30 A.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 5-9.

since August 1914."³

Through his refusal to accept any of Millerand's arguments, Lloyd George made it clear that if France did not yield to British views, he would risk what he himself called, "one of the most serious incidents since August 1914." During the remainder of the Conference, the prime minister achieved his goals in an atmosphere of surface cordiality, based on French concessions, punctured by outbursts of recrimination.

On April 24, the prime minister announced that he was in complete accord with the French desire to disarm Germany, but he feared that the strong measures recommended by the French reflected their continued wish to extend their border to the Rhine. He demanded some assurance that this goal had been abandoned. By this point, Millerand had accepted Lloyd George's proposal to allow Germany to make an offer of reparation, but he suggested that an annuity would be better because a strong negative public reaction to any realistic fixed sum was bound to occur in France. Lloyd George agreed with that suggestion. A small concession indeed, for when the discussion shifted to German disarm-

3. Notes of a Meeting of the Heads of the British, French and Italian Delegations, held at San Remo, April 18, 1920, ibid., pp. 10-19. Philip Kerr produced the text of the June 1919 letter inviting the Germans to make their own proposal on reparations for the Conference, ibid., p. 14.

ament, Lloyd George said that 100,000 men were too small an army for Germany and suggested that that figure could be acceptable if Germany was allowed to retain the Einwohnerwehr.⁴

At the April 26 meeting, the Conference agreed to invite Germany to confer directly with them in order to discuss all aspects of the Treaty of Versailles which had not yet been carried out. The German government was invited to meet with Allied governments on May 25 at Spa.⁵ The note to the German government stated that the Allies stood united in their desire to see the Treaty carried out. Thus, Lloyd George, after having won Millerand's consent to a Conference, satisfied the French desire to present the Germans with a statement of Allied unity.

The highly controversial matter of French unilateral occupation of the five German towns remained. On April 25, the German Peace delegation in Paris had informed the Allies that withdrawal of German troops in excess of the number permitted had taken place. At the concluding meeting of the San Remo Conference on

4. Notes of a Conversation held at San Remo, April 24, 1920, ibid., pp. 146-155.

5. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, April 16, 1920, ibid., pp. 199-204; Allied Declaration in answer to the German Note, ibid., pp. 209-210.

April 26, the matter was discussed and resolved. Foch argued that since Germany had originally been obliged to withdraw all troops from the neutral zone as of April 10, the withdrawal of excess troops was of no consequence. Lloyd George would not entertain this argument because the insurrection in the neutral zone had negated previously established conditions. He had understood that France was to evacuate as soon as Germany did so, but it now appeared that the French were not prepared to carry out said evacuation. If France persisted in this attitude, the prime minister would be bound to tell the House of Commons that France had departed from an Allied agreement. Millerand yielded to this threat of an open rupture, stating that he hoped the Allies would decide on total German withdrawal by July 10, as opposed to the original April 10 date. Lloyd George accepted this statement. Millerand announced that French troops would evacuate Frankfort and Darmstadt as soon as the Germans reduced their forces to the twenty battalions, ten squadrons, and two batteries which they were permitted to retain. The Supreme Council decided that France should inform the German government of their decision, and that the German government should also be informed that the total evacuation of the neutral zone, originally scheduled for April 10, must be

completed by July 10.⁶

The San Remo Conference ended with the French yielding to British views on every critical issue. Lloyd George had exacted a high price from France for his statement of Allied unity. His proposal to meet with the Germans was accepted, German troops were allowed to remain in the neutral zone, and Germany was to be permitted to submit her own proposals for reparations. In order to gain complete ascendancy for the British position, the prime minister had threatened to proclaim publicly the end of the Entente in order to preserve the existing government of Germany. After gaining concessions from a French premier, frightened by increased British appeasement and the subsequent isolation of France, the prime minister returned to London to explain the crisis and its resolution to the House of Commons.

Philip Kerr's notes for the prime minister's speech illustrate both the government's ideas and what they believed to be the temper of the House of Commons. Kerr explained the crisis as the result of two misunderstandings: one being the French fear that Britain did not plan to enforce the Treaty, and the other the British fear that France was using this incident as a

6. Derby to Curzon, repeated to San Remo, April 25, 1920, F. O. 371/3784; Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council held at San Remo, April 26, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 200-226.

pretext for an occupation of the Ruhr and/or seizure of the Rhine frontier. Kerr advised the prime minister to state that all of these misunderstandings had been dispelled at San Remo, where the Allies had decided to view Germany in a spirit of trust when the German government shows a sincere desire to carry out its obligations.⁷

The prime minister began his speech by justifying the initial British support for sending additional German troops into the Ruhr on the basis of the fact that the German government had the right to suppress a revolution within its own borders. He criticized the French action, stating that Britain had been willing to reach a compromise, but he assured the House that all of those events were now part of the past. Lloyd George expressed great faith in the upcoming meeting with the Germans, emphasizing the fact that Germany must disarm as a prelude to European disarmament. The prime minister stated that he had come to believe that the establishment of a realistic fixed sum for reparations was an essential prelude to the restoration of economic stability throughout the world. Although Horatio Bottomly criticized the prime minister's remarks, and

7. Kerr to Lloyd George, Notes for a Speech, April 29, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/243, Folder 4.

demanded that the House have the correspondence between Great Britain and France during the crisis for their examination, others complimented the address. Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Samuel Hoare praised the government's refusal to interfere in the domestic affairs of Germany, and Lord Robert Cecil expressed the opinion that he wished to see Germany disarmed for only one reason: because German disarmament was necessary before France would disarm and permit the pacification of Europe. Asquith praised the San Remo Conference as a "distinct step in advance upon the road of international appeasement and reconstruction."⁸

Lloyd George had met with success in his negotiations with Millerand at San Remo. The parliamentary support his diplomatic efforts received further enhanced his international standing, for the French were forced to realize that the policies of the British government enjoyed the support of the opposition.

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8. Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons, April 29, 1920, Fifth Series, Vol. 128, cols., 1459-1534, quotation on col. 1478.

When Asquith hailed the San Remo Conference as an "advance upon the road of international appeasement and reconstruction," he summarized not only the meaning of the San Remo Conference, but the entire series of events which precipitated the Anglo-French crisis and its termination. As the government was committed to appeasement, the Liberal and Labor opposition were even more convinced of the wisdom of that course. The attitude toward Germany displayed by British personnel assigned there, even before diplomatic relations were restored, was one of constant empathy. During the breach with France, the pro-appeasement outlook of the Foreign Office clearly emerged. It would become more important when the Lloyd George era of personal diplomacy ended with his fall from power. Appeasement was becoming ingrained in all factions of British political life. The British considered it was only a matter of time until events and statesmanship thrust Germany into an acknowledged place as a great power again. The events of late 1919 and early 1920 were most decisive steps on the path

of appeasement.

The detailed examination of the Frankfort-Darmstadt affair shows how British policy makers moved from an attitude of annoyance with French aims, to distrust, and even to venom. San Remo was an attempt to demonstrate reconciliation, but the events could not be undone, and the suspicions which emerged could not be eradicated. The Anglo-French military alliance was dead; the diplomatic Entente drastically altered. Concerted diplomatic action by Britain and France was rendered difficult by diverse policy goals and poisoned by mutual suspicion.

However, France's fear of estrangement from Britain gave British policy makers a potentially decisive role as the arbiters between France and Germany. It remained to be seen whether British statesmen could sufficiently allay French fears of German military revival and convince France that appeasement would make Germany a satiated power.

PART III

THE FAILURE OF BRITISH DIPLOMACY IN EUROPE:
1920-1923

The British government believed that France would be willing to accept Britain's terms for a renewal of the Anglo-French alliance, because after the crisis of April, 1920, France had conceded to British wishes on every major issue. The price Britain exacted for her friendship was France's following Britain's lead in formulating policy toward Germany. This meant that the Anglo-French alliance was no longer an alliance of equals; rather France, frightened of isolation, was forced to subordinate her policy to the demands of British appeasement of Germany. Whenever possible, France conceded to British wishes to keep alive the shadow of the Entente. She realized that an Anglo-German understanding or British withdrawal from continental affairs would leave her at the mercy of Germany when the political and economic strength of the German nation revived.

For their part, British leaders hoped this altered Entente would make them the arbiters of Europe. However, they failed to consider that Germany would be

appeased by nothing less than the end of the Versailles system. Nor did they realize that France would sacrifice Britain's friendship rather than accept the threat to her security implicit in an end to the Versailles system.

Failing to take the fundamental flaw in their policy into account, a British diplomatic initiative began at San Remo when Lloyd George received French consent to hold a conference with the Germans at Spa. The powers would meet face to face, outside of Paris, the city symbolic of French victory and German humiliation. Britain, in her position as both the ally of France and the appeaser of Germany, would have the pivotal role in determining the future of Europe. For Britain sought European stability, but European stability required appeasement of Germany.

Beginning with the pre-Spa Allied meetings, Britain became the spokesman of German interests during the conflicts resulting from the implementation of the Treaty of Versailles. Britain prevented Allied military action to force Germany to disarm, championed German interests vis-à-vis the French and the Poles during the Upper Silesia controversy, and worked to reduce Germany's reparations burden, even at a cost to herself.

The British government feared the result of creating hostility in Germany which could erupt into a future war. Because of this frequently expressed fear,

the British government argued that Germany was the victim of Allied injustice. Because Britain had disarmed so rapidly, her leaders could not see any purpose in involving their nation in a military venture, should Germany violate or circumvent the terms of the Versailles settlement. Britain strove to prevent a causus belli resulting from German territorial grievances, and worked to keep Upper Silesia German, as she had insisted that the Rhineland remain German at the Paris Peace Conference. British statesmen, realizing that German weakness was transitory, feared the French policy of supporting Poland as a buffer state including German minorities as dangerous to Europe.

Britain's belief that appeasement was essential because German weakness was transitory and a result of the imperfect Versailles system appeared in British policy on German disarmament and Upper Silesia. But this belief emerged most clearly in the conflict over reparations. Here Britain's primary concern was German economic revival. Yet German economic revival would again make Germany the greatest economic power on the continent, a situation France labored to prevent. A strengthened German economy would also make Germany a world-wide rival to Britain as she had been in the pre-war years. In spite of this danger, Britain gave Germany every opportunity to propose a reasonable

reduction of her reparations burden, and then attempted to force France to accept the reduction. The Germans, however, refusing to cooperate with Britain, remained unappeased despite British efforts.

While Lloyd George was prime minister, the pattern of conflicts was established, which would eventually lead to the French occupation of the Ruhr. Britain persuaded France to allow Germany to negotiate aspects of the disarmament and reparations problems. In the negotiations, however, the Germans failed to meet the most rudimentary of Anglo-French requirements. This was followed by a threat of sanctions which Britain consented to in the hope of never carrying them out. When Germany failed to meet her obligations, Britain attempted to forestall French action. The duplicity of British policy led to the French invasion of the Ruhr, without British consent, in January 1923.

The French invasion of the Ruhr marked the nadir of British influence in continental affairs. Britain, disapproving of the invasion, aided Germany as much as possible in making the Ruhr invasion a failure. During the Ruhr crisis, the European stability that Britain had worked for remained as illusory after four years of peace as it had been in 1918.

British statesmanship after the Paris Peace Conference must bear much of the blame for the crisis of

1923. In their desire to appease Germany, the British government augmented, rather than allayed, French fears. Had Lloyd George stood by the Treaty of Versailles and forced Germany to disarm, France might have appeased Germany in other areas of contention. But Germany's failure to disarm and Britain's failure to renew the 1919 Treaty of Guarantee forced the French government to remain primarily concerned about their national security. British policy led to French fears of a mounting German revanche. French governments were in time propelled into uncompromising positions, even on relatively minor matters, while the British sought compromise.

The period of the failure of British diplomacy ended with France hostile toward Britain and with Germany unappeased by British efforts. Britain, in her role as the mediator between victor and vanquished, lost the trust of her partner in victory and failed to conciliate the vanquished. The pattern of failure was established by the time the Spa conference adjourned in July of 1920.

CHAPTER VIII

Lloyd George Attempts to Take the Initiative in European Diplomacy: May - July, 1920

Lloyd George's goal for the Conference at Spa was to discuss the Treaty of Versailles with the German government in the hope that new agreements could be reached, which, having been worked out in conjunction with the German government, would be willingly enforced by them. He hoped that all of the major outstanding issues, disarmament of Germany, restitution, and reparations and indemnities could be transformed from focal points of international tension into issues which all of the interested parties could resolve in concert. In order to bring about this relaxation of international tension, the prime minister tried to give the Germans every possible option to make their own proposals at Spa. Once the Germans presented their own plans, Lloyd George would have the pivotal role of the Conference because Anglo-German agreement would isolate France.

For the British prime minister, a success at Spa could give him the decisive role in European diplomacy, and satisfy the desire of his government and his countrymen to stabilize Europe, thus freeing Britain from continental commitments.

Before meeting with the Germans at Spa, Lloyd George had promised Millerand that Great Britain and France would reach a prior understanding concerning unexecuted provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. He made this promise because continued Anglo-French discord would doom Spa to failure for two reasons: French recalcitrance could prevent the general rapprochement Lloyd George sought, and the German government could take advantage of Allied division to continue its policy of non-fulfillment of the Treaty based on the assumption that Britain would restrain France from using military coercion to enforce it.

Thus, conferences were to be held to attempt to reach an Anglo-French accord concerning the major questions of German disarmament and reparations. Although Britain had shown more tolerance than France of German infractions of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty, German disarmament, an essential prelude to European disarmament, was seen by the British government as a key to a durable peace. On the subject of reparations and indemnities, Britain and France were as divided as

ever, with France wanting all the Treaty allowed her, and Britain wanting the question of reparations and indemnities settled in a way which the Germans would not consider crippling to their economy. With a successful Conference at Spa the prime minister's foremost goal, a period of hectic negotiations began after San Remo.

On May 6, Lloyd George asked Derby to arrange an informal meeting with Millerand at Belcaire, Kent, the home of Sir Philip Sassoon, where the prime minister was to remain for a rest on the advice of his doctor. Because Lloyd George felt that most of the progress at San Remo had taken place in informal conversations, he desired another informal meeting in order to discuss plans for Spa. Wishing to postpone the Spa Conference until after the German elections because he feared the present German government could fall, he asked Derby to discuss this matter with Millerand at once. The prime minister had concluded that a failure at Spa could destroy any "prospect of obtaining a substantial realisation of some of the terms of the Treaty." He felt that disarmament of Germany could be achieved, with only the possible exception of rifles held by German civilians. Therefore, the prime minister reasoned, the greatest problem at Spa would be securing German acceptance of obligations to aid in the rebuilding of France.

The only way to obtain German acceptance of her obligations was for Germany herself to be induced to work with the Allies in pledging future credit in a reasonable amount. Lloyd George felt that such a scheme would avoid future friction when Germany again became a great power. In order for Spa to succeed, Lloyd George believed, "It is above everything essential that the Germans should not hear the sound of a crack in the alliance at Spa."¹

The prime minister's thinking revealed that he wished to conciliate the Germans by avoiding demands which they believed could not be carried out. However, he had come to realize that the Allies must maintain unity if any results were to be derived from the efforts he had initiated.

When Millerand came to Kent for the conversations of May 15-16, the tension of the period prior to San Remo was absent. The possibility of steps toward unification of Anglo-French policy goals was present.

This first in the series of Inter-Allied Conferences revealed that Lloyd George had been carefully planning proposals for the Spa Conference which he wished to make to Millerand. He wanted disarmament to

1. Lloyd George to Derby, May 6, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/33.

be placed first on the agenda at Spa. To Millerand, he insisted that discussion would be on the basis of the Treaty of Versailles rather than an attempt to revise it, arguing that disarmament clearly took precedence over questions of finance because the Allies did not wish to undertake military operations to enforce the Treaty. After Millerand consented to place a priority on disarmament, it was agreed that France should draw up a list of German violations of the disarmament clauses to be presented to the German government before Spa.²

During the afternoon of May 15, the two statesmen conferred, along with the respective finance ministers. It had been agreed that France would get 55% of the total of reparations and indemnities while Great Britain received 25%. The French Finance Minister, François Marsal, had drawn up a scheme to divide the total of reparations and indemnities into classes based on priority which would have in fact further diminished the British share. However, the figures of 55% of the total to France and 25% of the total to Britain had been accepted by the Dominions only after extensive persuasion. Lloyd George dismissed Marsal's plan, stating that the

2. British Secretary's Notes of a Conversation between the Heads of the British and French Governments, May 15, 1920, 10:15 A.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 253-260.

proportions fixed represented exhaustive study. He agreed with the Dominion view that, "damage to flesh and blood was at least as important as damage to bricks and mortar." The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Austin Chamberlain, wished to work with the plan drawn up by the French financial expert Avenol at San Remo. Avenol's scheme gave Germany the right to present estimates to the Reparations Commission. Lloyd George praised the Avenol scheme which would work on a sliding scale of Germany's prosperity. Chamberlain presented a draft proposal for reparations, based on the Avenol scheme, which estimated a yield of 100 milliards of gold marks per annum. Millerand flatly rejected this, stating that the British proposal did not give the Allies sufficient reparations. Chamberlain asked the French to introduce a proposal of their own at the next meeting.³

The French proposal, introduced on May 16, included a scheme to grant a priority on reparations payment for rebuilding the devastated areas of France. Lloyd George refused to consider it because of the political effect it would have on the Dominions. Although they could not agree, the Conference ended with

3. British Secretary's Notes of a Conversation between the Heads of the British and French Governments, May 15, 1920, 3:45 P.M., *ibid.*, pp. 261-272, quotation on p. 263.

the hope that a complete Anglo-French accord could be reached before Spa.⁴

The private conversations between Lloyd George and Millerand had taken place in an atmosphere of cordiality, with much discussion occurring as they walked about the gardens of the estate.⁵ Lloyd George had been successful in getting the question of German disarmament placed first on the agenda at Spa. The French premier had not become acrimonious when the British presented low reparations figures.

In the private discussions, Lloyd George reiterated the British position that there must be no military action against Germany. However, to allay French fears, he coupled that remark with the promise that the Spa Conference was to discuss, but not to revise, the Treaty of Versailles.

Lloyd George's assurance to Millerand that Britain would stand by the Treaty was necessary because the events of April still loomed large in French minds. Derby reported, "At the present moment there is no doubt that the anti-British feeling here is worse than

4. British Secretary's Notes of a Conversation between the Heads of the British and French Governments, May 16, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 274-279.

5. Riddell's Diary, May 15, 1920, Riddell, pp. 193-194.

it has been at any time since I have been in France."⁶
The state of French opinion remained a critical aspect of the problem of planning the Spa Conference.

In early June, Millerand asked for another conversation with Lloyd George in Paris. Millerand believed that his political position would be improved if his opponents were deprived of the argument that the French premier went anywhere the British prime minister wished.⁷ Lloyd George, however, was not inspired to go to Paris to raise Millerand's stature and thus diminish his political difficulties. Consequently, Lloyd George agreed to the private conversation which Millerand had sought. It was held at Sassoon's estate on June 20 rather than in Paris.

Prior to the conference with Millerand, the prime minister sought the views of his government. At a meeting of the Cabinet on June 7, he reported that the Spa Conference had been postponed until July 5, but Millerand had requested an additional Allied conference at Brussels to be held two or three days before the German arrival at Spa. No objection was raised to the postponement, and no changes in the policy being

6. Derby to Curzon, June 9, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/40.

7. Derby to Lloyd George, June 4, 1920, ibid., F/53/1/38.

pursued by the prime minister were suggested.⁸

In order to obtain complete freedom in negotiations on the question of reparations at the pre-Spa meetings, the prime minister met with the British Empire delegation on June 18. Chamberlain reminded the Dominion representatives that they had already accepted a 25% share of reparations for the British Empire. He reported that Millerand was anxious to fix a sensible sum so that Germany could establish the credit she needed to pay. Basil L. Blackett of the treasury described a scheme to establish a maximum figure for reparations due, arguing that it was in Germany's interest to accept this simplified method rather than try to fulfill the complex Treaty obligations. The problem with the proposal, the delegation concluded, appeared to be that, "The Germans might take the line that the terms of the scheme were wholly excessive . . . and might prefer to decline to accept the scheme even though they could carry it out and fall back on the Treaty which the Allies could not enforce. . . ." No real objection was raised to the scheme, with all united in the hope that a fixed sum could be agreed to as soon as

8. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, June 7, 1920, CAB 33 (20), CAB 23/21.

possible.⁹

Lloyd George had the consent of the Dominion representatives to pursue the reparations policy he desired, but that alone was not the significance of the meeting. While promising France that Spa was not to be a revision of the Treaty, the prime minister and his colleagues, in private consultation, fully accepted the fact that the bargaining position of the German government was strengthened by the knowledge that the Treaty could not be enforced. Enforcement of the Treaty would require military action which the British government had ruled out. Thus they came to consider aspects of the Treaty which were particularly repugnant to the Germans as negotiable items. Lloyd George's colleagues were aware that the goal of the Spa Conference was to alter the Versailles settlement to make it acceptable to Germany.

Lloyd George could not allow the French government to be aware of Britain's willingness to alter the Treaty. Thus, in his discussions with the French, the prime minister emphasized the need for German disarmament, for that was the only question on which the Allied agreed.

During a day of conversations with Millerand on June 20, Lloyd George again urged German disarmament

9. Conclusions of a Meeting of the British Empire Delegation, June 18, 1920, CAB 29/28.

in the strongest terms. However, when Millerand suggested that the only way to be sure of Germany's sincere desire to disarm was to force them to hand weapons over to the Allies, Lloyd George replied in vague terms. Suggestion of this harsh step had made the prime minister think twice. Lloyd George also told Millerand that the Allies might not get the reparations figures they proposed. He considered the figures to be a starting point of negotiations rather than a demand.¹⁰

After their short private talk in the garden ended, the prime ministers sat down with their financial experts. Millerand accepted the procedure which Lloyd George had suggested for Spa: permit the Germans to make a reparations proposal first. The French premier then raised the question of whether Great Britain would consent to an extended Allied occupation of Germany if Germany failed to satisfy Allied demands. Skirting the issue, Lloyd George replied that a show of Allied unity would frighten the Germans. The prime minister accepted Millerand's suggestion for an Anglo-French joint declaration stating that the Allies would take strong action to destroy German war materials.

10. Notes of a Conversation held at Lympe, June 20, 1920, 10:30 A.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 308-309.

After having consented to a threatening declaration, Lloyd George suggested that a reduction in the cost of the army of occupation of Germany would leave more money for reparations. He gave France the concession that Great Britain would not ask for the capitalization of her share of reparations within the next five years if the annuity scheme was accepted. Although this concession did not apply to the Dominions, it did provide an increase in the amount of ready capital to rebuild the devastated areas, thereby aiding French acceptance of the proposal.¹¹

During a discussion in the afternoon, with Marshal Foch and General Weygand present, all agreed that destruction of German war material had to be speeded up. Later that day, when the difficult subject of reparations was again raised, Lloyd George observed that a suggestion that the Reparations Commission take over German customs would arouse resentment in Germany and thereby hurt the Allies. Millerand agreed, and he again raised the question of occupation of Germany in case of German default. Lloyd George did not openly dispute the French premier's statements, but he would only go as far as to give the Reparations Commission

11. British Secretary's Notes of a Conference held at Lympe, June 20, 1920, 10:55 A.M., ibid., pp. 310-318.

the power to suggest tax increases to the German government should they fail to pay their debts. If Germany remained in default after failing to follow Reparations Commission suggestions, the Allies would discuss necessary steps to be taken.¹²

The Conference had proceeded in an atmosphere of cordiality. Great Britain and France had agreed on a reparations counter-proposal to present to the Germans should the German offer prove unsatisfactory. Lloyd George and Millerand went to Boulogne to begin a round of meetings appearing as if the crisis of April belonged to the distant past, for they both had made concessions with the knowledge that Spa would fail if the Allies could not reach an accord before the meeting.

12. British Secretary's Notes of a Conference held at Lympe, June 20, 1920, 5:00 P.M., *ibid.*, pp. 319-323; British Secretary's Notes of a Conference held at Lympe, June 20, 1920, 6:50 P.M., *ibid.*, pp. 329-331. The report of the financial experts accepted at the June 20, 1920, 6:50 P.M. meeting at Lympe was summarized by Chamberlain for the Cabinet as follows: 1) The total German debt shall be fixed to include the cost of armies of occupation, reparation including the payment of the Belgian war debt, an annuity of 3 milliards gold marks commencing May 1, 1921 and payable half-yearly for 42 years, and an additional annuity commencing May 1, 1926 payable half-yearly for 37 years to be raised from 3 to 4 milliards gold marks in 1931, 2) It would be open to Germany to pay in advance, and such payment will result in the reduction of subsequent annuities, 3) Germany would be authorized by the Reparations Commission to assign as security for loans any asset of the Empire, including the Customs, and the Reparations Commission may permit Germany to retain up to 20% of the proceeds of these loans for her own needs. Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, June 26, 1920, C. P. 1533, CAB 24/108.

At an Anglo-French conference at Boulogne on June 21, Lloyd George was again adamant on German disarmament, considering it essential because the Allies would have difficulties in rearming. Lloyd George was especially concerned with the amount of small arms individual Germans held. When Foch said this was a deliberate policy rather than the result of domestic unrest, Lloyd George replied: "The time had come now when the Germans must be made to hear the crack of the whip. It was much more dangerous for the Germans than it was for ourselves to have all these small arms distributed about the country undestroyed."¹³

When the full Conference of Boulogne, which included representatives of Italy, Belgium and Japan met from June 21-22 to discuss reparation, a picture of Anglo-French harmony was presented, for the basic percentages of 55% to France and 25% to the British Empire had to stand the assault of the smaller nations who wanted larger shares. Lloyd George consistently argued that, among the Allies, France had suffered most. Since the total amount to be taken from Germany was not at issue, but only the distribution of that unknown

13. Draft British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of the Supreme Council, June 21, 1920, 12:30 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 340-344; British Secretary's Notes of a Conference held at Boulogne, June 21, 1920, 4:00 P.M., ibid., pp. 351-357.

quantity, the French could only react with optimism to British support of their position. At Boulogne, it was decided that another Allied reparations conference should meet at Brussels July 2-3, and that the Allies should replace their charges d'affaires in Germany with ambassadors at the earliest possible date.¹⁴

Although accord appeared restored during the period prior to Spa, much of this harmony was a result of Lloyd George's personal diplomacy. He fostered understanding with France to further his own goal of a successful encounter with the Germans which could result in the European pacification that Britain had desired since the peace. However, his fundamental commitment toward conciliation of Germany remained the guiding principle in negotiations with France. Reparations were adjusted to reach a figure the Germans could accept rather than calculated to exact all that the Allies were entitled to under the Treaty of Versailles. To France, the choice was between acceptance of the British position and isolation. Yet Lloyd George's strong stand on the need to force Germany to disarm

14. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at Boulogne, June 21, 1920, 6:30 P.M., ibid., pp. 359-364; British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Conference held at Boulogne, June 22, 1920, 10:00 A.M., ibid., pp. 365-370; British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Conference held at Boulogne, June 22, 1920, 11:15 A.M., ibid., pp. 371-379.

provided Millerand with great hope for a potential victory for France. A French concession to Great Britain on reparations, especially when cushioned by the promise that Britain would not take her share for five years in order to expedite the rebuilding of the devastated areas, was a small price to pay for the security which German disarmament could provide. However, despite all movement toward restoring the Anglo-French alliance, the two nations went to Brussels and Spa with a fundamental divergence in attitude toward Germany remaining.

Spa, however, would not mean an active British role in strengthening the relationships between the victors of 1918. This attitude emerged in a Cabinet discussion over a renewed commitment to Belgium. The Cabinet learned that there was no question of a treaty at that time, but Britain had been requested to send a military representative to take part in purely technical discussions to decide what plan should be adopted if any emergency should arise. The belief that there would be difficulty in avoiding commitments, once the nation entered into technical military conversations, was voiced at once, for the lesson of 1914 was that even conversations had become morally binding. A fear of Parliamentary reaction was expressed, since members would see military conversations as a step toward an

entangling alliance at a time when the Anglo-American guarantee to France was suspended pending American action. Such conversations were considered to be premature because Germany could not take offensive action in the foreseeable future. The fact that Germany was about to be disarmed was thought to give the nominally defensive purpose of an Anglo-French-Belgian alliance an offensive character. In addition, stress was laid on the importance of reciprocity in any agreement of this nature. The Cabinet concluded that, " . . . a British guarantee which might some day become necessary, should only be given in return for some great reciprocal stipulation, such as, for example, the adoption of a reasonable attitude by France and Belgium towards the revival of Germany."¹⁵ The British commitment to the revival of Germany had not been broken; the British government continued to look upon a role in a military alliance with derision.

From the outset, the British government had viewed German disarmament as a prelude toward European disarmament. Lloyd George's strong stand in making arrangements for Spa should be seen in this light. Uniting with France to force Germany to disarm did not represent a shift in policy, but it was a result of

15. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, June 30, 1920, CAB 38 (20), CAB 23/21.

growing awareness that the need to stabilize Franco-German relations could not be satisfied without German disarmament's progressing. There was little awareness that German military activities constituted not only infractions of the Treaty of Versailles and a threat to European peace, but also a threat to Great Britain herself.

On June 10, the British government was informed that the French dominated Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control had been correct in reporting that Germany did not intend to abolish conscription. Men were allowed to enlist for one to three months and a cadre of non-commissioned officers was submerged in the Sicherheitspolizei while former Freikorps members were being incorporated into the Reichswehr instead of disbanded. In addition, the German government had done nothing to dissolve the Einwohnerwehr or to requisition arms in private hands. The abolition of military schools had only led to increased militarism in the civilian schools, especially in the universities. A report from Brigadier-General J. H. Morgan, dated June 25, specifically dealing with the situation in Prussia, showed that the Freikorps had not been abolished, but had been organized into the supposedly prohibited "economic detachments" (Wirtschaftsabteilungen). Quartered in barracks, they did little labor and received

the salary of a private in the Reichswehr. In addition, large numbers of Sicherheitspolizei were in towns and villages with tiny populations and did no police work.¹⁶ Morgan's reports indicated that British military representatives in Germany had finally realized that Germany intended to circumvent the military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. This realization effected decisions in London.

During his May 15 meeting with Millerand, Lloyd George had requested a French memorandum concerning violation of the disarmament clauses of the Treaty. It showed that Germany had violated almost every stipulation. Consequently, the British General Staff concluded that the French had presented a fair picture of the situation, but commented that the German government was too much in the hands of the military party to take effective action. Although sympathetic to past efforts of the German government, the British General Staff report concluded, "Now that the elections have increased the power of the military party and weakened the strength of the Government, it is of utmost importance to insist on the complete execution of the military terms

16. Précis of the Third Report by Brigadier-General J. H. Morgan, June 10, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. X, pp. 134-137; Report on a visit to the Königsberg Effective Committee, by General Morgan, June 25, 1920, ibid., pp. 146-152.

of the Treaty, with the sole exception of an increase in the number of police."¹⁷

After the British General Staff had urged execution of the military provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Lloyd George departed for Belgium with compelling reasons to take a strong stand on disarmament. Nevertheless, the prime minister still sought a way to avoid confrontation with Germany.

At the first meeting in Brussels on July 2, Lloyd George cautioned Millerand against confronting the Germans with disarmament demands in specific areas at Spa. He argued that in some cases delay could be excusable. The Allies might be able to yield a little on small matters. Lloyd George asked that a report showing willful cases of delay or concealment be presented at a later meeting. In order to allow the Germans time to reply, it was decided that the Chairman of the Spa Conference should address the Germans on disarmament at the first meeting. This decision, urged by Lloyd George, was adopted at the July 3 session of the Brussels Conference.¹⁸

17. Millerand's Memorandum on the Execution of the Treaty of Peace with Germany, June 4, 1920, C. P. 1381, CAB 24/106; Notes by the Secretary of the Cabinet covering statements by the Admiralty, Air Ministry, and War Office, June 17, 1920, C. P. 1483, CAB 24/107.

18. British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Meeting at Brussels, July 2, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 392-397; British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Meeting at Brussels, July 3, 1920, ibid., pp. 410-418.

The subject of reparations again led to conflict over the amounts the various Allies were to receive. Voices in France were already questioning whether 55% could be adequate without the prior establishment of a fixed sum.¹⁹ In order to prevent the reopening of the reparations question between Britain and France, Lloyd George refused to discuss the Belgian protest that the amount allotted her was insufficient, commenting that 8% for Belgium was too high a figure. When the subject of reparations discussions at Spa was raised, Lloyd George insisted that it would be harmful to establish a procedure in advance, for the German government would experience difficulty in formulating proposals. He assured Millerand that Inter-Allied conferences during the Spa Conference would prevent the lack of an agenda from allowing the Germans to divide the Allies.²⁰

The final pre-Spa meeting saw the first altercation between Lloyd George and Millerand since San Remo. The subject was coal due from Germany. The British proposed that Germany herself be asked to produce a

19. Derby to Curzon, June 24, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/12/3/38.

20. Notes of a Meeting in Lloyd George's Room, Brussels, July 2, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 400-405; Notes of a Meeting held in Lloyd George's Room, Brussels, July 3, 1920, ibid., pp. 406-409; British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at the Palace des Academies, July 3, 1920, ibid., pp. 411-421.

workable plan for delivery of stipulated amounts of coal, while the French, who had only received 54.2% of the coal due, wanted the German government to be forced to accept an absolute priority to deliver coal demanded by the Reparations Commission before the coal could be applied to any other purpose. With the support of the Italian delegate, Count Carlo Sforza, Lloyd George's view prevailed.²¹

For the sake of appeasing Germany, at Brussels Lloyd George had prevented the establishment of a precise agenda for the Spa Conference. He had insisted that Germany have the right to make her own proposals on coal deliveries and reparations. Moreover, he had maintained that Germany be allowed to formulate her own plan for disarmament, and he had secured a procedure to be followed at Spa giving the Germans the opportunity to negotiate every aspect of reparations as well as some aspects of the disarmament question. However, the German delegation, aware that proposals would be expected from them, left for Spa on July 3 without them. Nevertheless they could reasonably expect to find the British delegation sympathetic to their problems.

British professional diplomats urged their

21. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at the Palace des Academies, July 3, 1920, ibid., pp. 411-421.

government to support the German position on reparations. The newly appointed British Ambassador to Germany, Viscount D'Abernon, cautioned the British delegation to the Spa Conference that an Allied failure to take German economic problems into account could cause the Berlin government to fall and strengthen the extremists. Waterlow, of the Rhineland department of the Foreign Office, warned the British delegation to the Spa Conference that the annuity scheme, agreed to by Britain and France as a counter-proposal, was far beyond Germany's capacity to pay. He believed the scheme would only be practicable if it became part of an international loan agreement. Unless the Allies could reduce their demands to a figure the Germans considered reasonable, it was feared the Spa Conference would break up. Such a collapse would result in recriminations among the powers, chaos in Germany, and French occupation of additional German territory.²² Within the British government, the fear that reparations demands would cause a collapse of the Spa Conference led to the conviction that an attempt to exact a higher reparations sum than Germany believed she could pay was

22. D'Abernon to Curzon, July 4, 1920, F. O. 371/4738; Note on the German Situation by Mr. Waterlow, July 5, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. X, pp. 267-269; Same note with minutes including instructions to send to Curzon at Spa, F. O. 371/4726.

not worth the cost: a conflict for an indefinite period.

The Spa Conference had been Lloyd George's idea. He based his preparation for the Conference on the hope that a display of Anglo-French unity would induce Germany to enforce the Treaty of Versailles. The prime minister's work was cut out for him, for only a combination of concession and demand on the part of the Allies, coupled with tact and skill from all parties, could make Spa the beginning of a general European appeasement.

The Spa Conference convened on July 5, 1920 with the Belgian President of the Council, Leon Delacroix, in the Chair. When Delacroix proposed placing military questions first on the agenda, the German Chancellor, Konstantin von Fehrenbach, proposed that military questions be examined within the context of Germany's overall difficulties. This suggestion fell on deaf ears. The Conference adjourned, pending the arrival of the German Defense Minister, Dr. Otto Gessler, and the Commander-in-Chief General Hans von Seeckt.²³

Gessler began the July 6 meeting by stating that Germany had tried her best to carry out the Treaty. He

23. British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 5, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 422-424.

argued that internal disturbances required an army of 200,000 men. Gessler asserted that economic problems retarded demobilization because released men could not find jobs. The German Foreign Minister, Dr. Walter von Simons, added that because the present government had only been in power for a few days, it could not take effective steps for the reduction of the army. Lloyd George replied that the German government failed to realize the immense gap between Treaty requirements and what had been done. He observed that the danger of militarism, rather than Bolshevism, was Germany's greatest difficulty. The British prime minister frankly stated that the Allies were tired of excuses; they wanted specific plans to be formulated for carrying out the Treaty. Fehrenbach claimed that it was difficult for the government to requisition small arms; and he followed that statement with more excuses. Lloyd George, however, reiterated his demand for a precise plan for disarmament, complaining that if the Germans intended Spa to be a place to give excuses rather than a plan for the execution of the Treaty, there was no reason to remain at the Conference. The German delegation promised a plan the next day.²⁴

24. Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 6, 1920, ibid., pp. 431-441.

On July 7, Simons declared that the German delegation, after prolonged study, remained convinced that the account of the internal situation in Germany of the previous day was substantially correct. He feared serious unrest if the German government was compelled to use force to obtain small arms in the hands of their opponents. In compliance with the Allied request, Seeckt began an account of what arms Germany possessed, what she had delivered, and what she still owed to the Allies. When Seeckt completed his account of small arms in German hands, Lloyd George declared that all of the complex calculations meant that there were approximately one million men armed by the German government and two million rifles in the hands of the population. Seeckt replied that the only way small arms in the hands of citizens could be retrieved by the government would be if the Allies permitted Germany to retain a larger army. He concluded that disarmament of the population could be accomplished within a year if forcible operations were successful. Later Seeckt admitted that the Einwohnerwheren had been armed by the German government. After discussing areas where he believed Allied demands had been satisfied, Seeckt asked that the date for the reduction of the Reichswehr to 100,000 men be postponed to October 10, 1921, that an addition of 300 army doctors and 735 administrative

officials be made to the number of officers permitted the Reichswehr, that an increase in the number of light machine guns be permitted, and that the German army have the right to enlist men for a probationary period after which they could be rejected as unfit. Following Seeckt's statement, the Conference adjourned for the day.²⁵ Seeckt's blunt and self-confident manner, and his requests for modification of the Treaty could only harm the possibility of a conciliatory response by the Allies.

After the adjournment, in informal conversation, Lloyd George made it clear that the Allies would not tolerate Seeckt's suggestions, which were tantamount to a refusal to comply with the Treaty for another fifteen months. He expected the German government to declare it an offense to possess arms and to enforce the law. Simons' reply again stressed the difficulties of the German government. He spoke of German weakness with a humility which contrasted favorably with Seeckt's self-assurance. He told the Allies that a law forbidding private possession of arms had failed. A plan showing how the Reichswehr could maintain order had been prepared.²⁶

25. British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 7, 1920, ibid., pp. 455-461.

26. Ibid., pp. 461-464.

On July 8, Foch prepared a note for the Germans stating that there was no cause for fresh delays in the reduction of the German army to 100,000 men, adding that the reduction of the Reichswehr must take place by September 1, 1920. The marshal asserted that the Reichswehr, with the help of the Sicherheitspolizei, provided sufficient force to sequester arms still in the hands of the population. Lloyd George considered the note a request for Germany to do the impossible. Public opinion in Britain would not permit troops to be called up to enforce this demand. Pointing out that it was impossible for an army of 100,000 men to collect two million rifles, he praised Seeckt's account of affairs for its accuracy. Lloyd George proposed that the Germans be given until January 1, 1921 to reduce the size of the Reichswehr. Millerand reacted by reminding the Allies that the German army should have been reduced to 100,000 men three months prior to Spa, according to the Treaty. The only reason, he argued, that the Germans proposed disarmament at all was pressure from Lloyd George. The French premier then reminded Lloyd George that he had agreed to meet the Germans on the condition that the Allies concur on terms which did not alter the Treaty. Although the Belgian premier supported Millerand in principle, he said that the Allies could not risk going into the Ruhr while

German civilians were armed. Lloyd George would only consent to an Allied occupation of the Ruhr if the Germans failed to comply with reasonable terms. He proposed yielding to Seeckt's requests for additional army doctors, administrative officials, and a reserve of light arms. Millerand conceded to the January 1, 1921 date, but included in the protocol a provision that the Allies might proceed to occupy additional German territory if the Allied Commission of Control in Germany reported that the German government was not taking adequate steps to disarm.²⁷

Allied decisions were presented to the Germans on July 8. Lloyd George opened the meeting with a justification of Allied demands, cushioned with a statement of Allied consent to Seeckt's requests accepted by his colleagues at the previous Inter-Allied session. Simons requested time for the German delegation to study the Allied position. To allow the German delegation to consult Berlin, the Conference recessed until the next day. On July 9, after objecting to the threat of occupation of additional territory if disarmament was not carried out fell on deaf ears, the Germans agreed

27. Draft Despatch to the German Government, July 8, 1920, *ibid.*, p. 469; British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held in a Private Room at the Villa Fraineuse, Spa, July 8, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 470-481.

to sign a protocol on disarmament.²⁸

When the Allies met to formulate the terms, Lloyd George had worked to make the protocol as acceptable to Germany as possible. The protocol allowed Germany the concessions Lloyd George had insisted upon, including an extension to January 1, 1921 of the reduction of the Reichswehr to 100,000 men. Germany was also to be permitted to retain a number of troops, to be specified by the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control, to remain in the neutral zone until October 1, 1920, and 300 medical officers and 735 administrative officials were not to be included in the 4,000 officers permitted by the Treaty. In addition, the reserves of rifles and machine guns were to be increased. In turn, Germany was obliged immediately to disarm the Einwohnerwehr and Sicherheitspolizei, to issue a proclamation demanding surrender of arms held by civilians, to abolish conscription, and to complete naval and air force disarmament. The protocol ended with a warning that, " . . . the Allies will proceed to the occupation of a further portion of German territory, whether it be the region of the Ruhr or any other, and they will not evacuate it until the day when all the above conditions

28. British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 8, 1920, ibid., pp. 481-489; British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 9, 1920, ibid., pp. 491-495.

have been completely carried out."²⁹

Lloyd George had pressured the French into granting some of the concessions requested by Seeckt before he would consent to a threat of occupation of German territory if Germany failed to disarm. These concessions did represent the potential of increased military strength for Germany, for they gave the German army the right to have 1,035 more officers. These men, although serving in medical and administrative capacities, would free others for the task of training recruits. Thanks to Lloyd George, Germany would be allowed to retain a larger quantity of light arms than the Treaty permitted, and to remain in the neutral zone for a longer period. Lloyd George granted these concessions to a German government which had never shown any intention of disarming unless forced to do so. Future German recalcitrance could result in forcing concessions on France, for Britain had allowed Germany further delay, despite past evidence of Germany's bad faith. British actions can be explained on the basis of the British government's fear of the consequences of military coercion, a fear which continued to lead to appeasement of Germany.

Because of German failure to submit an acceptable

29. Protocol of the Conference at Spa, July 9, 1920, C. P. 1644, CAB 24/109.

disarmament proposal, Anglo-French conflict ensued, demands had to be made to the Germans, and Lloyd George had reluctantly consented to the threat of force. Thus, his hope of a conciliatory atmosphere at Spa had fallen by the wayside. Although at least one British diplomat, Lord D'Abernon, believed that Lloyd George was himself at fault for bringing up the issue of disarmament at the first session of the Conference, the German proposals could only have been hurt by the impression the German delegation created. Seeckt projected, "A very haughty demeanour and extreme military stiffness . . . in striking contrast with the rather dejected appearance of the German civilians."³⁰ The strain of the Conference weakened the German government. Before the July 9 signing of the protocol, Minister of Defense Gessler resigned.³¹

At this point, the British delegation could only hope that the threat of force was enough to inspire Germany to disarm, and that France, considering British acquiescence in an occupation of the Ruhr a great victory, would be persuaded to make concessions on coal and reparations.

30. D'Abernon's Diary, July 5-6, 1920, Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), Vol. I, pp. 60-62, quotation on p. 61.

31. Curzon to Foreign Office, July 9, 1920, F. O. 371/4738.

Beginning on July 9, the question of German failure to deliver the required amount of coal to France almost destroyed the Conference. During the first discussion of the subject, Simons expressed his government's willingness to enter into an agreement concerning coal. To this Millerand replied that the Treaty of Versailles was just such an agreement. When German experts were brought to a meeting of the Conference the next day, a representative of the mine owners, Hugo Stinnes, made a defiant speech declaring Allied demands impossible, and stating that they could not be enforced even with the use of troops. The destruction of French mines, he alleged, had been due to military necessity. He denounced the French use of black troops in the spring 1920 occupation of the five towns. Later, the German delegation officially apologized for his conduct.³²

The official German apology had not undone the damage caused by Stinnes' remarks. All of the Allied leaders were angered. However, Lloyd George, determined that this incident would not destroy the Conference, told his colleagues that he believed the experts

32. British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 9, 1920, 4:30 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 507-512; British Secretary's Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, ibid., pp. 519-524; Curzon to Foreign Office, July 10, 1920, F. O. 371/4738.

should discuss the matter as the Germans proposed and try to discover some method through which deliveries of coal could be made, "without undue detriment to Germany." When the Germans submitted documents, Lloyd George insisted that they provide a basis for discussion, cautioning French leaders against allowing this crisis to cause the fall of the German government and subsequent extremist takeover. He urged that the Allies unite in their desire to work to help the Germans solve their problems. The British prime minister argued that no imposition of terms could induce the German miners to greater productivity.³³

In his hope of resolving the coal crisis without a breach, at the July 12 meeting, Lloyd George presented himself to the Germans in the role of the honest broker, a role which he believed was justified because Britain was not to receive any coal. When the Allies proposed to reduce the Reparations Commission figure of 2.4 million tons of coal per month to 2 million tons per month, the German delegation found that unacceptable. When they proposed that the productivity of German miners be linked to the food crisis in Germany, Lloyd

33. British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Conference held at Spa, July 10, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, pp. 531-533; British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Conference held at Spa, July 12, 1920, 10:30 A.M., ibid., pp. 564-573.

George saw a possible resolution of the coal question in that German proposal. In conclusion, the prime minister stated that,

He wished to beg that the Germans should not throw the Allies back on the provisions of the Treaty. If the machinery of the Treaty had to be applied it would be bad from an international point of view, and it would be particularly unfortunate, as it would show the Conference had failed to reach agreement.³⁴

Before the German delegation, the prime minister openly stated that a failure to reach a new agreement at Spa, which would force the Allies to carry out the Treaty, was repugnant to him. Because of his statement the Germans then could be sure of what they had reason to suspect throughout the Spring of 1920: Britain was willing to alter substantially the Treaty of Versailles to foster Anglo-German rapprochement. Lloyd George tried his best to aid Germany in reducing her burdens when he argued that the Germans were justified in their complaint that food shortages reduced the productivity of the miners. The Germans, however, did not aid the prime minister in forcing concessions further on France by producing a suitable plan of their own for solving the coal problem. They left the solution of the coal question to Lloyd George in the

34. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting, July 12, 1920, 3:30 P.M., ibid., pp. 573-579, quotation on p. 578.

hope that his refusal to agree to French demands would provide a settlement advantageous to Germany.

At an Allied meeting later in the afternoon of July 12, Lloyd George picked up the German suggestion of increasing food supply to the miners. Millerand agreed that this course provided a possible solution. Unfortunately, the German proposal introduced the next day was considered so highly inadequate that Lloyd George was forced to suggest calling Foch and Wilson to Spa, with word of their summoning being released to the press.³⁵ Again, the prime minister had acted in the hope that the Germans would not call an Allied bluff, for if he had military action in mind, he would not let the press know before the government was consulted.

On July 13, the Germans proposed to deliver 1.4 million tons of coal per month from October 1920 to October 1921, and 1.7 million tons per month thereafter. This offer represented the greatest fears of the prime minister, for it allowed no room for compromise and forced outright rejection. In the morning of July 14, Foch was asked what an occupation of the Ruhr would entail. After the Marshal's explanation, Lloyd George stated that he would consent only if certain conditions

35. British Secretary's Draft Notes of an Allied Meeting held at Spa, July 12, 1920, 4:30 P.M., ibid., pp. 579-580; Notes of a Meeting held at Spa, July 13, 1920, ibid., pp. 582-585.

were met. There must be a stipulation that the Allies would withdraw once the proper amount of coal had been supplied; black troops must not be used; proper supply of food for the German miners must be provided; the market value of the coal should be credited to the German reparations account; and the occupation of population centers should be avoided unless absolutely essential. After placing conditions on his consent to an occupation, Lloyd George insisted that the crediting of the value of the coal to the German reparations debt was something he would stand by. After acrimonious discussion, Millerand was forced to accept this change in the Treaty. The Treaty of Versailles, however, considered coal deliveries for German destruction of French and Belgian mines as restitution rather than reparation.³⁶

During the day of crisis, July 14, Lloyd George met privately with Simons to try to work out a compromise. He apologized to the German foreign minister for the situation, blaming much of Allied anger at the appalling manner in which Stinnes had entered into the negotiations. He made it clear that his assent to the proposed

36. Notes of an International Conference held at Spa, July 13, 1920, *ibid.*, pp. 594-596; British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at Spa, July 14, 1920, 11:30 A.M., *ibid.*, pp. 597-605; British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at Spa, July 14, 1920, 6:00 P.M., *ibid.*, pp. 606-611.

occupation of the Ruhr was the result of the inability to see any alternative. He reminded Simons that he had always been opposed to the occupation of the Ruhr, and had been opposed to the French occupation of Frankfort. But Simons replied with an additional recitation of German difficulties, omitting any suggestion which could bring the crisis to an end. Lloyd George stated that food shipments to the miners might provide the German government with a solution. He intimated that he had been forced into the threat of occupation of the Ruhr after the realization that arrogant men like Stinnes and Seeckt had the power to override the government.³⁷

Lloyd George had stated to Simons that he opposed the occupation of the Ruhr, despite the fact that the threat of occupation had been made only a few days earlier. He intimated that he made the threat unwillingly because he blamed the threat on the arrogance of individuals during the Spa meetings, rather than on Germany's failure to fulfill her obligations. The prime minister, faced now with Simons' continued refusal to deliver coal as required by the Treaty, proposed that the coal crisis be resolved by an Allied grant of food shipments to Germany. Thus, Germany's continued refusal

³⁷. Notes of a Conversation at Spa, July 14, 1920, ibid., pp. 617-620.

to make proposals which would satisfy the requirements of the Treaty had led Lloyd George to grant Germany further concessions. The next day, the prime minister began to force his concessions to Germany on the French government.

The remaining Inter-Allied discussions were dominated by French dismay at British insistence that Germany receive the market price for coal. Lloyd George became angered with the French when they challenged a provision guaranteeing the Allies 2 million tons of coal per month if Germany was guaranteed 1.5 million tons per month out of the coal production of Upper Silesia. In spite of French protest, the German proposal had British support and became the basis of negotiations. The Allies made changes in their draft protocol on coal deliveries which left Upper Silesian mines under the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission, and stipulated that the price of the coal could be used by Germany to finance the import of foodstuffs rather than credited to the reparations account. A threat of occupation of the Ruhr, should Germany fail to meet the terms of the agreement, was included in the protocol. At 9:00 A.M. on July 16, the German government accepted the Allied proposal.³⁸

38. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at Spa, July 15, 1920, 11:00 A.M., ibid., pp. 621-627; British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting held at Spa, July

The Spa Conference ended with Anglo-French relations restored to that of an alliance in the public mind. The French considered the threat to occupy the Ruhr a realization of their dreams.³⁹ However, in his discussion of Spa in the House of Commons, Lloyd George placed the emphasis on the question of disarmament, presenting an optimistic picture of German intentions, placing no emphasis on the threat to occupy the Ruhr, and again dwelling on the troubles faced by Germany. He concluded that the mere fact that discussion with Germany had taken place was a step on the road to peace.⁴⁰

15, 1920, 5:00 P.M., ibid., pp. 629-635. The German proposal was formed after Simons meeting with Lloyd George and sent to Lloyd George as an annex to a personal letter. Simons to Lloyd George, July 15, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/3/4. The Proposal promised 2 million tons of coal per month for six months beginning in August 1920 as a provisional arrangement, the price of the coal being credited to the reparations account, an arrangement forthwith whereby Germany was to be guaranteed at least 1.2 million tons of coal per month from Upper Silesia, a commission to be established at Essen to study living conditions of the miners, and an Allied declaration to guarantee a definite advance for the purchase of food-stuffs and raw materials. Proposal of the German government for Settlement of the Coal Problem, July 15, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VIII, p. 628; Protocol of the Conference at Spa, July 16, 1920, C. P. 1639, CAB 24/109; Curzon to Foreign Office, July 16, 1920, F. O. 371/4738.

39. Derby to Lloyd George, July 17, 1920, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/42; Derby to Curzon, July 17, 1920, F. O. 371/4739.

40. Parliamentary Debates; House of Commons, July 21, 1920, Fifth Series, Vol. 132, Cols. 447-502. For a revealing account of the political need to stress Germany's failure to disarm as the justification of the Spa Protocol, see Hankey's Notes for Speech in the House of Commons after return from Spa, Lloyd George Papers, F/243, Folder 8.

Lloyd George had failed to make the Spa Conference the beginning of a general European appeasement. However, the failure to make the Spa Conference harmonious was the fault of the German delegation. Instead of letting Lloyd George's conciliatory policies dominate the negotiations, they played into the hands of the French by actions which created the impression of a fumbling German government obeying the dictates of military men and arrogant industrialists.⁴¹

The attitude of Seeckt and Stinnes could have shown the British government how little the German power structure had changed with the establishment of the Weimar Republic. Instead, their commitment to appeasement deepened as they continued to equate the power of the Weimar leadership with the strength of the German nation. Thus, Lloyd George did reduce the harshness of French demands at every juncture. The praise for Spa which the French public initially felt was not shared by those in the French government who realized that the British desire to appease Germany remained.

The failure at Spa had deeper implications. Although Britain had forced French concessions, the Germans were not appeased. Instead Spa prevented the growth of pro-British sentiment in Germany. It

41. Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, pp. 226-230.

strengthened those who advocated a Russian alliance rather than an Anglo-German entente. To some Germans, the British threat to occupy the Ruhr signaled the revival of the Entente Cordiale as a military alliance. They were mistaken.

The British pledge to occupy the Ruhr if Germany defaulted on her obligations was designed only as a threat to prevent complete abandonment of the Treaty of Versailles, and did not mean the end of the British desire to modify the Treaty in Germany's favor. Lloyd George had intimated to Simons at Spa that the threat of occupation was made in the hope it would never be carried out. In addition, German defiance at Spa served to deepen Anglo-French conflict rather than unite the Entente powers, giving Germans the impression that Britain would support continued violation of the Treaty.

The fundamental British attitude toward Germany had not been altered by the arrogance of Seeckt and Stinnes which had angered Lloyd George during the Spa Conference. Those in Britain who feared a France which could dominate Europe were to find new dangers in French policy after Spa. Lloyd George failed to engineer the birth of a general European appeasement at Spa. He was forced to begin the search for a European order anew after further Anglo-French conflict and German

recalcitrance preserved the instability he had sought to end. However, when the Germans called Britain's bluff and failed to carry out the Spa Protocol on disarmament, tension among the powers was increased rather than diminished.

CHAPTER IX

British Acquiescence to Germany's Failure to Disarm

After Spa, disarmament of Germany remained the paramount issue among the powers. At Spa, Lloyd George had demanded German disarmament, softening his demands with only superficial concessions, thereby raising the French government's hopes that Germany would disarm. However, acquiescence by Britain in the German failure to disarm in accordance with the Protocol of Spa represented no real change in British policy. Since the Paris Peace Conference, German refusal to disarm in compliance with the Treaty of Versailles had been tolerated by the British government. The threats of enforcing provisions, which Lloyd George had made at Spa, angered the Germans. But the failure to carry out the threats would anger the French, when Britain continued to accept willingly German excuses. The British refused to force German disarmament because of a mistaken fear of French military hegemony in Europe and a

realistic fear of the consequences of armed intervention in Germany.

Soon after the signature of the Spa Protocol on German disarmament, stipulating that the Allies would occupy the Ruhr in case of German violation, the British government found compelling reasons for failing to carry out the occupation and sought Italian and Belgian support for their position. On August 21, 1920, Robertson of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission informed Curzon that German hatred of the French in the occupied area had grown. Consequently, the occupation of the Ruhr would be a formidable undertaking which could lead to a German alliance with the Soviet Union. Little time was lost by the British government in seeking the support of the other Allies to block any occupation of the Ruhr. Lloyd George and the Italian Premier, Giovanni Giolitti, decided that further occupation of Germany was undesirable. But they agreed, " . . . through their respective Ambassadors in Berlin, to exercise all the influence they can on the German Government to carry out the agreements reached at Spa as completely as possible." Belgium did not want an occupation of the Ruhr. The Belgian Chiefs of Staff opposed the operation. At a conference on October 11, 1920 Premier Delacroix

told Lloyd George that Belgium would not join France in the Ruhr unless it was an Inter-Allied action which included England.¹

British representatives in Germany did not consider the German violations of the Spa Protocol as a danger worthy of risking the occupation of the Ruhr. D'Abernon advised his government to press neither for the surrender of rifles held by civilians nor for the disbandment of the Einwohnerwehr. The ambassador was firmly against going into the Ruhr. All parties in Germany would consider an invasion as a calculated attempt to destroy their nation. The invasion would create hostility detrimental to British policy. A British observer in Bavaria suggested that keeping a limited number of Einwohnerwehren was an adequate compromise to make to the Germans. Lord Kilmarnock, who agreed, argued that the advice of D'Abernon rather than that of the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control should be heeded. By December of 1920, when the Germans had begun overtly to resist compliance with Allied demands, Kilmarnock believed that resistance could be overcome by promising Germany further concessions.

1. Robertson to Curzon, August 21, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. X, pp. 295-296; Conclusions of a Conversation between Lloyd George and Giolitti at Lucerne, August 22, 1920, ibid., pp. 775-776, quotation on p. 775; Notes of a Conversation held at #10 Downing Street Between the British and Belgian Prime Ministers, October 11, 1920, ibid., p. 793.

Kilmarnock, filling in for D'Abernon in the latter's absence, stated that anything was preferable to an invasion of the Ruhr.²

During the fall of 1920, British diplomats did not conceal their government's unwillingness to enforce the Spa Protocol. German actions reflected this attitude.

On December 14, 1920, the German government felt strong enough to refuse to comply with the Spa demand to disband the Einwohnerwehr. In a memorandum, the Bavarian Minister President, Gustav von Kahr, asserted that the political instability of Bavaria, coupled with the economic crisis and effects of the Treaty of Versailles, had given people reason to fear a struggle between order and revolution. Kahr believed that the state forces at his disposal would be powerless in the event of an armed insurrection. He explained that the Einwohnerwehr was a civilian institution, consisting of about 300,000 men with light arms. His memorandum concluded: "The execution of the Spa provisions is therefore not refused but only temporarily postponed."³

2. D'Abernon to Curzon, November 23, 1920, D'Abernon MSS, 48924; Smallbones to Curzon, November 17, 1920, F. O. 371/3758; Kilmarnock to Curzon, December 16, 1920, ibid.; Kilmarnock to Curzon, December 20, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. X, pp. 350-352.

3. Memorandum on the Bavarian Einwohnerwehren prepared on behalf of Minister President von Kahr. December 14, 1920, ibid., pp. 472-476, quotation on p. 476.

A typical British diplomatic response to this outright German defiance came from Kilmarnock who wrote to Curzon that minor infractions should not be allowed to lead to an invasion of the Ruhr. He attributed the stronger German posture to the revival of national feeling in Germany coupled with the German government's knowledge that some of the allies did not wish to act.⁴

France had never concurred in Britain's attitude. Her representatives dominated the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control. Therefore, the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control, instead of allowing violations of the Spa Protocol to be ignored, suggested action.

The meetings of the British Cabinet on December 28 and 30 revealed the determination of the British government not to force Germany to disarm. Lloyd George called a Cabinet meeting on December 28 because of a drastic measure which the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control had brought before the Council of Ambassadors in Paris. The measure called for the surrender of all rifles in Bavaria within three months. Cabinet members argued that the Germans had been doing

4. Kilmarnock to Curzon, December 14, 1920, F. O. 371/4758.

their best; they all agreed that the disarmament of Germany had been carried out satisfactorily. The Cabinet considered that the existence of machine guns and rifles in German hands, although technically a violation of the Treaty of Versailles and the Spa Protocol, constituted no danger, and therefore threats of action, such as the occupation of the Ruhr, had to be avoided. At a Cabinet meeting on December 30, reports by D'Abernon and Sir Henry Wilson confirmed the conclusions of the previous discussions. The Cabinet agreed that Curzon should inform the French authorities that no notes of a drastic character should be despatched to the German government without the consent of Allied governments. The Cabinet decided to accept the German government's proposals to complete disarmament by February 1923, to insist on a specific plan for the reduction of the Einwohnerwehr, and to postpone any action on East Prussian disarmament until the crisis between Poland and the Soviet Union was resolved.⁵

On January 20, 1921, the British Cabinet considered a report from Foch detailing German violations of the disarmament terms and recommending the occupation of the Ruhr. The British military, however, wished

5. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, December 28, 1920, CAB 75 (20), CAB 23/23; Conclusions of a Meeting held at #10 Downing Street, December 30, 1920, CAB 80 (20), ibid.

to give the Germans more time to reduce their forces. The Cabinet criticized the policy of fixing dates for Germany to complete disarmament because fixed dates led to threats of French action when they were not met. The Cabinet suggested that the procedure be altered and that dates for disarmament be arranged in consultation with the Germans at Berlin. The Cabinet unanimously opposed adoption of any sanctions, and left full discretion to the prime minister in his upcoming talk with the French at Paris.⁶ Forced to take into account the collective and harmonious opinions of the Cabinet of British diplomats in Germany, and of British military opinion, Lloyd George went to Paris knowing that any additional threats to Germany would meet with strong disapproval by his government. It was the prime minister's duty to inform the French that Britain had abandoned her obligation to enforce the Spa Protocol.

When Lloyd George met the new French President of the Council, Aristide Briand, at the first meeting of the Paris conference, he stated flatly that Britain would not accept the French proposal to occupy the Ruhr. He admitted that at the time of Spa conditions were serious enough to make the threat of force necessary,

6. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, January 20, 1921, CAB 3(21), CAB 23/24.

but now, he argued, Germany was weaker than Poland. The prime minister blamed threats of enforcing the Spa Protocol for the collapse of credit and lack of confidence which was harming the German economy.⁷

After this conference, the French government, knowing that they would never win British approval of the occupation of the Ruhr, stopped arguing in favor of such a sanction to enforce the Spa Protocol on disarmament. Briand would not risk a repetition of the breach in the Entente which the Millerand government's unilateral action had caused in April 1920.

Briand was willing to pay a great price for Anglo-French harmony, because Lloyd George had made it perfectly clear that disarmament would not be enforced. When Germany still failed to comply with the Treaty of Versailles and the Spa Protocol by May of 1921, no action was taken.⁸

No action was taken by the Allies because the British government asserted that Germany had disarmed in all essentials. According to the Treaty of Versailles, once Germany had disarmed to the satisfaction of the powers, and Britain believed she had done so, the

7. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, January 23, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. VX, pp. 16-18.

8. Memorandum Respecting the State of Execution of the Treaty of Versailles, May 5, 1921, ibid., Vol. XVI, pp. 591-592.

Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control was to be disbanded. Even D'Abernon, who devoted himself to conciliating the German government, feared that Germany would use the end of control to rebuild her entire military machine. However, his caution was not heeded, for the creation of a new Inter-Allied Military Mission, with less power than the Commission of Control, was considered a matter for the League of Nations alone.⁹

By the spring of 1921, Brigadier General J. H. Morgan had gathered enough information to outline the specific German plan of subterfuge to create a larger army and manufacture war material. He stated that only very close supervision, beyond the projected end of the Inter-Allied Military Commission of Control, December 1921 or June 1922, could prevent German rearmament.¹⁰ Again, no action was taken to check German militarism.

The pattern set by the British government after Spa, constant refusal to act to check German militarism, continued. However, German response to British policy, which helped them to remain a potentially great military

9. D'Abernon to Curzon, November 13, 1920, Minutes by Waterlow, F. O. 371/4758.

10. Memorandum by Brigadier General J. H. Morgan on the possibilities of a Military Revival in Germany and the Means of Frustrating It, June 20, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XVI, pp. 905-915.

power, did not aid in building Anglo-German understanding. Germany would not be appeased as long as Britain supported the retention of any restrictions whatsoever on her military growth.

Lloyd George's signature of the Spa Protocol on disarmament turned the German government, in spite of post-Spa British policy, away from using British appeasement as the device to shed the military burdens of the Treaty of Versailles. Despite his hatred of Bolshevism, General von Seeckt reacted to the rebuff he had received at Spa by establishing a special unit in the Reichswehr Ministry to study possible cooperation with the Red Army. The secret German rearmament in the Soviet Union, which characterized the Weimar period, soon began.¹¹

By mid-1922 the British knew of actual arms deals between the Germans and Soviets.¹² This information which D'Abernon sent to the Foreign Office, was not considered serious enough to pass on to the prime minister. British policy remained the same: a policy of inaction.

The German government never fully executed the

11. Gordon A. Craig, The Politics of the Prussian Army (New York: Oxford, 1968 reprint), pp. 408-415.

12. D'Abernon to Crowe, August 11, 1922, D'Abernon MSS, 48924.

disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles because the British government chose to ignore the dangers of which they had been aware since 1920. German militarism was never eradicated by the 1918 defeat, for the British not only refused to use force to end militarism in Germany, but did all in their power to prevent the French from doing so, thus deepening French fears.

The French belief that Germany's failure to disarm was a threat to their national security forced the French government to deepen its commitment to give Upper Silesia to Poland, thereby weakening the industrial base of Germany's military machine. This French policy conflicted with the British goal of making Germany a satiated power. In the interests of appeasing Germany, the British government opposed French policy in Upper Silesia.

CHAPTER X

The Failure of British Diplomacy in Upper Silesia

One of the reasons why German defiance of Allied disarmament demands during 1920 and 1921 met with so much success was the hopeless division between Britain and France concerning the future of Upper Silesia. If Germany was to trust Britain as a protector against the French, British diplomacy on the Silesian question had to meet with success, for Berlin knew that British statesmen and economic experts were opposed to Polish control of Silesian industry. Therefore, the bitterly contested question was dealt with by Britain and France at the highest level. To both Britain and France, the outcome was crucial to national policy, and to both prime ministers it became a matter deeply involving their personal prestige.

In the summer of 1920, Poland was in turmoil. There was conflict between Germans and Poles in the plebiscite districts and a full-scale war with the Soviet

Union in the east. On August 16, 1920, Poland won the battle of Warsaw, thereby ending the possibility of Soviet expansion into central Europe. Although the aid of the French General, Maxime Weygand, was important in the building of Polish forces, the new nation's national pride was greatly enhanced, while the victory gave credibility to the French notion of Poland as the guardian against German expansion in the east.¹

The British played little part in these events which were so critical to the crisis in Upper Silesia. Lloyd George attempted to determine the fate of Upper Silesia from a position of weakness, for Britain had never sent the required number of troops to the plebiscite areas.

When an insurrection in Upper Silesia began in mid-August 1920, the British observers blamed France, specifically General LeRond, commander-in-chief of French forces in Upper Silesia. The French were accused of arming and fraternizing with the Poles, and supporting Wojciech Korfanty, a Polish rebel leader. The German government protested the lack of even-handed behavior on the part of French authorities. The accounts of Colonel Percival, the British high commissioner,

1. Piotr S. Wandycz, France and her Eastern Allies, 1919-1925: Franco-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), pp. 168-174.

supported the German accusations. By the end of August, Percival asked the British government to induce the French to order their Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commissioners to act in an impartial manner. Percival reported that some British officers had expressed a desire to resign from the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission because of their implied complicity in the gross miscarriage of justice which French partiality had caused. The British failure to despatch troops to Upper Silesia until the plebiscite, despite her obligation to do so, had created this crisis. At the time of the crisis, Britain had only between 12,000 and 13,000 troops in the Rhineland, her major area of concern on the continent, while France had 100,000 troops, and the United States and Belgium had 16,000 troops each.² British lack of military strength on the continent, as illustrated by the figures showing comparative troop strength in the Rhineland, precluded any decisive role in the course of events.

That Britain's having defaulted on her obligation to send troops deprived her of any serious bargaining position was demonstrated by the failure of Derby's

2. Percival to Curzon, August 22, 1920, F. O. 371/4815; Kilmarnock to Curzon, August 24, 1920, ibid.; Percival to Curzon, August 27, 1920, ibid.; Kilmarnock to Curzon, August 30, 1920, ibid.; Curzon to Henderson, August 31, 1920, ibid.; Memorandum by Waterlow, undated, F. O. 371/4821.

attempt to settle the Anglo-French conflict over Upper Silesia behind the scenes at Paris. On September 19, Derby insisted that the German protest be discussed by the Council of Ambassadors after LeRond made a statement. The ambassador was planning then to ask for an immediate adjournment of the Conference to try to settle the matter privately, believing that he might meet with success because of LeRond's unpopularity within some government circles. Derby failed, and on September 29 he was authorized to threaten British withdrawal from the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission. That threat carried no weight with the French government since Britain had played only a limited role on the Commission because she had failed to send troops.³ The French and the Poles continued to cooperate in spite of British opposition.

The Poles, with French support, attempted to exclude non-resident natives from voting, a procedure contrary to the Treaty of Versailles. Derby became convinced that Britain must either send troops to support the procedure laid down by the Treaty, which gave

3. Derby to Curzon, September 19, 1920, DBFP., First Series, Vol. IX, p. 72; Memorandum by Derby on the Upper Silesia Question, September 22, 1920, ibid., Vol. XI, pp. 76-77; Curzon to Derby, September 29, 1920, F. O. 371/4818; Derby to Barthelot, October 8, 1920, ibid.; Minutes by Major Ottley to Waterlow, October 25, 1920, F. O. 371/4819.

all natives of the region the right to vote, or leave the Commission. With Curzon determined to resist a proposal involving flagrant violation of the Treaty, the Polish government was informed that the British government would not support their proposal. At the same time, the British decided to press for the expulsion of the Polish rebel leader Korfanty from Upper Silesia. They expected to meet with French resistance. In order to give British policy some credibility, the Cabinet agreed to authorize Curzon to state that four battalions of 500 men each would be sent from the Rhineland to Upper Silesia to force the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission to administer the plebiscite in a spirit of neutrality, if the French and the Poles stood fast to their position. The Cabinet considered French partiality to the Poles to be based on their desire to see Germany lose the plebiscite, become entirely dependent on Ruhr coal, and thus at the mercy of France.⁴

4. Curzon to Derby, November 18, 1920, F. O. 371/4820; Curzon to Ciechanowski, December 9, 1920, F. O. 371/4822; Hardinge to Curzon, December 24, 1920, F. O. 371/4823; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, December 30, 1920, CAB 80 (20), CAB 23/23. The Treaty of Versailles provided that the plebiscite in Upper Silesia be held not sooner than six months, nor later than eighteen months, after the establishment of the Inter-Allied Plebiscite Commission, with all natives of the region over twenty-one years of age allowed to vote. The Treaty of Versailles, Article 88, Annex 4, FRUS., Vol. XIII, pp. 217-218.

A curious state of affairs existed at the end of 1920. While Germany defied the Spa agreement by refusing to disarm, and Britain resisted the use of troops to enforce it, she was willing to move troops to Upper Silesia to block French ambitions thereby reducing the size of her forces in the Rhineland to the point where any threat against Germany would be ludicrous.

The plebiscite in Upper Silesia was carried out in an orderly manner according to the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles on March 20, 1921. The total vote was 704,000 for Germany and 471,000 for Poland. The general breakdown by district indicated that the towns voted German and the countryside Polish.⁵ The 2,000 British troops were withdrawn immediately after the plebiscite was held.

Peace did not long endure, for on May 1, the Polish nationalists rose in armed revolt with the objective of taking the area and presenting the Allies with a fait accompli. On May 13, Lloyd George told the House of Commons that the Allies should either use their own troops to maintain law and order or allow

5. Percival to Curzon, March 21, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XI, p. 196; Percival to Curzon, March 23, 1921, ibid., pp. 196-197.

Germany to do what was rightfully her duty.⁶

Within a few days, the French Ambassador, Count St. Aulaire, informed Curzon that severe attacks on the British government were expected in the Chamber of Deputies, but Briand would try to conciliate British opinion. Curzon informed the ambassador that the complicity of the 10,000 French troops in the insurrection was a fact which rested on incontrovertible evidence. After St. Aulaire made excuses and stated his doubts as to Curzon's sources of evidence, he told the British foreign secretary that any German movement in Silesia would be considered a hostile action by France and could lead to the occupation of the Ruhr, and the holding of that region as leverage to prevent German seizure of Upper Silesia. Because of the gravity of the situation, Curzon offered to travel to Paris with Lloyd George to seek a resolution of the crisis. In July, the French sent additional troops to Upper Silesia without the concurrence of the Allies.⁷

In Paris from August 8 to 13, Lloyd George attempted to resolve the Silesian question. The prime minister did have the information that the total

6. Parliamentary Debates: House of Commons, May 13, 1921, Fifth Series, Vol. 141, Cols. 2380-2386.

7. Curzon to Cheetham, copy to Lloyd George, May 18, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/13/1/21; Curzon to Cheetham, July 23, 1921, F. O. 800/153.

vote in the industrial area had gone to Germany to use in support of his arguments. The French method of dividing the region, that of counting votes by commune, would divide the industrial area in Poland's favor. At their first meeting, Lloyd George told Briand that many in Britain had reservations about continuing the Entente. After that comment so lacking in subtlety, he proposed that any formal agreement about Upper Silesia be presented through the experts rather than through the Supreme Council. Briand agreed at once, for both men knew that the hope of accord was dim. In a monologue at the formal Allied Conference, Lloyd George recited all the reasons why the industrial area should not go to Poland. These boiled down to the belief that all of the skill in the area, both managerial and manual, was German. After again having stated his prejudice against the Poles at a summit conference, the prime minister called the giving of Upper Silesia to Poland another Alsace-Lorraine, and, therefore, a threat to French security. At the August 12 meeting, both heads of government agreed to refer the question to the League of Nations because they had reached a deadlock.⁸

8. Notes of a Conversation between Lloyd George and Briand, August 8, 1921, S-35, CAB 23/35; British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference at the Quai

On October 12, 1921, the League of Nations decision, which divided Upper Silesia according to the French plan, was communicated to the Supreme Council. The border left most of the industrial area to Poland. The Germans attempted to get Britain to intervene again on their behalf, but they failed. In June of 1921, all Allied troops were withdrawn.⁹

The solution of the Upper Silesia question was the greatest failure of British diplomacy since the war. Britain had fought for German interests throughout the struggle, but the effort came to no avail. The Germans forgot that without Lloyd George's intervention in June of 1919 they would have lost all of Upper Silesia to Poland as part of the Treaty of Versailles, and that because of British pressure they retained more of Upper Silesia than either France or Poland would have liked. D'Abernon recorded that the blow to British prestige was noticeable in a change of feeling in Berlin. The Germans had the impression that Great Britain was outwitted at Geneva. Some saw a

d'Orsay, August 9, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 632-639; British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference held at the Quai d'Orsay, August 12, 1921, ibid., pp. 700-704.

9. Gregory F. Campbell, "The Struggle for Upper Silesia," Journal of Modern History, Vol. 42, #3 (September, 1970), pp. 381-385.

betrayal of Germany in British actions.¹⁰

The British could not have done more, considering that they had never sent troops to Upper Silesia until it was too late to block Franco-Polish intentions, and then withdrew their tiny force as soon as the votes were counted. Although the intensity of the Irish crisis stifled British action in 1921, that was no excuse for the failure to send troops to assist the Commission when the Treaty came into force on January 10, 1920. Lloyd George's diplomacy had succeeded in angering the French and Poles while failing to please the Germans, for the Germans would have been pleased with nothing less than retaining total control of the province. The British attempt to leave Upper Silesia totally in German hands had failed. The Germans had in fact done well, for they not only received more of Upper Silesia than they had expected, but they were able to take advantage of Anglo-French discord to ignore the Spa decisions. In addition, the German revanchists could feel secure that Britain would not fight to uphold the Upper Silesia settlement. Germans could assume that the British would consider the re-establishment of German dominance in the area as the rectification of an injustice.

10. D'Abernon's Diary, October 13-15, 1921, D'Abernon, Vol. I, pp. 216-218.

British policy during the Upper Silesia crisis revealed a British willingness to allow Germany to return to her pre-1914 role as the primary economic power on the continent. The British, who had failed to appease German aims in Upper Silesia, were to work toward the mitigation of Germany's reparations burden, fearing that the consequences of an attempt to make Germany economically prostrate would result in continued European economic instability and the creation of a spirit of revenge in Germany.

CHAPTER XI

The Diplomacy of Reparations

From mid-1920 to 1923, British policy concerning reparations followed the same pattern of failure which had characterized the disarmament and Upper Silesia questions. They had no principle other than to search for piecemeal compromises and temporary expedients to placate France and, at the same time, to revitalize the German economy. As the result of this policy, neither goal was achieved.

Because the Spa Conference had failed to solve the problem of reparations, it was decided that Allied and German experts would meet in Geneva during late September 1920 to attempt a solution of the reparations question. The British government was anxious that the conference take place, but the French did not wish to meet with the Germans until prior Allied agreement was reached over the amount Germany was to pay. The French proposed postponing the reparations discussions

because they believed the Germans would try to use such a conference to revise the Treaty. Instead, France suggested summoning a German delegate to the Reparations Commission in Paris. Because Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and Curzon considered it a breach of a promise made to the Germans at Spa they rejected the proposal. However, it became difficult to pressure France because, in this case, Belgium shared her position. The conflict over going to Geneva grew when Frenchmen alleged that the lesson of Spa had been to avoid direct talks with the Germans because the Germans entered into discussion with the intention of revising the Treaty. The British believed the French view of German intentions to be in error. They expressed satisfaction with German execution of the Spa agreements, and considered the Germans entitled to concession in negotiating reparation. They conceded to the French request to have a German negotiate with the Reparations Commission only if it was a necessary step to save Millerand from political attack and as a prelude to the Geneva Conference.¹

The French refused to go to Geneva until after

1. Foreign Office to Henderson, August 31, 1920, F. O. 371/4727; Derby to Curzon, September 10, 1920, ibid.; Foreign Office to Parr, September 14, 1920, ibid.; Derby to Curzon, September 30, 1920; ibid.; Curzon to Derby, September 18, 1920, ibid.

the Upper Silesia plebiscite, or at the latest in early February 1921. However, they agreed to a meeting of Allied and German experts at Brussels for a preliminary study of the problems to be solved at Geneva.² Thus, by the end of 1920, very little progress on reparations had been made.

Lloyd George's failure to secure a reparations agreement during the fall of 1920 left Germany in a state of continued financial uncertainty. The Silesia plebiscite was not held until March 1921, and the chaos in the area lasted most of the year. Therefore, plans for Geneva miscarried. Britain could only provide Germany with sympathetic words in answer to complaints about their reparations burden. However, sympathetic words were not enough to establish financial security in Berlin. Again Lloyd George turned to personal diplomacy to solve the reparations question. At the same time, the hopes for a successful British initiative were augmented by the conciliatory attitude of Briand. Although Briand could not sacrifice France's foremost eastern ally, Poland, to accommodate the British, his conciliatory attitude in other matters made 1921 a

2. Derby to Curzon, November 10, 1920, F. O. 371/4729; Agreement between His Majesty's Government and the French Government regarding the forthcoming Discussions with the German Government as to Reparations, November 11, 1920, ibid.

year of limited hopes.

Lloyd George went to Paris in January of 1921 hoping to reach agreement on reparations. The Allies had previously agreed, at Boulogne, to establish an annuity scheme which would require Germany to pay 3 milliard gold marks per annum from 1921-1926, 6 milliard gold marks per annum from 1926-1931, and 7 milliard gold marks per annum from 1931-1963. When the French proposed imposition of an export tax of 15% in addition to the Boulogne annuities, Lloyd George accepted the principle of an export tax provided that the annuities were reduced in total and increases made on a more gradual basis. After the prime minister insisted that an export tax of 15% would injure German trade, a compromise figure of 12% was reached. The total the Boulogne annuities would have yielded was 269 milliard gold marks, but the Paris figures reduced this to 226 milliard gold marks plus a levy of 12% on the value of German exports for 42 years. Germany was to pay 2 milliard gold marks per annum from May 1, 1921 to 1923, 3 milliard gold marks per annum from 1923 to 1926, 4 milliard gold marks per annum from 1926 to 1929, 5 milliard gold marks per annum from 1929 to 1932, and 6 milliard gold marks per annum from 1932 to 1963. The Paris scheme was advantageous to all, because the total amount the Allies would receive would increase with a revival

of German trade. This accord was accompanied by conditions, including a possible invasion of the Ruhr or the seizure of German customs, if Germany failed to fulfill the stipulations.³

Lloyd George had succeeded in reducing the German debt over the short term by more than one-third, and arranged an accord whereby France stood to gain more from a revival of German trade than she could gain by attempting to stifle the German economy indefinitely. The French had gained another British promise to threaten sanctions. They could only hope that this time the threat would be honored if Germany failed to live up to the agreement.

Initially the Germans reacted to the Paris proposals with extreme hostility. By February 5, D'Abernon became somewhat optimistic that reason could prevail in Berlin.⁴ The French were determined, however, not to retreat from the Paris figures, which had immediately aroused the opposition of Frenchmen who wanted more. Some expressed the desire to apply sanctions

3. Notes of a Meeting of a Committee on Reparations, January 28, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 80-84; Agreement between the Allied Powers for the Settlement of Certain Questions relating to the Execution of the Treaty of Versailles, ibid., pp. 102-104; British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, January 29, 1921, ibid., p. 118.

4. D'Abernon's Diary, February 5, 1921, D'Abernon, Vol. I, p. 123.

without the Allies if necessary.⁵ The British were cool toward enforcing the proposals. The Foreign Office, disapproving of Lloyd George's most recent pledge to enforce sanctions, was pleased that the commitment to impose sanctions had no legal basis unless the Germans first accepted the proposals and then failed to carry them out.⁶

Philip Kerr, Lloyd George's most intimate advisor on foreign policy, believed that the prime minister should consider the reparations most carefully, and expressed his fears about the course of events in progress. He suggested that Lloyd George make it clear to Briand that Britain will only risk the destruction of Europe by advancing into Germany in case of dire necessity.⁷ Kerr's opinion, which expressed a polite disapproval of the pledge Lloyd George had given Briand to carry out sanctions, increased the pressure to appease German desires on reparations which had already

5. D'Abernon to Curzon, February 17, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XVI, p. 466.

6. Memorandum by Crowe on the Paris Agreement as to Reparations and the forthcoming Conference with the Germans, February 28, 1921, ibid., pp. 469-470; Memorandum by Waterlow on the Paris Agreement as to Reparations and the forthcoming Conference with the Germans, February 28, 1921, ibid., pp. 470-473.

7. Kerr to Lloyd George, February 19, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/90/1/38.

emerged in the Foreign Office. It was possible that any conciliatory move on Germany's part would gain Lloyd George's support and isolate France.

The Germans made the same blunder during reparations discussions in London March 1-9, 1921 that they had made at Spa in July of 1920 for they failed to negotiate seriously. They rejected the Paris proposals. Instead they submitted a counter-proposal which would have given the Allies only 1 milliard gold marks per annum, with Germany having the right to pay in kind, conditional on German retention of Upper Silesia. When France proposed using an Inter-Allied force to seize customs on the Rhine, Lloyd George said that he "did not think Britain could undertake any further burdens of that kind." After a full week of fruitless negotiations, Lloyd George approved authorizing the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission to study the seizure of the customs. At the last meeting, he reminded Briand that the moment a German agreement satisfied the Allies, the proposed seizure of the customs must end, for they were not to become part of a new French effort to foster Rhenish separatism.⁸

8. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference at London, March 1, 1921, with German proposals as to reparations submitted by Dr. Simons, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 216-225; British Secretary's Notes of an Inter-Allied Conference, March 2, 1921, ibid., pp. 225-238, quotation on p. 237; British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, March 9, 1921, ibid., pp. 354-457.

On March 23, Lloyd George informed the Cabinet that customs officials would be needed for the Rhineland, but no additional troops would be sent to the continent because units previously detached from the Rhineland to go to Upper Silesia would be returned to the Rhineland. Robertson of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission was informed that no takeover of the British zone by French troops and/or customs officials could be contemplated.⁹ Neither close cooperation with France nor the despatch of the additional forces, needed in case of further sanctions, was considered.

On April 19, Lloyd George was informed that Briand would come to England. At a Cabinet meeting that day, the prime minister explained his position regarding the reparations problem. He had made harsh statements about German defaults in the House of Commons in the hope of influencing the German government to make a serious proposal. However, he feared that the French were prepared to act unilaterally on May 1, the due date for the first German cash payment according to the Treaty of Versailles and all agreements which

9. Conclusions of a Cabinet Meeting, March 22, 1921, CAB 14 (21), CAB 23/24; Curzon to Robertson, March 17, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XVI, p. 497; British customs officials were withdrawn in August 1921, but France did not follow suit. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, August 15, 1921, CAB 67 (21), CAB 23/26.

followed. He saw little prospect of gaining time by having further conferences of experts. They raised the possibility of mitigating the French debt to Britain or renewing the guarantee of French security to deter French action. The Cabinet decided that France should be forced to accept the Paris figures as a maximum demand and to accept German payment in kind in order to obtain British consent to a Ruhr occupation.¹⁰ It was believed that French acceptance of the Paris figures as a maximum would encourage Germany to make an offer acceptable to Britain. If Germany did so, the occupation of the Ruhr would not be approved by the British and, therefore, would not take place.

On April 23, D'Abernon informed the prime minister that the German Cabinet was working toward a solution but needed time because of internal division. When Lloyd George met Briand at Sassoon's estate on April 23 and 24, he said that British public opinion would not support a Ruhr invasion. Already, Liberal and Labor elements were blaming British unemployment on the French desire for reparation. The prime minister said that Germany could not pay what France asked. Briand, after citing the large discrepancies between what

10. Hardinge to Lloyd George, April 19, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/53/1/61; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, April 19, 1921, CAB 24 (21), CAB 23/25.

Germany owed and what she had paid, assured Lloyd George that France would not apply unilateral sanctions to Germany. The conference reached no conclusions, but the two prime ministers decided to meet again in approximately a week.¹¹

On April 29, Kerr informed Lloyd George that France would press for an immediate occupation of the Ruhr. Kerr observed that both business and organized labor in Britain were against such a move. He believed that unilateral action by France would lead to conflict between France and Germany, a British retreat from Europe, and both Britain and the United States turning against France for creating world-wide economic crisis. Kerr informed a French representative that British experts were working on a proposal which they expected the Germans to accept.¹² The economic consideration plaguing the British made it doubtful that the offer which would emerge from a British experts study could be compatible with French needs or desires.

Briand came to London on April 30. He informed the British government that if Germany did not pay, France was prepared to march into the Ruhr. Sir John

11. D'Abernon to Lloyd George, April 23, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/54/1/20; Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of Hythe, April 23-24, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 453-481.

12. Kerr to Lloyd George, April 29, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/90/1/43.

Bradbury reported that the Reparations Commission had agreed to a fixed sum of 132 milliard gold marks and had communicated this to the Germans. That evening, at an urgently summoned Cabinet meeting, it was decided that if Germany accepted the figure Britain would be satisfied, but if she rejected it, the occupation of the Ruhr could no longer be opposed. After days of debate, the Conference ended with an ultimatum requiring Germany to act on the Reparations Commission proposal of a fixed sum by May 6.¹³

On May 5, Lloyd George met with German Ambassador Dr. Friedrich Sthamer to try to convince him to accept the Reparations Commission proposal. He called the offer generous, explaining that France needed the money to rebuild devastated areas. He reminded the ambassador that the whole purpose of British policy was to restore normal relations with Germany. When Germany failed to reply by May 6, the Cabinet agreed on May 10 to allow the commander-in-chief of British forces on the Rhine to place troops and equipment at the disposal of the French command. On May 11, 1921, the German government

13. British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, April 30, 1921, 3:00 P.M., DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 488-507; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, April 30, 1921, 7:45 P.M., CAB 37 (21), CAB 23/25; Allied Note to the German Government, May 5, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 579-580.

accepted its obligation to pay the fixed sum defined by the Reparations Commission.¹⁴

The Reparations agreement of May 1921 was Lloyd George's greatest success. Britain had played the critical role in forming the Reparations Commission proposal which Germany accepted. The fixed sum fell way short of French hopes, but a French failure to agree would have led to her isolation. However, Germany accepted the accord because of British support of the French threat to occupy the Ruhr.

Rather than reacting to the reduction of their obligations with pleasure, and taking advantage of the British commitment to their economic revival, this British threat simply affirmed the German practice of looking upon the Entente powers as united. Had Germany used this opportunity to embark on a policy designed to pacify France, further unrest could have been avoided. Germany did not. The May accord provided only a temporary respite from serious reparations conflicts, and despite the advantage Lloyd George achieved for Germany in the area of reparation, and sought for her in Upper Silesia, Anglo-German understanding did

14. Notes of an Interview between the Prime Minister and the German Ambassador, May 5, 1921, ibid., pp. 584-587; Conclusions of a Meeting in Chamberlain's Room, House of Commons, May 10, 1921, CAB 37 (21), CAB 23/25; Sthamer to Lloyd George, May 11, 1921, Appendix I to CAB 38 (21), CAB 23/25.

not develop.

The Germans chose to ignore the fact that British officials had formulated the May 1921 Reparations Commission proposal which reduced their debt, and that the British government had pressured France into accepting the proposal. Germany herself was the only power not to compromise, thus forcing Lloyd George to again make a threat he wished to avoid. Germany would be appeased only if Britain relinquished all her rights under the Treaty and completely abandoned her alliance with France. At the same time, some in Britain had come to contemplate a policy which would in fact satisfy Germany's desires under the guise of advocating a return to nineteenth-century splendid isolation.

While Germany looked upon Great Britain and France as allied in the present and future, non-involvement in Europe became more and more attractive to British policy makers. Inspired by Dominion opinion's advocating withdrawal from European affairs, Hankey prepared a paper on the question of Anglo-French relations for Lloyd George on June 25, 1921. The position of those who wished to maintain an alliance with France included the conditions that France accept the British position on Upper Silesia, withdraw from the Rhineland, and make concessions in the Middle East in return for a guarantee of security. The advocates of alliance

believed that this would place Britain in an authoritative position to restrain French ambitions, but Hankey believed the premise was doubtful. The cabinet secretary asserted that Poland had replaced Russia in French minds, and no alliance could induce France to abandon Poland. Hankey's most serious objections were based on the premise that when Germany regained her strength an Anglo-French alliance would compel Britain to increase military spending and introduce conscription, two obligations he believed the nation would not tolerate. He concluded that Britain should look to the League of Nations in the future in order to avoid binding promises.¹⁵ Hankey's paper reveals that the idea of continuing the alliance with France was looked upon with distaste by one of the most influential men in the inner circle of government. The ideas he expressed were to come to fruition in the future, and the doubts he expressed influenced the prime minister's thinking.

However, during 1921, the idea of replacing the abortive 1919 guarantee to France was raised. In December, French views were sought at a meeting with Briand. The French premier suggested a broad understanding guaranteeing the interests of both nations in all parts of the world. Lloyd George responded to this

15. Hankey to Lloyd George, June 25, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/25/1/48.

proposal, to revise the pre-war Entente in a more comprehensive form, by stating that opinion in Britain would never accept such an undertaking. Britain would guarantee the soil of France against German aggression, but she would not become involved in any guarantee of the eastern frontiers of Germany. Briand believed that if an Anglo-French alliance could be formulated, Germany would find it to her advantage to join in a non-aggression pact rather than remain isolated or seek a Russian connection.¹⁶

At the Cannes Conference on January 9, 1922, a formal British guarantee to consult in case of unprovoked aggression against French soil was proposed. The Cabinet viewed the new guarantee as a force which could allay French fears and weaken the chauvinists. At the same time, no military preparations were involved. There was no hostility toward Germany in the guarantee, but rather, it ought to be welcomed by Berlin in the interests of easing tension. On January 10, the full Cabinet decided to accept the proposal Lloyd George and Curzon had made at Cannes, which obliged Britain only to consultation if the Treaty of Versailles

16. Conclusions of a Meeting held at #10 Downing Street, May 24, 1921, CAB 40 (21), CAB 23/25; British Secretary's Notes of a Conversation between Lloyd George and Briand, December 12, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 785-787.

provisions restricting German military activity were violated.¹⁷

The proposed alliance involved Britain in no permanent military obligations, for France was to be guaranteed in case of German aggression on her soil, not German violation of the Treaty of Versailles. How this would allay French fears was not clear, but its primary purpose was to ease the tension caused by French activity in western Germany. Consequently, it was designed as a step to free both Britain and Germany from the burdens of Versailles. The alliance never came into being, because during the Cannes Conference the Briand government fell and Poincaré came to power.¹⁸

During his return trip from Cannes, Lloyd George met with Poincaré. The prime minister told Poincaré, in an informal meeting, that the premier's intention of accompanying the pact by a military convention was entirely against the spirit of British policy. Soon after the accession of Poincaré, the Cabinet formally decided to suspend any further action on

17. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, January 10, 1922, CAB 1 (22), CAB 23/29; British Delegation at Cannes to Chamberlain, January 9, 1922, ibid., Appendix.

18. Lloyd George to Dominion Prime Ministers, despatched by Churchill, January 16, 1922, Lloyd George Papers, F/10/2/32; c.f., A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (Greenwich: Fawcett, 1961), pp. 38-39.

the pact.¹⁹

The fall of Briand, and along with him the British hopes of bringing about a Franco-German reconciliation, was precipitated by another reparations crisis. Germany was destined to default on her January and February installments unless she could raise credit in either London or New York. Credit was refused because of the chaos of German government finance and the unreasonableness of French demands. The great hopes of May had been withered by French demands in other areas, and the fixed sum was threatened by the instability of the mark.²⁰ When Briand had come to London to discuss reparations in December of 1921, Lloyd George admitted that the German government was failing to tax industry at a heavy enough rate. He chided Briand for placing the selfish purpose of reparations above the overall need for a revival of trade, thus pursuing a policy injurious to the British economy. An agreement was worked out which reduced the 1922 schedule of payments; the agreement was to be ratified at

19. Ibid.; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, January 18, 1922, CAB (22), CAB 23/29.

20. D'Abernon to Curzon, November 16, 1922, D'Abernon MSS, 48924.

Cannes.²¹

Briand's policy represented a search for conciliation coupled with maintenance of the British alliance so greatly weakened by the Upper Silesia controversy. But as he left for the Cannes Conference Briand's policy was already falling from favor. Because the first Cannes meeting had been acrimonious, Lloyd George wished to present a public display of friendship. On January 7, Briand played golf with Lloyd George, and, as any man playing for the first time, Briand appeared clumsy. The French press made him look foolish, saying that he was so much the puppet of Britain that he would even become involved in un-French sports.²² The press sensation became the catalyst for a vote of no confidence in the Chamber of Deputies. As a result, the Cannes Conference, which was supposed to be a meeting with the Germans, broke up as soon as Poincaré became president of the council. Poincaré would have no part of a conference initiated by Lloyd George, who, because of his sympathy with German financial difficulties,

21. British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting between Lloyd George and Briand, December 19, 1921, DBFP., First Series, Vol. XV, pp. 760-763; David Felix, Walther Rathenau and the Weimar Republic: The Politics of Reparations (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), pp. 116-117.

22. Riddell's Diary, January 7, 1922, Riddell, p. 347.

wanted to break the deadlock of the Reparations Commission at the summit. The French right wing, led by Poincaré, would tolerate no more delays, excuses, or moratoriums on reparations.²³

Lloyd George wrote that the fall of Briand sent the world rolling towards catastrophe, and, "Had he remained in office, European appeasement from the Urals to the Rhine might have been reached in 1922. . . ."²⁴

There is truth in that statement, for once Poincaré came into power, British diplomacy was helpless in the face of a French leader who believed the Germans could only be persuaded by force. At the same time, the fall of Briand signaled the beginning of the total collapse of Lloyd George's diplomacy. The year 1922 was a time when Franco-German conflict raged and the ability of the British government to influence events reached its nadir.

With the collapse of the Conference at Cannes, Lloyd George pressed for a Conference at Genoa, to include Germany and the Soviet Union, which he hoped would settle the problems of European trade. On February 18, 1922, the prime minister met with Derby to explain

23. David Lloyd George, The Truth About Reparations and War Debts (New York: Doubleday, 1932), pp. 65-66.

24. Ibid., p. 68.

the position he wished the ambassador to convey to the French government. Lloyd George stood by the offer of the guarantee pact made at Cannes, but he was aware that opinion in Britain was swinging against it, for many within the coalition had joined the Opposition in opposing the pact. Lloyd George believed that French objections to the Genoa Conference, from which an improvement in trade was hoped for, had created this disaffection. In order to gain parliamentary approval of any pact, a French statement pledging support of the Genoa Conference was needed. Lloyd George offered to go to France for private informal conversations with Poincaré, but he remained unwilling to consider the stronger guarantee which Poincaré wanted. When Poincaré insisted that Genoa was not to deal with reparations or any change in the Treaty of Versailles, Lloyd George was forced to agree.²⁵ Lloyd George had placed his personal prestige on the line in calling the conference, and pledges of a weak guarantee could not achieve Poincaré's cooperation. In order to have France attend, reparations could not be discussed.

Genoa was doomed from the start because any viable solution of the economic and trade crisis in

25. Derby to Lloyd George, February 18, 1922, Lloyd George Papers, F/14/5/39.

Europe required the settlement of reparations. In March, the Reparations Commission had demanded that Germany pay her debts. But an economic crisis developed which most Germans considered to be a result of that demand. The policy of fulfillment, which Britain considered to be the policy of the Wirth-Rathenau government, was threatened by the possibility of their fall if they attempted to impose new taxes.²⁶ When this crisis loomed, Lloyd George had failed to receive full support for his efforts at Genoa. Poincaré himself would not attend, but sent Louis Barthou, the foreign minister, who would remain only if no concession whatsoever was made to the Germans. He threatened that France would send troops into the Ruhr, unilaterally if necessary, should Germany default on her payment by the end of May.²⁷

The Germans came to Genoa aware that Britain could not influence France. They proceeded to sign a pact of mutual friendship with the Soviet Union at Rapallo. The Rapallo Pact was in part a result of Lloyd George's credibility gap in Berlin. The German government believed that British diplomacy had accomplished

26. D'Abernon to Curzon, March 23, 1922, D'Abernon MSS, 48924.

27. Lloyd George, The Truth About Reparations and War Debts, pp. 69-70.

nothing to soften their reparations burden, and feared that the Soviet pledge to honor Czarist debts, which Lloyd George demanded as the price for recognition of the revolutionary regime, could lead to Russian demands for reparations and thus Franco-Russian rapprochement. Lloyd George's efforts at Genoa had failed. His attempt to recognize Russia, over the objections of some of his own colleagues, weakened the coalition further. At home and abroad his prestige was low.²⁸

Poincaré's policies, which had harmed Lloyd George's attempts at international reconciliation, drove Britain and France farther apart. When France threatened invasion of the Ruhr because of German default on her reparations installment of May 1922, the British government decided to disassociate itself from any French action. London made it clear that unilateral action, taken despite Millerand's pledge of April 1920, would result in the ending of combined efforts to enforce the Treaty of Versailles.²⁹ French action at this juncture was stalled, but a new crisis developed in the summer. On August 5, the German Chancellor personally appealed to Lloyd George for help. He pleaded that the coal

28. Taylor, Origins of the Second World War, p. 52; Lord Beaverbrook, The Decline and Fall of Lloyd George (London: Collins, 1963), pp. 144-145.

29. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, May 23, 1922, CAB 29 (22), CAB 23/30.

deliveries expected were excessive and could not be continued. He implored the prime minister to prevent the French from using force and to work toward a reduction of Germany's debt to a level which the German economy could sustain.³⁰

At the Inter-Allied Conference taking place in London at this time, Poincaré proposed Allied control over German exports, re-establishment of customs controls in the Rhineland, German cession of state forests to the Allies, the handing over of 60% of the capital of certain industries on the left bank of the Rhine to the Reparations Commission, and Allied collection of taxes in the occupied region. Poincaré, displaying no spirit of compromise, also threatened to act alone. Although Poincaré later cut his proposals down to a takeover of mines and state forests, the conference ended without agreement.³¹

Disgusted by British support of German defaults which he believed was causing suffering in France, Poincaré, on September 1, proposed that Britain give up

30. Personal Message from the German Chancellor to Lloyd George, August 5, 1922, Appendix to S-55, CAB 23/26.

31. Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, August 10, 1922, CAB 44 (22), CAB 23/30; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, August 12, 1922, CAB 45 (22), ibid.; Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, August 14, 1922, CAB 46 (22), ibid.

both her share of reparations and her debt due from France in return for a reduction of Germany's obligations. Although this was met with a flat refusal, it is significant as an illustration of the depth of division existing in 1922.³²

Lloyd George's diplomacy had collapsed. Ostensibly because of his support of Greek claims against the Turks which brought about conflict with France, non-support from the Dominions, and division within the government, Lloyd George fell from power when the Conservatives decided to end the coalition on October 19, 1922. Although the reasons for the fall of Lloyd George are much more complex, a significant part of it was the collapse of British diplomacy under his direction. Lloyd George had always believed in personal diplomacy, a method which has two great drawbacks: the alienation of the career diplomats within one's own government; and the fact that a head of government puts his nation's prestige on the line along with his personal power. The policies pursued by Lloyd George would have been difficult to implement given the best of conditions, for Franco-German rapprochement could not be affected by a third power when neither France nor Germany was willing to make the sacrifices. The policy of appeasement

32. Draft Reply to M. Poincaré's Note of September 1, September 8, 1922, F. O. 800/153.

of Germany after the war was not Lloyd George's conception alone. Appeasement grew as British statesmen convinced themselves that they ought to return to the traditional principle of balance of power rather than to an alliance as the cornerstone of foreign policy even though they knew that German weakness was transitory and even though they feared Germany causing another war in the future.

Appeasement policy, pursued slowly through diplomatic channels, might have met with some success by 1922. Because of Lloyd George's penchant for diplomacy at the summit, however, both Paris and Berlin believed that British policy was based on duplicity. Paris resented non-enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles, despite numerous British pledges both in word and in writing. Berlin could not look to Britain as an ally as long as her repeated expressions of friendship were accompanied by threats of maintaining an alliance with France. Lloyd George's methods, more than his conceptions, were responsible for the fact that after four years of peace, he left Bonar Law facing the greatest crisis of the post-war period.

By late fall 1922 the Reparations Commission was no closer to agreement than Lloyd George and Poincaré had been at their last meeting in August. Sir John Bradbury, British delegate to the Reparations Commission,

warned Bonar Law that any conference with Poincaré would fail. Poincaré, however, desired a meeting, and came to London in December. Bonar Law, wishing to avoid a rupture, proposed a subsequent meeting in Paris if no accord was reached. He had his experts prepare a plan whereby Britain would cancel all European debts on the condition that her share of reparations appear sufficient to cover her own debt to the United States.³³ The British share of reparations would not have actually covered her debt to the United States, but, to avoid public outcry, it would convey the impression that it did. Bonar Law was willing to pay the bill to avoid conflict.

The prime minister's hunch that the London meeting would fail proved correct. Plans were made for a visit to Paris. On December 24, 1922, St. Aulaire explained to Bonar Law that the French government could not accept a new moratorium without guarantees. As guarantees, Poincaré was determined to establish control over the exports of coal and industrial products from the Ruhr district. He desired no military occupation. This was unacceptable to the British, but they still

33. Bradbury to Bonar Law, October 23, 1922, Bonar Law Papers, 11/7/27; Notes of a Conversation between Bonar Law and the French Ambassador, November 28, 1922, ibid., 113/10/4; Bonar Law to Curzon, December 7, 1922, ibid., 111/20/40.

hoped that the crisis could be averted. On December 26, the Reparations Commission, with Bradbury dissenting, declared Germany in default on deliveries of timber.³⁴

Bonar Law spent the first week of January 1923 in Paris attempting to forestall the invasion of the Ruhr, which France believed to be her legal right after the Reparations Commission declared Germany in default. He made the journey in a spirit of pessimism, taking with him a plan drawn up after consultation with Keynes concerning Germany's capacity to pay. The plan projected a lower fixed sum than the May 1921 figures, and gave Germany a four year moratorium on payment to restore her economy. Poincaré would not consider the plan. The conference ended on January 4, 1923. On January 11, France invaded the Ruhr.³⁵

Bonar Law's actions and the plans he presented indicated a willingness on Britain's part to make sacrifices in the interests of German economic recovery. But with the invasion of the Ruhr, Britain was isolated, for France had the support of the other European Allies, Belgium and Italy, in the operation. The British government embarked on a policy of non-interference

³⁴. Curzon to Phipps, December 27, 1922, ibid., 111/12/51; Bradbury to Bonar Law, December 29, 1922, Davidson Papers, Beaverbrook Library.

³⁵. Tom Jones Diary, January 1, 1923, Middlemas, ed., p. 224; Blake, pp. 285-286.

with the French action which they had failed to prevent. However, they did not openly break with the Allies and come to the overt assistance of Germany, a change of policy which would have augmented French hostility toward Germany and thus only further retard the British goal of a general European reconciliation. The British government was in a position where almost any action taken by them could intensify the Franco-German conflict rather than shorten or end it.

It appeared at the outset that Britain could have divorced herself from all complicity in Allied action by pulling her troops out of the Rhineland, a move which London had contemplated as a response to the French invasion. But when the United States did so, French troops simply occupied the American zone. D'Abernon reported that the German government wanted Britain to remain. Throughout the crisis, the British zone remained the only refuge in a strife-torn region.³⁶

Thus in the early months of the Ruhr crisis Britain played no decisive role. However, the attitudes of her government and the sympathies of her representatives in Germany may have unwittingly further intensified the struggle because British empathy with Germany's

36. D'Abernon to Curzon, January 25, 1923, D'Abernon MSS, 48925; Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimer Republic (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 235-236.

plight may have encouraged the German government's hope that they could turn to Britain to solve their problems.

British dismay with France was great; her concern for Germany's future profound. As early as January, 1923, when the Germans in the Ruhr began passive resistance to the French occupation, D'Abernon was pleased to report that the German nation was more united than he had ever seen it in his years as ambassador. On January 29, the Labor party leader, Ramsay MacDonald, informed the prime minister that his party considered the French action a threat of war. During February, D'Abernon attributed French motives to the ambitions of the great iron and steel cartels which sought to dominate the industrial heartland of western Europe. The ambassador considered German passive resistance a people's movement rather than one directed from the top. The Dominions, cool toward European entanglements since 1919, placed pressure on the prime minister by March. Smuts considered the French action to be a prelude to France becoming so great a power that Britain would have to prepare to defend, " . . . her very existence against the new menace."³⁷

37. D'Abernon to Kilarnock, January 21, 1923, D'Abernon MSS, 48925; MacDonald to Bonar Law, January 29, 1923, Bonar Law Papers, 112/27/2; D'Abernon to Curzon, February 6, 1923, D'Abernon MSS, 48926; D'Abernon to

With Britain and France deeply divided, and Britain sympathetic to Germany, Germany looked to Britain to aid her in escaping her difficulties. The hope that Britain would provide a solution was held out to the Germans by Curzon in an April 20 speech in the House of Lords. After having called the three and one-half month occupation a failure, he asked Germany to formulate a proposal to fulfill their reparations obligations to the best of their ability. The German government, under the burden of a rampant inflation and threatened by the extremists of the right and left, again presented a proposal which could not be accepted. The Germans fixed the sum of reparations at 30 billion gold marks, and did not afford adequate guarantees. It was rejected outright by France and Belgium on May 2; the British rejection followed on May 13. The Germans had not only failed to take advantage of the possibility of a reparations settlement, but included a passage in the note which said they would continue to resist the occupation of the Ruhr.³⁸ Again, German response to

Curzon February 20, 1923, *ibid.*; Smuts to Bonar Law, March 29, 1923, with covering note indicating circulation to the Cabinet, Davidson Papers, Beaverbrook Library.

38. Parliamentary Debates: House of Lords, April 20, 1923, Fifth Series, Vol. 53, Cols. 795-797; Eyck, Vol. I, p. 245. During the winter and spring of 1923, Chancellor of the Exchequer Stanley Baldwin entered into an agreement with the United States settling the British war debt. The debt settlement made it politically

a British initiative had been inadequate to provide a solution to reparations on the basis of Anglo-German understanding.

Curzon, who worked for understanding with Germany, held a greater initiative over foreign policy under Bonar Law than he had ever attained under Lloyd George, but British policy remained a failure. In May 1923, Bonar Law resigned because of ill health. Stanley Baldwin, after only a few months as chancellor of the exchequer, became prime minister. Curzon, who surpassed Baldwin in experience and intellect, continued to serve as foreign secretary during the first Baldwin government.

While much of the initiative in British diplomacy remained in Curzon's hands, Britain refused to concur with the French demand that the German government end the passive resistance in the Ruhr, which was causing a fall in productivity in the region, as a precondition for negotiations. During June and July, Curzon refused to agree with the French demand unless Germans arrested by French authorities were granted a general amnesty, and persons evicted from their homes

essential that Britain not abandon reparations even though they opposed French actions. They had in fact tied themselves deeper into the reparations claims crisis. A. J. P. Taylor, English History: 1914-1945, pp. 203-204.

were allowed to return. In order for Britain to demand the end of passive resistance, Curzon wanted France to accept the premise that the May 1921 reparations settlement could no longer be carried out by the German government, and that an impartial body conduct a study and arrive at a reparations figure which the German government considered just and reasonable. Although the French rejected these proposals, Curzon's position had the full support of the Cabinet.³⁹

The ideas Curzon had communicated to the French were made public in the summer of 1923. On July 20, Britain issued a note saying she would concur in the French demand to end passive resistance if two conditions were met. A new assessment of Germany's capacity to pay should be made by an impartial body of experts; conditions in the Ruhr should be restored to a position where the region was once again a center of production rather than international intrigue.⁴⁰

The July 20 note showed that the British price

39. Curzon to St. Aulaire, June 13, 1923, Great Britain: Foreign Office: Correspondance with Allied Governments Respecting Reparation by Germany (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), pp. 4-7; Curzon to St. Aulaire, July 20, 1923, ibid., pp. 18-22; St. Aulaire to Curzon, July 30, 1923, ibid., pp. 25-38; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 183-184.

40. Eric Sutton ed., Gustave Stresemann: His Diaries, Letters, and Papers (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 72.

for acquiescence in the French demand for an end to passive resistance was nothing less than France herself appeasing Germany on reparations and becoming committed to German economic revival. Within less than two months, a new German government would come to realize the benefits Germany could gain by agreeing with the British position on reparations.

By August 1, 1923, Gustave Stresemann, chairman of the foreign committee of the Reichstag, had come to believe that the German government must cease to hope that Britain would openly confront France and must consider abandoning the policy of passive resistance as a prelude to ending the rampant inflation which threatened the very existence of a stable society in Germany. On August 14, Stresemann became chancellor of Germany.⁴¹

One of Stresemann's first public actions was to respond to a British note of August 11 stating that the invasion of the Ruhr was illegal in the opinion of the British Crown Jurists and, therefore, Britain was not in a position to call upon Germany to give up passive resistance. In the Reichstag, Stresemann praised Britain for her sense of justice. When France responded to the British note by defending the Ruhr

⁴¹. Stresemann to Dr. Jäncke, August 1, 1923, ibid., pp. 75-76, p. 78.

occupation and stating that the Reparations Commission alone could decide Germany's obligations, Stresemann was not alarmed. By August 23, he reported to his Cabinet that Britain, although not helping Germany directly, was working to isolate France.⁴²

On September 18, the German Cabinet considered ending passive resistance on the condition that the French end martial law in the occupied zone and a new study of the reparations problem be initiated. The same day, Stresemann reminded D'Abernon that the German conditions for the end of passive resistance corresponded with the conditions of the British note of July 20, which had asked that a revised assessment of Germany's capacity to pay be made by an international committee of experts.⁴³

After the German government had informed the British ambassador that they would consider abandoning passive resistance, according to the conditions set down

42. Ibid., p. 79; Curzon to St. Aulaire, August 11, 1923, Great Britain: Foreign Office: Correspondance with the Allied Governments Respecting Reparations by Germany, pp. 48-61; Stresemann's Speech in the Reichstag, August, 1923, Sutton, p. 89; ibid., p. 96.

43. German Conditions for the Abandonment of Passive Resistance, Stresemann to the Cabinet, September 18, 1923, ibid., pp. 122-124; Stresemann's Notes of a Conversation with D'Abernon, Reported to the Cabinet, September 18, 1923, ibid., pp. 124-125. Stresemann's notes of the conversation with D'Abernon reveal that he asked the ambassador to convey his position to Baldwin, who was going to meet with Poincaré on September 19.

in the British note of July 20, Baldwin, had a private, informal meeting with Poincaré at the British Embassy in Paris on September 19. Baldwin who was not a Francophobe like Curzon, pressed Poincaré to accept the British position in order to avoid further Anglo-French estrangement. Although the meeting ended with the issuance of a communiqué stating that there were no differences between Britain and France, Baldwin's advisor, J. J. C. Davidson, believed that it had resulted in future French acceptance of the British position. Davidson speculated that the end of passive resistance in the Ruhr would present France with the overwhelming task of feeding the population and reorganizing the industry in the region. To do this, Davidson considered, France would need British help, and the way would be opened for Britain to impose a settlement.⁴⁴

⁴⁴. Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 197-202. Henry Ashby Turner, in his Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 117, concludes that the September 19 meeting between Baldwin and Poincaré resulted in complete agreement between France and Britain, thus destroying German hopes of English assistance and forcing Stresemann to end passive resistance. Stresemann appears to have reached the decision to end passive resistance, if it could be done on the terms of the British note of July 20, earlier than at the September 20 meeting of the German Cabinet. In addition, Anglo-French unity after the September 19 meeting was expressed only in a public communiqué, while British statesmen saw both the meeting and the end of passive resistance in Germany as a step toward the imposition of the British commitment to German economic revival on the French government. Davidson to Stamfordham, September 1923, Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 201-202; c.f., Gilbert, pp. 96-97.

Imposing a settlement required a solution to the reparations problem, and Britain had committed herself to a restructuring of reparations. If Britain failed in this endeavor, after Germany had ended passive resistance ostensibly because of the British proposal of July 20, Germany would remain unappeased and European stability would be remote. Thus Britain began a new initiative to settle reparations.

On September 26, when the German government announced the end of passive resistance in the Ruhr, the British Cabinet decided to approach the United States about the prospect of American participation in a reparations conference. On October 13, the American Secretary of State, Charles E. Hughes, was informed that the British government had concluded that American participation was essential to avoid economic disaster. Two days later, the United States replied that they would take part in a conference to consider Germany's capacity to pay and financial plans for payment. A committee was established under the chairmanship of the American financier, Charles Dawes.⁴⁵

British diplomacy had failed to prevent the Ruhr occupation of 1923, but the possibility of a new

45. Middlemas and Barnes, p. 202; Chilton to Hughes, October 13, 1923, FRUS., 1923, Vol. II, pp. 68-70; Hughes to Chilton, October 15, 1923, ibid., pp. 70-73.

reparations settlement combined with a German government which was seriously attempting to resolve the internal crisis, provided a glimmer of hope that Germany would revive economically and be satisfied with her position in Europe.⁴⁶

It remained to be seen whether the first Labor government, elected on December 6, 1923, with Ramsay MacDonald as prime minister and foreign secretary, could secure the formation of a reparations settlement and the acceptance of the settlement by both France and Germany.

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46. For Stresemann's domestic policy see Eyck, pp. 256-302; Sutton, pp. 86-279; Turner, pp. 114-153; Eyck presents the picture of British policy in 1923 in a different light than either this paper or Sutton's commentaries on the Stresemann papers. He considers British inaction against the French invasion of the Ruhr to mean the continuation of the Entente.

During 1923, Britain had used her influence to end the Ruhr crisis. After the failure of the French invasion of the Ruhr, the Entente, a term which contemporaries continued to use, became what Britain had sought to make it in 1920: a device through which Britain could force France to bow to the policy of appeasement.

By the autumn of 1923, Britain had given Germany many opportunities to solve the reparations problem. In addition, she had fought for German interests in Upper Silesia, declined to force Germany to disarm in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles and the Protocol of Spa, and had refused to enter into a military alliance with France to replace the abortive 1919 Treaty of Guarantee. Britain had openly declared the Ruhr occupation illegal and refused to concur in French demands that Germany end passive resistance unless France entered into a reparations arrangement which would ensure German economic revival despite the fact that the devastated regions of France were not fully rebuilt.

Britain was committed to Germany again becoming the leading economic power on the continent.

Nevertheless, Britain had failed to appease Germany. Britain failed to appease Germany because she was unable to bring about Franco-German understanding, unable to force her will on France continuously, and unable to appease Germany within the framework of the Versailles system. As long as relations between the powers were governed by the Treaty of Versailles, even dexterous statesmanship could not have resulted in Anglo-German rapprochement, for the Versailles Treaty was a symbol of humiliation to Germany. Britain did not attempt openly to break the Versailles system, but acted on Germany's behalf within the system, leaving Germany with the fear that Britain might insist on enforcement of the Treaty at any time. German fears were not groundless, for Lloyd George had consistently allowed Franco-German differences to maneuver him into a position where he made threats which both he and his government did not wish to carry out. Britain's failure to appease Germany resulted from both the method and conception of British diplomacy. The method of pursuing a policy of appeasement within the Versailles system was illogical, and the conception that appeasement could be a success without Franco-German understanding was faulty.

All of the actions of British governments had pointed to a desire for a drastic alteration of the Versailles system. Britain saw the role which France had assumed as inimical to European political and economic stability. Britain did not seek to destroy the Treaty of Versailles, but she sought to change it because events had shown her leaders that only a modification in the Versailles system could end the failures of British diplomacy and begin the establishment of the European order she had sought since 1919: France accepting Germany as a great power on the continent, coupled with Germany considering herself a satiated power.

Conclusion

Locarno: The Establishment of a New European Order

Britain had never been committed to a European order based on the Versailles Treaty. The Treaty itself had been an Anglo-French-American compromise, and the final document was considered too harsh by many Britons even at the time of its signature. This sentiment surfaced while the wounds of war were fresh; it grew as they began to heal. Those who had felt the effects of the slaughter most intensely found that when reason replaced bitterness and grief, they realized that international relationships governed by a punitive arrangement could only engender a desire for revenge. Another war was unthinkable, yet France pursued a policy destined to keep German hatred alive. As long as Germany was forced to live with an unjust peace, she could never become a pacific nation. By 1920, a vocal minority in Britain agreed with the German belief that an injustice had been done. In the years that followed, this view came to dominate British

thinking. The British government had growing popular support as their commitment to appeasement deepened.

In the formulation of policy, an initiative for the formal revision of the Treaty of Versailles was unthinkable even after the failure of the French invasion of the Ruhr. Revision was impossible because the French fear of a German military revival could never be eradicated. Consequently, the Treaty provisions guaranteeing the demilitarization of the Rhineland remained the fundamental cornerstone of French security. However, the reparations sections of the Treaty left almost all essentials open to future negotiations. All past negotiation on this question had failed. Economic instability, resulting from the uncertainty of reparations brought on a collapse of international credit. By 1923 the crisis was at its worst. But only after achieving some degree of economic stabilization could Britain begin to work with Germany on altering the entire Versailles system.

After the failure of the invasion of the Ruhr, which France had for so long viewed as a panacea, her government was persuaded to follow the British lead on reparations. Reluctantly the French cooperated with the Dawes Committee which had been established in the fall of 1923. In the plan drafted by the Dawes Committee, German reparations were altered and privately

financed loans to Germany were planned. Montague Norman of the Bank of England played an essential role in securing the loans for Germany; the Bank of England contributed to the loan.¹ Previously Britain had refused to give loans to France to rebuild the devastated areas. But in the interests of appeasement the London government was willing to lend additional capital to the German industrial complex. British statesmen then worked to force this settlement on France.

Less than a week after the Dawes Report was issued, MacDonald reported to the American Ambassador, Frank B. Kellogg, that he had received absolute assurance from the German government that they would accept the plan. He was sure of Italian support, but he did not have assurances from France and Belgium. Since the United States was not officially involved, the task of persuasion fell to MacDonald who was, " . . . using the utmost endeavor to obtain unanimity for an unconditional acceptance, and he will go so far as to insist upon this, or he will raise the whole question of the legality of the occupation of the Ruhr, tariffs, and the Saar administration." After the fall of Poincaré because of the failure of the Ruhr episode, the

1. Lloyd George, The Truth About Reparations and War Debts, p. 31; Middlemas and Barnes, p. 347.

new French Premier, Édouard Herriot, accepted the plan. A conference was held in London during August to settle the details.²

When ratification of the plan by the Reichstag was threatened, the British ambassador encouraged further efforts at appeasement to secure German acceptance of the plan. The German nationalists had been encouraged by the outburst of chauvinism engendered by the Ruhr occupation. D'Abernon urged MacDonald to be sure that the plan was not presented as an ultimatum. The ambassador believed that a date for French evacuation of the Ruhr had to be fixed. He thought that the German government was so unstable that rapid conciliatory action was imperative.³

Stresemann, who fell from power as Chancellor on November 23, 1923, remained as foreign secretary. He worked for German acceptance of the plan, which was presented as an agreement rather than as an ultimatum. Rejection by Germany would have led to another reparations crisis, which might not have been resolved in a way favorable to Germany. With the support of Germany's leading industrialists, the Dawes Plan was ratified by

2. Kellogg to Hughes, April 17, 1924, FRUS., 1924, Vol. II, pp. 12-13, quotation on p. 13; Kellogg to Hughes, June 24, 1924, ibid., pp. 28-30.

3. D'Abernon to MacDonald, June 16, 1924, D'Abernon MSS, 48927.

the Reichstag on August 29, 1924.⁴ The acceptance of the Dawes Plan was the culmination of British efforts to restore German economic vitality despite the French need for reparations. Moreover, because the United States had lent her aid to the progress of British appeasement, France was hopelessly isolated.

The problem of reparations was solved. The process of solving the reparations problem, the promoting and ratification of the Dawes Plan, had exposed the depth of the British commitment to appeasement to Stresemann, and given to this adroit statesman an example of how the British desire to conciliate Germany worked to Germany's advantage.

However, throughout the years of post-war unrest, reparations had been only the major catalyst of crises. A real pacification of Europe could come about only with the solution of the problem of international security. The premise that European security meant a prostrate Germany had been rejected by British statesmen since the end of the war, yet that premise governed French thinking and was partially incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles. To the British, the idea of a Franco-German arrangement which would free Britain from continental responsibilities had been

4. Turner, pp. 151-181.

germinating since 1919, and was to culminate in the Locarno Pact.

During the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, while the Rhineland and disarmament agreements were being shaped, Balfour had written that he did " . . . not see that such a policy is justifiable unless it is associated with some guarantee of German territory against external aggression." In 1921, Churchill had written that a guarantee of the Franco-German frontier should be the foundation, not only of Anglo-French, but of Anglo-German relations.⁵ While Poincaré was in power, all discussion of a renewed Anglo-French alliance in any form was dropped.

During the period of Poincaré's tenure as President of the Council, D'Abernon realized that security was the key to European relations while others devoted their attention to the economic crisis. In April 1923, he informed Curzon that Germany would be prepared to enter into a far reaching security pact with France provided that the pact be reciprocal. The ambassador reported that the Frenchmen he had spoken with did not resent the idea of reciprocity. D'Abernon recorded that the Germans envisioned a guarantee of the Franco-

5. Notes on the Military Peace Proposals, March 5, 1919, Balfour MSS, 49751; Churchill to Lloyd George, November 28, 1921, Lloyd George Papers, F/10/1/48.

German border by Great Britain and the other powers similar to the Belgian treaty of 1839. D'Abernon believed that any renewal of the abortive 1919 guarantee was absurd because of French military dominance. Although response to feelers in Paris dulled his optimistic view of French opinion, D'Abernon continued to press for a British initiative. By 1924, he was convinced that Germany needed security against France. He argued that allowing French hegemony to continue would be an abandonment of traditional British policy, that is, intervention in Europe only to support the weaker against the stronger.⁶

The original initiative for the Locarno Pact came from D'Abernon. When Austin Chamberlain became foreign secretary after the Conservative victory of

6. D'Abernon to Curzon, April 12, 1923, D'Abernon MSS, 48926; D'Abernon to Curzon, April 17, 1923, ibid.; Phipps to D'Abernon, April 24, 1923, ibid.; Draft Memorandum by D'Abernon, December 6, 1923, ibid., 48927; Notes on a Guarantee of French Security and future methods to be employed to this end, November, 1924, marked, sent, January, 1925, ibid. During 1924, the Baldwin government had concluded that the Geneva Protocol, an agreement accepted by the Council of the League of Nations designed to strengthen the Covenant by imposing compulsory arbitration, clearly defining aggression, and obliging all powers whose geographical position and state of armaments permitted them to enforce sanctions on the aggressor, would render Great Britain's obligations too specific and precise. It was also repugnant to the Dominions. Lacking British support, this opportunity to strengthen the League of Nations was missed. Chamberlain to Cecil, November 19, 1924, Cecil of Chelwood MSS, 51078; Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 347-355.

November 1924, discussion of an Anglo-French pact was revived. D'Abernon opposed this, and urged Stresemann to propose a multilateral non-aggression pact between Germany, Britain, France, and Italy. D'Abernon was not only mistaken in his belief that Chamberlain could win Cabinet approval for a pact with France, but he also had assessed Chamberlain erroneously. The pact Chamberlain proposed was not a renewal of the 1919 Treaty of Guarantee, but a revival of the promise to consult in case of German aggression that Lloyd George had held out to Briand at Cannes in 1922. Although a Francophile in comparison to Curzon, Chamberlain too believed in appeasement of Germany. He was to make a deep personal commitment to a European security pact which would remove Britain from the Versailles system when it was formally proposed by Stresemann in January of 1925.⁷

On January 20, 1925, the German government presented a memorandum on the subject of European security to D'Abernon. According to the memorandum, Germany sought a special treaty to create an understanding with France. It could take the form of a guarantee by Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, establishing the inviolability of the present status-quo on the Rhine.

7. Turner, pp. 186-187; Jon Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 12-13.

D'Abernon informed Chamberlain that the memorandum, having come from a government of the right, marked an epoch in the advance toward European pacification. D'Abernon, realizing that the question of Germany's eastern frontier would present problems in negotiations, made it clear that the Germans would sign no pact guaranteeing those borders. Chamberlain responded that Britain would undertake no obligations of any sort concerning any boundary but that between France and Germany.⁸ The agreement which Britain had sought, one which would pacify Europe while not involving her in a military alliance, was in the making.

Chamberlain committed himself to a pact along the lines suggested by the German note of January 20, 1925. He was aided in his task by Briand's return to the French foreign ministry in the same month as the German offer. The personal messages of support Chamberlain received revealed British thinking, for Churchill, then chancellor of the exchequer, considered Germany prostrate at the time. He believed if Germany were to rearm,

8. German Note to Great Britain, January 20, 1925, D'Abernon, Vol. III, Appendix III, pp. 276-277; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, January 21, 1925, D'Abernon MSS, 48928; Memorandum by D'Abernon, January 26, 1925, ibid.; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, March 18, 1925, Charles Petrie ed., The Life and Letters of the Right Honourable Sir Austin Chamberlain (London: Cassell and Co., 1940), Vol. II, pp. 267-268; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, March 18, 1925, D'Abernon MSS, 48928.

and France sought to invade as a preventive measure, Britain would not wish to be bound to such action. He urged that Britain enter into a guarantee only if it was part of a genuine Franco-German rapprochement. Philip Kerr, the former eminence grise of Lloyd George's diplomacy, was convinced that the Germans wanted peace in order to complete the economic recovery which would make them the strongest power in Europe, and, therefore, had to be accepted as a great power at that time or diplomatic isolation could contribute to a possible collapse of the weak democratic government and result in a military revival at a later date.⁹ Both of these messages of support argued that Germany must be appeased, not because she had become a peaceloving nation, but because she was likely to turn to aggression once she was strong enough to do so.

Chamberlain received the support of the prime minister and the full Cabinet on March 20, 1925. He was authorized to state in Parliament that the German government's proposals offered the best basis for European security. On that basis, he opened the negotiations.¹⁰ By May, Briand was privately committed to

9. Churchill to Chamberlain, February 25, 1925 (Chamberlain Papers), F. O. 800/257; Kerr to Chamberlain, April 3, 1925, ibid.

10. Middlemas and Barnes, pp. 356-357.

the pact although he sought British support for an agreement concerning Germany's eastern frontiers. Briand failed to obtain that support. Despite British concurrence with the German position in that critical area, Chamberlain complained that the Germans were pressing him for additional concessions at every turn. The Germans insisted that the pact guarantee that forcible intervention could only take place after impartial arbitrations, and the arbitration procedure was to include cases where differences as to interpretation of the Treaty of Versailles arose.¹¹

Chamberlain became agitated by the German desire to dominate the negotiations to the point of dictating the pact, and wrote to Lord Robert Cecil that, "I forgot who it was who expressed his astonishment to observe with how little wisdom the world is governed . . . he was probably fresh from a study of post-Bismarkian German policy."¹² Despite German arrogance, Chamberlain held the conference together. The foreign secretary praised Briand's character, calling him amazingly reasonable despite the fact that, " . . . in our draft

11. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, May 7, 1925, D'Abernon MSS, 48928; Chamberlain to D'Abernon, May 31, 1925, *ibid.*; Chamberlain to Cecil, June 5, 1925, Cecil of Chelwood MSS, 51078; D'Abernon to Chamberlain, August 10, 1925, D'Abernon MSS, 48929.

12. Chamberlain to Cecil, September 28, 1925, Cecil of Chelwood MSS, 51078.

Western Pact France in fact consents to forgo her rights under Article 44 of the Versailles Treaty."¹³

France did in fact give up her right to invade Germany in case of a breach of the Treaty of Versailles when the Locarno Pact was initialed on October 16, 1925 and ratified on December 1. The Locarno Treaty of Mutual Guarantee stated that the signatory powers agreed to maintain the inviolability of the Franco-German and German-Belgian borders as established by the Treaty of Versailles. The powers also agreed collectively to guarantee the demilitarization of the Rhineland as established by Articles 42 and 43 of the Treaty of Versailles. Article 44 of the Treaty of Versailles had stated that any German violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland was intended to disturb the peace of the world and, therefore, would be considered a hostile action against the powers signatory to the Treaty. In the Locarno Treaty of Mutual Guarantee this was replaced with the provision that the powers were to respect the inviolability of one another's borders except in case of, " . . . a flagrant breach of articles

13. Chamberlain to D'Abernon, September 15, 1925, D'Abernon MSS, 48929; In Chamberlain's handwritten note he wrote " . . . Article 42 (44?) . . . " He meant Article 44, for that is the provision which states that violation of any of the demilitarization of the Rhineland provisions is a hostile act against the powers, while article 42 simply defines the geographical limits of the demilitarized zone.

42 and 43 of the said Treaty of Versailles, if such a breach constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression and by reason of the assembly of armed forces in the demilitarized zone immediate action is necessary." This article of the Locarno Pact, which weakened article 44 of the Treaty of Versailles, was followed by the establishment of a procedure whereby effective and rapid French action was rendered impossible. The procedure was as follows: a party alleging that a breach of article 42 or 43 had been committed must bring the question before the Council of the League of Nations. If the Council agreed that a violation had occurred, the Council was obliged to notify the signatory powers who were to aid the victim of aggression. In case of a flagrant breach of articles 42 or 43 of the Treaty of Versailles, the signatory powers were to come to the assistance of the aggrieved power, but at the same time, the question was to be referred to the Council of the League of Nations, and the powers were to abide by the Council's decision. Exactly what constituted a "flagrant breach" was not defined. Thus the Locarno Treaty of Mutual Guarantee revoked France's right to invade Germany in case of a violation of the demilitarization of the Rhineland unless the signatory powers to the Locarno Pact and the Council of the League of Nations agreed that German aggression was intended. All

other disputes between France and Germany were to be governed by the Locarno Arbitration Convention, which stipulated that questions were to be laid before the Permanent Court of International Justice if normal diplomatic channels failed.¹⁴

The military effectiveness of the Versailles system was ended by the Locarno Pact. This result was what the British government had desired. In the calling of the Conference and during the Conference, Britain and Germany acted as allies. Britain gave her full support to the Germans during the negotiations and continued to do so despite German arrogance. There would be no return to supporting France because of personality clashes at a conference. The disastrous failure of Lloyd George's efforts would not be repeated. The Germans left Locarno knowing that they could trust Britain to continue her abandonment of the Versailles system.¹⁵

14. Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, Annex A, October 16, 1925, F. J. Berber ed., Locarno: A Collection of Documents (London: William Hodge Ltd., 1936), pp. 50-54, quotation from Article 2, p. 51; Arbitration Convention, October 16, 1925, ibid., pp. 54-60. The Treaty of Mutual Guarantee also provided that it did not go into operation until Germany joined the League of Nations, and it placed no obligations on the Dominions or India, ibid., p. 53. The Locarno Agreements also included arbitration conventions between Germany and Poland, and Germany and Czechoslovakia, ibid., pp. 60-61.

15. Jon Jacobson's Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929, presents the same view of

The goal which British statesmen had sought for seven years had been achieved. Locarno freed Britain from the Treaty of Versailles, and thus ended any hope of even partial fulfillment of the Treaty. British diplomacy had been frustrated by French actions such as the seizure of the five towns in 1920 and the Ruhr invasion of 1923. Locarno affirmed the demilitarization of the Rhineland specified in the Treaty of Versailles, but substituted for the Treaty provision allowing the Allies to act, a vague stipulation that no action could be taken unless the Council of the League of Nations agreed that a breach of the Treaty constituted an act of unprovoked aggression. The Pact guaranteed the Franco-German and German-Belgian borders, and, therefore, any attempt to occupy further German territory to collect reparations or to enforce other provisions of the Treaty could be considered an act of aggression against Germany. This is what Britain wanted: a guarantee against future French military ventures. France actually lost little, for experience had taught her that any action taken contrary to British wishes was doomed to fail. Thus with a nervous optimism, France followed the British lead in conciliating Germany. France

Locarno presented in this paper, also placing emphasis on the British desire to avoid military entanglements on the continent. However, Jacobson does not deal with the period prior to Locarno.

was left with a paper guarantee, for the other signatories were not even obliged to send immediate assistance in case of invasion. The repugnance of the British Empire for any continental commitments whatever was written into the Pact as well, for Locarno was not binding on the Dominions and India.

Locarno was the goal of British policy because it freed Britain from military obligations. From the start, the abortive 1919 Treaty of Guarantee had aroused opposition because it required immediate military action in case of German aggression. All the plans for a revised guarantee proposed during the intervening years omitted the definite commitment and replaced it with a vague obligation to consult. The British government had been unwilling to enter into even unofficial military talks with France and Belgium. This problem could no longer arise, for after Locarno, who was to talk to whom? The drift into a moral commitment which preceded the war of 1914 was precluded. The Entente was permanently ended.

British appeasement of Germany sought to restore Germany to her proper place among the powers through diplomacy, because the appeasers realized that if she remained ostracized, she would some day be strong enough to dominate Europe by force. British appeasement in the 1920's was based on that possible future danger

coupled with an unrealistic fear of French hegemony on the continent. Yet Locarno destroyed the French alliance system at a stroke. For Britain and Germany were united in preventing a guarantee of the eastern frontiers of Germany, but France was powerless to gain for her eastern allies the same security she had gained for herself. Because French weakness was exposed they were forced to look toward rapprochement with Germany as the key to security. This represented the culmination of the British efforts, beginning in 1919, to prevent France from building the successor states, especially Poland, into powers at Germany's expense. Germany was successful in her refusal to consider a Treaty guaranteeing her eastern borders because Great Britain would not participate in such a scheme. Because British leaders since Lloyd George had opposed the injustice of including German minorities in the successor states, they would never make a commitment that could ever lead to the use of force to perpetuate that injustice.

Germany was appeased by Locarno because her statesmen realized that Locarno had destroyed the effectiveness of the Versailles system. The Germans never considered the changes in their western border incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles as their major grievance; they sought only full sovereignty in the Rhineland.

The tortuous procedure set down by Locarno assured that this could be gained, for it was unlikely that any signatory power to the Locarno Pact, except France, would consider German actions on her own soil an act of aggression. If Britain had allowed the Reichswehr into the Rhineland in April 1920, would she go to war to prevent the same thing from happening again? Germany's greatest grievance in the west, the legality of Allied sanctions to enforce the Treaty of Versailles, had been removed by Locarno. Most important for Germany, Locarno untied Germany's hands in the east. A German move to regain all of Upper Silesia for example, could not be resisted by France alone without a French invasion of Germany. Since the spring of 1919, the British had made it clear that they were adverse to taking up arms to preserve Germany's eastern borders; this British attitude had been affirmed by the British position during the Locarno negotiations. The success of British appeasement at Locarno set the stage for the remainder of the inter-war period, but the principles embodied in the Locarno Pact had been present since 1918.

The British government had formulated the policy of appeasement based on the realization that Germany had not been decisively defeated in 1918. However, political and economic instability in Germany made

Germany appear weaker than she was. British statesmen knew this, for they all voiced the fear that Germany could renew the war in the future if she remained unappeased. Despite this knowledge, many in London rationalized that appeasement was really a return to the balance of power because of French dominance. This rationalization was accepted by statesmen who could not admit that a war which had cost the nation so much had been inconclusive. However, a few members of the British government understood and accepted the reasons for appeasement. Balfour was the first to assess the European situation correctly and to admit that France was a second-rate power thrust into temporary dominance because of internal chaos in Germany and in Russia, coupled with American and British rapid demobilization. Balfour saw that appeasement was the only alternative open to Britain if she did not wish to remain armed and tied to an artificial European system based on French continental hegemony, a role France was too weak to sustain. Lloyd George, lacking as clear a perspective, attempted to appease Germany while remaining nominally allied with France. Yet, in moments of anger or in rare moments of reflection, Lloyd George admitted that France was weak and Britain acted to conciliate Germany out of fear. Kerr and Hankey's advice to the prime minister reflected a level of understanding which he

rarely displayed, for they perceived the European situation as Belfour had. Curzon believed France was a threat to the British Empire, and his erroneous belief was shared by many at the Foreign Office, in the diplomatic corps, in the Dominions, and by none other than Winston Churchill. Thus, in spite of diverse motives, the coalition government appeased Germany.

The precedents set by the coalition, dissatisfaction with the Treaty of Versailles, the destruction of the Entente, acquiescence in Germany's failure to disarm, and a constant support of German economic revival made appeasement of Germany the only policy open to subsequent governments. Alternative policies had been removed by the actions of the British government in 1919 and 1920, for only a British commitment to support France economically and militarily, coupled with an understanding with the Soviet Union, and backed by British rearmament could have kept Germany weak. Believing a strong German role in Europe was compatible with the security of the British Empire, such a policy was never considered. Appeasement of Germany alone could result in the British government realizing their goal of European stabilization and an end to British involvement in continental alliances.

To recapitulate, the decisive steps toward appeasement of Germany, including a distrust of involve-

ment in an alliance system designed to keep Germany permanently weak, were taken beginning in 1918. Britain had demobilized rapidly while Germany remained armed. It is also important to recall that some British statesmen considered the Treaty of Versailles too harsh even before it was signed. In June, 1919, the British Empire Delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, expressing unanimous dissatisfaction with the draft Treaty because they considered it a punitive document, had advocated changes in the Treaty which would mitigate Germany's reparations burden. Also, they had strongly desired changes in the security arrangements which would open a path toward a European security system rather than the alliance system incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles.

Since the signing of the Treaty in 1919, the British government had chosen to ignore continued militarism in Germany. However, it was during the critical year of 1920 that appeasement was strengthened, although a failure of statesmanship prevented an Anglo-German accord in Europe. The German government's pleas for acceptance of violation of the Treaty of Versailles were met with sympathy and tolerance in Britain. There the government chose to ignore continued German militarism. London encouraged German violation of the demilitarized Rhineland in the interests of supporting the

Weimar regime. This British action, taken during the Frankfort-Darmstadt affair of 1920, destroyed the Entente Cordiale as a military alliance. Afterwards, the British government went to Spa hoping to achieve a general European appeasement. The Spa Conference failed to achieve this, but, after Spa, the British government reneged on a promise made during the full conference of the European powers to enforce the Treaty of Versailles. France grew even more distrustful of Britain, but Germany remained unappeased. Germany would be appeased by nothing less than again becoming the dominant continental power, and being so acknowledged by the victors of 1918. As Britain became more willing to appease Germany on the issue of continental dominance, France became more steadfast in opposing it. When the relations among the powers were deadlocked, Britain had neither the trust of the French or Germans, nor the economic, political, and military muscle to break this deadlock.

British diplomacy from Spa to Locarno failed because France, unwilling to sacrifice her own security, rejected a policy of appeasement. Britain, however, continuing to ignore Germany's failure to disarm, worked to further German interests in all critical matters of European dissention. She fully supported the German position in Upper Silesia although the weakness of her army in Europe doomed her policy to failure. Yet

Britain was willing to consider the use of force to block Franco-Polish ambitions in Upper Silesia. At the same time, the British government would not use force to implement either the Treaty of Versailles or the Spa Protocol. The British government consistently worked to reduce Germany's reparations burden despite the financial loss to themselves and serious economic consequences to France. They created and accepted an illusion of French hegemony in Europe, but at the same time, they feared German revenge for French actions would cause another war that France could not win without their help. France believing Britain's friendship was necessary, was restrained from enforcing the Treaty of Versailles until January, 1923. When France invaded the Ruhr without the approval of the British government, she did not secure the reparations due her, and she failed to ensure the security she had sought since 1919.

After the failure of the invasion of the Ruhr, France was forced to bow to the policy of appeasement of Germany. The British government, rather than continuing to wait on events as it had since late 1920, worked with a responsive German regime to become the architect of a system designed to make Germany a satiated power through the Dawes Plan and the Locarno Treaty. With Locarno, London considered European stability achieved because Germany appeared appeased.

With Locarno, Britain was free to turn away from Europe. Imperial expansion too, had ceased, and a period of consolidation of the Empire and adjustment to social and economic change at home began with European pacification achieved. Reduction of armaments remained a yearly process under both Conservative and Labor governments. In the late 1920's, some of the abortive promises of improvements in housing and social services made by Lloyd George came to fruition. Appeasement of Germany had resulted in a better world, and when the frail German republic broke up under the impact of the great depression, appeasement continued, for no politician dared to re-establish the alliance that had come to be considered a cause of World War I when the nation looked upon both alliances and armaments as anathema.

When the Locarno Pact was under discussion, Winston Churchill had written:

It is argued that we could never endure the possession of the Channel ports by a victorious Germany, i.e. by the greatest European military power. . . . It should never be admitted in this argument that England cannot, if the worst comes to the worst, stand alone. I decline to accept as an axiom that our fate is involved in that of France.¹⁶

The policy of appeasement which was established when the

¹⁶. Churchill to Chamberlain, February 25, 1925, F. O. 800/257.

Locarno Pact broke the Versailles system guaranteed that Europe could not resist German expansion. The chimera of the great French army that had loomed too large in British minds fell to pieces in 1940. Then Britain stood alone as the result of her policy of appeasement which began with the ending of the first world war.

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