

FRANCE, HITLER, AND THE SAAR, 1933-1935

By

J. FREDERICK NEET, JR.

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Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approved:

Alfred Levan

Thesis Adviser

Homer L. Knight

J. M. Bogan

Dean of the Graduate School

581350

PREFACE

This study takes a brief look at a neglected but nevertheless important area of diplomacy between the wars. The controversy over the Saar Basin was born in the passions generated after World War I, but lay relatively dormant for some thirteen years. At the accession of Hitler, however, the Saar situation became critical, even to the point of threatening war in 1934 between France and Germany. Two interdependent problems made up the Saar question: the situation within the Saar culminating in the 1935 plebiscite, and the diplomatic wrangle between France and Germany. Several monographs have dealt with the first problem but the second area has been largely ignored. Therefore, it has been my intention to outline the whole question with the stress on the foreign policy of France. The problems of sources immediately rendered this approach difficult. Extensive use of the New York Times was combined with the available memoirs of several French officials and a few French periodicals; in addition, the Débats parlementaires of the Chamber of Deputies and Le Temps of Paris were at hand. Other French journals could not be obtained, and only a minimum of French diplomatic correspondence was available from British Foreign Office publications. Most German documents in this area were totally inaccessible. Thus, the story herein recounted is of necessity incomplete, but will, I hope, serve as a basis for later research. It is a fascinating period and one that should lead to deeper understanding of Hitler's foreign policy motives in a critical era.

Acknowledgments for this study are numerous. Special gratitude goes to Dr. Homer L. Knight; his guidance sometimes has been necessarily firm

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. BACKGROUND OF CONTROVERSY, 1919-1933	1
II. THE FIRST YEAR, 1933	21
III. PLEBISCITE PREPARATIONS, 1934.	41
IV. THE CRISIS ENDS.	62
V. CONCLUSION	82
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	86
APPENDIXES.	91
Appendix A	92
Appendix B	93

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND OF CONTROVERSY, 1919-1933

One of the most familiar of historical paradoxes has been the Treaty of Versailles. Forged almost literally as a mechanism for peace and hailed idealistically as a basis for international cooperation, it instead operated to foment nationalism and even, one may argue, war. The provisions of Versailles concerning the Rhineland were no more workable than various other proposals since Charlemagne's death. Alsace-Lorraine, in dispute since the ninth century and a major factor leading to World War I, remained an unresolved problem after 1919. The Saar Basin likewise persisted as a disputed area and later became a stepping-stone to German aggression.¹ The decisions made at the Paris Peace Conference gave rise to the Saar controversy which culminated in the Saar plebiscite of 1935. From that moment the Hitlerian die was cast. The results of the plebiscite, which returned the Saarland to Germany, seem to have given Hitler a measure of confidence, and may have urged him into the ventures he later risked and won. The Saar triumph was relatively unchallenged by France and greatly strengthened the Nazi position both in Germany and Europe by adding a people and area to the Third Reich. This study will show the factors which led to Hitler's first victory in the Saar plebiscite -- a victory gained through negotiation rather than war.

¹See Laing Gray Cowan, France and the Saar, 1680-1948 (New York, 1950); and Frank Marion Russell, The Saar: Battleground and Pawn (Stanford, c. 1951), for a brief, general background of the history of the Saar.

The 1919 Paris negotiations for peace saw the initial emergence of the Saar question. Although it was not the most pressing question at the Conference, the controversy surrounding the disposition of the Saar, principally between Georges Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson, almost disrupted that meeting. As early as February, 1917, France had sought a free hand in the Rhineland, including the Saar Basin. A secret treaty with Russia at that time anticipated French annexation of the "entire coal district of the Saar Valley," and the creation of an independent buffer state in the Rhineland.² Herein may be found an expression of the primary aim of French diplomacy between the wars and the introduction of the concept of "securité." More specialized than its English equivalent, securité came to mean the strengthening of the French political and economic position vis-à-vis Germany.³ Since Germany was potentially superior both in manpower and in war production, the French feared another invasion by her old foe; hence the demand for demilitarization and reparations. The cession of the Saar to France would promote both objectives. In German hands, the territory could serve as a route of invasion; this route must be closed. Moreover, deprivation of Saar coal would limit German industrial capacity as it would strengthen the French, and the Saar coal received by France could also be termed reparation in kind, a form of reparation to which Wilson would acquiesce.⁴

²Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement (Garden City, N. Y., 1923), I, 57-58.

³In the opinion of Ray Stannard Baker, "the basic idea of crippling Germany in an economic sense, as a guarantee of French security, lay deep underneath the struggle for the permanent control of the coal of the Saar, the permanent control of the Rhine frontier, and the weakening of Germany in the Silesian districts." Wilson and World Settlement, I, 363-364.

⁴André Tardieu, The Truth About the Treaty (Indianapolis, c. 1921), p. 263; Baker, Wilson and World Settlement, II, 14.

Two principal claims regarding the Saar were put forth by France at the Peace Conference. The fact that the principal coal-producing region of France had been devastated by the withdrawing German troops provided the first basis for these claims. As France normally imported coal anyway, she was tremendously hurt by this and felt entitled to an indemnification for the loss. Secondly, France had been in control of the Saar until 1815, when it was annexed by Prussia. Actually, Germany and France had disputed the territory for centuries and both claimed it by right. At any rate, the so-called "1814 frontier," the farthest French penetration of the region, comprised only a small part of that coal-producing area France now claimed and included the least important mines.⁵ Yet France strongly opposed dividing the territory on the basis of 1814. She wanted all the coal. Thus there developed a two-pronged claim: that the French should have political control over that part of the Saar within the 1814 boundary with a separate administration over the remainder, and that they should have economic control of the whole. Elaborate arguments were adduced in support of this arrangement, first suggested by Professor Lucien Gallois and the Comité d'Etudes.⁶ Wilson would accept as valid only the French argument that they were entitled to the Saar coal as reparations. Lloyd George, on the other hand, was ready to agree to any pro-French arrangement which did not create a new Alsace-Lorraine.

Clemenceau struggled on, sometimes bitterly, in pursuit of his aims at the Conference. In a note of March 29, 1919, France demanded complete

⁵Tardieu, Truth About the Treaty, pp. 256-257, 250.

⁶Ibid., p. 262. The Comité d'Etudes was composed of eminent French scholars to coordinate preliminary governmental studies preparatory to the French peace demands. Headed by the historian Ernest Lavisse, it collected and criticized the geographical, ethical, historical, and political factors. Gallois was an honored University of Paris geographer.

economic and political control of the area with a plebiscite to be held after fifteen years of this arrangement. France felt that although the Saar was basically French, it would take time to overcome 100 years of Prussian influence. The plebiscite idea was in answer to Wilson's refusal to allow annexation without a Saar vote. In his reply of March 31, Wilson accepted the idea of French ownership of the mines but rejected the 1814 frontier or the creation of an independent state.⁷ By April 8, Lloyd George was in virtual support of the French position. Wilson would not give in on his opposition to French political control of the Saar, but suggested instead a Franco-German arbitration commission to deal with politico-economic conflicts. Clemenceau, in his note of April 9, indicated he would accept Lloyd George's compromise proposal of League of Nation's governance followed by a plebiscite and a Customs Union with France.⁸ Wilson agreed, perhaps recognizing the advantages of immediately presenting the League with a weighty problem. This agreement led directly to the framing of section IV of Part III of the Versailles Treaty -- the "Saar Clause."⁹

This clause, inextricably bound up with an annex which followed it and encompassing articles 45-50, marked the general guidelines for the disposition of the territory. French economic control in full was assured "as compensation...and...reparation."¹⁰ German governmental influences

⁷Ibid., pp. 266-271.

⁸David Lloyd George, Memoirs of the Peace Conference (New Haven, 1939), I, 274-279; Tardieu, Truth About the Treaty, pp. 271-275.

⁹Baker, Wilson and World Settlement, II, 75; Tardieu, Truth About the Treaty, p. 277.

¹⁰The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1923 (3 vols; New York, 1924), I, 32.

were to be removed. Boundaries of the Saar were delimited, the League of Nations was named as trustee, and personal rights of the Saarlanders were guaranteed. The Saar Annex applied these general principles to specific conditions. Regarding the "cession and exploitation of mining property," France was to exercise absolute authority, not only over the mines per se, but also over all plants, equipment, workshops, by-products, buildings, communication, schools, hospitals, and any other accessories or appendages. The value received from this arrangement was to be established by a Reparation Commission, and credited to Germany's reparation debt. Furthermore, no encumbrances, such as German debt, tariffs, social security claims, etc. in excess of normal charges would accrue to France. The French Government would thus control formidable instruments such as an economic bureaucracy and supervision of much of the Saar educational facilities with which to propagandize for a favorable plebiscite.¹¹

The "government of the territory of the Saar Basin" was to be a five-man Governing Commission appointed by the League Council and consisting of one Frenchman, one Saarlander, and three others neither French nor German. Full administrative powers devolved upon the Commission which, though salaried by local revenues, was responsible only to the League. The Commission would secure all Saar documents and govern according to laws in effect on November 11, 1918, with modifications if necessary. In all areas except those controlled by France, the Governing Commission of the League was to be supreme, even in interpreting the provisions of the Saar Annex. According to the "Saar Clause," French currency might be used in the district.¹² This provision together with French economic control

¹¹Ibid., I, 35-39.

¹²Ibid., I, 40-44.

and the later severity of the German inflation, virtually assured that the franc would replace the mark.

The final chapter of the Saar Annex concerned the plebiscite, which was to be held fifteen years from the Treaty's enactment. At this time, Saarlanders could opt for: (1) maintenance of the League regime with French economic control (status quo); (2) union with France; or (3) union with Germany (rattachement). Significantly enough, the League reserved the right to dispose of the Territory in a manner contrary to the decision of the plebiscite if it so chose, although this was unlikely. Should rattachement be decided upon, Germany would then be forced to repurchase the mines in gold at a price fixed by three League-appointed experts. In addition, France could not be blocked from purchasing Saar coal in whatever quantity necessary.¹³ The plebiscite, then, became the key to the Saar question. Germany protested against the entire Saar clause of the Treaty, primarily upon the grounds that it violated the principle of self-determination as embodied in the Fourteen Points.¹⁴ The result was that Germany could and did claim the Saar just as France claimed Alsace-Lorraine after 1871. Another territorial problem was created between the two continental antagonists.

The Treaty of Versailles, by establishing the Saar Territory, created an entirely new administrative unit from the former Prussian and Bavarian states. Containing only about 730 square miles and a population of about 800,000, the Saar was the most densely inhabited area in Europe, averaging 433 persons per square kilometer.¹⁵ Its wealth was measured almost

¹³Ibid., I, 44-47.

¹⁴Baker, Wilson and World Settlement, II, 509-510, 513.

¹⁵Sarah Wambaugh, The Saar Plebiscite (Cambridge, Mass., 1940), p. 3; cf. Russell, The Saar, pp. 18-20. The figures cited are those of 1934.

entirely in coal, with other industries only complementary or subsidiary to the mines. The third most important coal-field of Europe lay mainly in the center, south, and west of the Territory, as did the major proportion of the population. In the small northeastern portion lay an agricultural area, but the Saar remained an importer of foodstuffs. As might be expected, iron and steel production was the Saar's second industry, but the inferiority of Saar coal for modern production techniques hindered the growth of this enterprise. Compared with Ruhr coal, that of the Saar made low quality coke and was good principally for gas manufacturing and for heating purposes. Yet there was an abundance of it, and Clemenceau knew that the Saar reserves were larger than those of Lorraine and the departments of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais combined.¹⁶

Within the small territory, the population was scattered among numerous industrial cities. In 1934, only one such city, Saarbruecken, the capital and economic center of the Saar, had over 100,000 population. Neunkirchen had just over 40,000 inhabitants, and the others were less than 20,000 in population.¹⁷

Economically, the Territory was a cohesive unit and complementary to Lorraine. Light manufacturing supplemented the coal and ferrous metal industries in the Saarland economy. Glass making, pottery, chemicals, leatherworking, paper, and woodworking were some of the most important industries. During the 1920's and 1930's there arose new plants which

¹⁶Michael T. Florinsky, The Saar Struggle (New York, 1934), pp. 51-52. An Associate in Economics at Columbia University at the time this volume was written, Dr. Florinsky undertook his study due to a peculiar interest in the Saar question. His is an often-quoted work in publications dealing with the Saarland although he admits his conclusions are met with disapproval from many quarters. This is because Florinsky holds that German actions in the Saar were not excessive.

¹⁷Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 5.

produced soap, perfumes, tobacco, shoes, clothing, and matches. Full-time farming was but a minor industry, with only eight and one-half per cent of the working population engaged in it. Food imports and raw materials came primarily from Lorraine. The Saar needed Lorraine iron ore, and Lorraine provided the natural market for Saar coal. The lack of adequate transportation toward Germany further increased the natural dependence upon France. While the railway system was highly developed, the cheap water transportation needed for bulk transfer was almost nonexistent.¹⁸ The several canals which were proposed in the twenties to complement the partially navigable Saar River were not completed, and even the river inclined trade toward Lorraine. Since only four per cent of its coal could be delivered by water, Saar prices were high. Another factor making for high prices was the high wage level in the Saar. From 1919 on, strikes or threatened work stoppages by the well-organized laborers kept wages high. In spite of the continued German patriotism exhibited by the Saarlanders, Ruhr competition in Germany further oriented the Saar toward Lorraine, especially after the institution of a Franco-Saar Customs Union.¹⁹

The establishment of the French State Mines Administration (Les Mines Domaniales Françaises de la Saare) in 1920 began a period of more efficient economic organization and was the starting point for the French policy in the Saar. French control was not necessarily profitable in a financial sense, however. Though the miners enjoyed a rising standard of living between 1920 and about 1932, unemployment continued to present a major

¹⁸Florinsky, Saar Struggle, pp. 76-79, 53-55.

¹⁹Ibid.; New York Times, October 11, 1919, p. 3.

problem. The French made little physical improvements which would require a large amount of capital. This lack of capital investment, the depression, and French political interference precluded any profit-making by the Mines domaniales, but the French shortage of coal was alleviated. Between 1913 and 1933, and excluding Alsace-Lorraine, exports to France increased almost 400 per cent; exports to Germany fell by almost 350 per cent.²⁰ The French Customs Union and the introduction of the more stable franc into the Saar aided this process; so did German dependence on cheaper fuel (lignite), electrification, and the greater efficiency and production of the Ruhr. In the iron and steel works much French capital replaced the depreciating mark. Since the French Government controlled both Lorraine and the Saar economy, it became cheaper to import ore from Lorraine than from Germany. As a result, by 1932 the Saar was receiving 91.3 per cent of its ore from Lorraine, only 0.5 per cent from Germany.²¹ Even in the depression year of 1929, the Saar was producing fourteen million tons of coal and was the chief supplier for the French steel industry. Trade with France also pointed up the economic importance of the Saar: by 1930, France was selling about two billion francs worth of products per year to the Saar, and buying about one and one-half billion in return. In addition, it was then estimated that sixteen billion tons of easily obtainable coal reserves remained in the Saar. Finally, the Comité des Forges, the French steel trust, had perhaps 500,000 francs invested there, and this powerful organization demanded that its investment be protected.²²

²⁰Florinsky, Saar Struggle, p. 64.

²¹Ibid., p. 70.

²²New York Times, November 21, 1929, p. 11, and July 6, 1930, p. 11.

Culturally, the Saar was German, contrary to Clemenceau's boast in 1919.²³ The German language was overwhelmingly predominant, and German laws and administrative institutions had become fixed in the region since 1815. Of the trade unions, to which ninety per cent of the miners belonged, the two major ones and many of the smaller had their central offices in German cities such as Essen or Bochum. Other organizations -- social, sport, etc. -- were likewise tied to the Reich, at least until Hitler reoriented their activities. The principal religion of the Saar was Catholicism, and its bishops resided in Trier (Prussia) and Speyer (Bavaria). The Protestants, about one-fourth of the total population, received their direction from the Evangelical Church of the Rhine Province. Even the Jews, making up about 0.5 per cent of the population, were for the most part the progeny of an immigration from two to five centuries old and were thoroughly Germanized.²⁴

When the Treaty of Versailles became effective on January 10, 1920, one of the League Council's first duties was to set up a Governing Commission for the Saar. Victor Rault was appointed the French commissioner, Alfred von Boch represented the Saar, and Major Lambert came from Belgium; Count de Moltke-Huitfeldt, a Dane, and R. D. Waugh, a Canadian, completed the commission. Of these, only von Boch and Waugh were neither pro-French nor anti-German, a fact which gave rise to the claim by Germany and the Saar that the League and its Commission were but tools of French policy. This charge continued to be expressed throughout the League's regime, and

²³Clemenceau had argued that there were 150,000 Frenchmen in the Saar, and it was only just that they be returned to France. Tardieu, Truth About the Treaty, p. 265.

²⁴Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 14-15.

was heightened by the choice of Rault as chairman.²⁵ Although the Governing Commission made the Saar a politically autonomous unit and, especially in the late twenties, conscientiously strove to deal justly with the problem, their actions were continually attacked from both Germany and the Saar. In economic well-being and prosperity, in political liberty and security, the Saarlanders were usually better off in these pre-Hitler days than their counterparts in the Weimar Republic.²⁶ Yet two labor strikes, both politically inspired, marred this experiment in international government.

The first strike, coming in August, 1920, was apparently directed against the number of foreign officials employed by the League administration in the Saar. This labor crisis coincided with the disruptive railroad strike in the Ruhr and the Russian threat against Poland, and was therefore probably externally inspired and not a specific manifestation of Saarlander opposition to the League. The pretext for the Saar trouble was the hiring of 6000 of the 12,000 League officials from outside the existing Saar bureaucracy, though only seventy-five of the new employees were non-German in nationality. As the strike was general, martial law was declared and French troops operated transportation facilities; normal procedures resumed after only eight days.²⁷

The second labor walk-out was somewhat more severe and was an expression in sympathy with Germany against the French occupation of the Ruhr in January, 1923. For a hundred days after February 5, miners and

²⁵League of Nations, III (February-April, 1920), 53; Demetrius Caclamanos, "Report on the Saar Basin," League of Nations Official Journal (March, 1920), pp. 47-49, as quoted in Russell, The Saar, pp. 144-148.

²⁶Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 78-79.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 81-82; New York Times, August 9, 1920, p. 2.

railway workers demonstrated. The Governing Commission, again imposing martial law, decreed heavy penalties for all actions disturbing the tranquility of the region, including public criticism of the Commission. In May, the League Council acted upon Saarlander petitions against such stringency and ordered the Commission to moderate its policy. This and an impending League investigation of the Saar situation chastened the Commission and gave rise to elation among Saarlanders for their "victory" over so-called foreign oppression.²⁸

Practically every measure promulgated by the Governing Commission met with strong Saarlander criticism, particularly directed against Chairman Rault. Besides demanding more German officials, the Saarlanders agitated for a larger police force, for strictly German currency, German courts, and for the establishment of a territorial legislature. Although military occupation had nominally ended, French troops were retained in the Saar to supplement the local police. Expenses of the League regime were borne by local revenues, and the Saar could not afford the force of gendarmerie which it needed. But the existence of French troops on essentially German soil increased the danger of violence and contributed to other grievances as well. The Saarlanders accused the French forces of engaging in propagandistic activities and intimidating the populace. Behind this suspicion lay the constant fear of French annexation, which the Saarlanders regarded as a real threat. The situation was eased somewhat in 1926 when the bulk of the French forces were withdrawn to Lorraine.²⁹

Another perennial problem was the demand for a Saar parliament.

²⁸Ibid., April 24, 1923, p. 4., July 2, 1923, p. 2, and July 3, 1923, p. 4.

²⁹Ibid., March 21, 1926, section II, p. 19; and April 3, 1926, p. 5.

Although the Governing Commission customarily consulted the local assemblies, this was not enough for the Saarlanders who frequently raised the cry of "dictatorship." As a concession to this demand, the Commission permitted the establishment of an Advisory Council of thirty members on March 24, 1922. Perhaps it was well that this Landesrat had no legislative power, for its first president, Bartholomäus Kossman, showed little inclination to cooperate with the Commission and declared in his opening address that the Saarlanders were recognized as German, even by Versailles, and that their sentiments would never change.³⁰

Besides creating the Governing Commission, Versailles provided for a French agency for the economic control of the Saarland. The French State Mines Administration undertook this function and its efforts were likewise met with hostility. In its first year it introduced the franc in payment to the coal miners, and by 1923 the French currency was made official.³¹ The relative prosperity which this action brought to the region created a new French hope that the Saar might vote for status quo in 1935, although the former belief that it would incorporate itself into France had been largely abandoned by 1922 or 1923.

The Saarlanders were of a distinctly different mind, however, and campaigned strenuously against the French schools established by the Mines Administration. Fear of propaganda and intimidation prompted new charges against the Governing Commission that the schools were being used to forcibly indoctrinate the children of the territory. In this instance, the League Council found no cause to reprimand the Commission;³² the

³⁰Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 88.

³¹New York Times, May 20, 1923, sec. VIII, p. 4. For a discussion of the French State Mines Administration, see Florinsky, Saar Struggle, pp. 55-62.

³²New York Times, July 8, 1923, p. 2.

schools were not, in fact, under the Commission's authority. But this did not lessen the criticisms. Rather than recruiting or coercing for attendance as the Saarlanders charged, even non-employees voluntarily enrolled their children in these bilingual schools. This practice was abolished by the Commission in 1924 in a conciliatory move. As the Commission relaxed its control, however, attendance steadily increased so that criticisms were again raised by 1930. This furor was over twenty-four schools out of 510 in the Saar, whose enrollment of 3000 represented only 2.4 per cent of the total.³³

Labor organizations, too, were dissatisfied with their position under the League administration, claiming that their counterparts in Germany had greater influence. In 1921, the Mines Administration concluded an agreement with the four largest unions, recognizing them as legal agents for the first time. Meanwhile, real wages remained at the 1913 level in the Saar and were thus higher than those in Germany. Even the work week was reduced. But the Saar unions agitated for more control over wages, hours, and working conditions, for "more efficient" German engineers, and for better social insurance.³⁴ Another charge was that two French companies, Petite Rosselle de Wendel and Sarre et Moselle, were sinking horizontal coal shafts from Lorraine into the Warndt, a Saar district. This had the effect of drawing Saar workers onto French territory and was said to be for the purpose of obtaining pro-French votes. Also, such tactics were supposedly designed to exhaust Saar coal reserves before 1935 in anticipation of rattachement. France pointed out, however, that Saar coal was

³³Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 93-97, 115-116; New York Times, December 12, 1924, p. 3.

³⁴Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 115.

French property until 1935 and she would deal with it as she chose.³⁵

Despite all these manifestations of anti-French feeling, French hopes for a favorable plebiscite only wavered, never died. By 1923, with more French capital moving into the Saar to replace the worthless mark, some influential Frenchmen began to believe that the decision for a status quo settlement had a good chance and began urging that this goal be furthered. Coupled with the separatist movement in the Rhineland which was designed to create a buffer state under French influence, a similar attempt was made in the Saar. The Saarbund, an organization formed to promote Saar independence, published its own newspaper, Le Nouveau Courrier de la Sarre, which the Germans alleged to be part of the French spy network. Little progress appears to have been made by any movement expressly opposing reunion of the region with the Reich, and the Saarlanders called for a ninety-nine per cent expression of public support for rattachement. The anti-French Saarlanders only redoubled their efforts when this figure seemed threatened by France. The fall of the franc in 1926 and the revived stability of the new gold mark heightened the pro-German fervor. In the previous year the full impact of German nationalism had been shown when the Saarlanders, in direct defiance of the orders of the Governing Commission, turned out in huge numbers for a German celebration. The Commission was totally incapable of quelling the demonstration.³⁶

Despite the almost unanimous intransigence toward the League administration, the economic situation definitely favored the Territory. On January 10, 1926, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, a Franco-Saar Customs Union was established, and tariff barriers were raised

³⁵Cowan, France and the Saar, pp. 147-148.

³⁶Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 91, 98-100.

against Germany. The next year, however, a Franco-German agreement was concluded which allowed those Saar products which competed with France to flow duty-free into the Reich. Thus, during the prosperity of the late twenties, virtually two large markets were open to the Territory, while it remained relatively sheltered from the full impact of the Great Depression. Unemployment in the region nevertheless rose from 2000 in 1928 to almost 45,000 by 1932.³⁷ The Saarlanders claimed that Germany, which paid their social and unemployment insurance benefits as provided by Versailles, was their only salvation, and that France should be morally obligated to buy more coal since she had all but closed their German market. Though the Governing Commission's reaction to the onset of depression was constructive and enlightened, it was unable to win the support of the people. While it continued to operate within existing revenues and reduced the salaries of government officials by six per cent, the Saarlanders complained that taxes were too high.³⁸ French efforts to pacify the region were all in vain, but their faith in a status quo plebiscite persisted to the end.

In 1924, an "era of good feeling" between the Saar and France was inaugurated when the liberal government of Edouard Herriot succeeded the conservative and anti-German bloc national which had guided the destinies of France since 1919. A definite change of policy marked the next three years, beginning with the acceptance of the Dawes Plan. Both the easing of reparations demands and the Ruhr evacuation of August, 1924, contributed to this lessening of tension.³⁹ In 1925, Aristide Briand, French

³⁷New York Times, January 18, 1925, p. 2, and November 8, 1926, p. 5; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 111.

³⁸Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 113-114.

³⁹Quincy Howe, The World Between the Wars (New York, 1953), pp. 160, 166.

Foreign Minister, accepted the German proposal to guarantee the Rhine frontier by international agreement, a suggestion which Raymond Poincaré, as head of the bloc national, had twice refused. In return for a promise that French troops would leave Cologne, and that other Rhineland problems would be discussed, German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann agreed to negotiate. From this arose the Treaty of Locarno of 1925 which guaranteed the western frontiers created by Versailles and apparently augured European tranquility. The "spirit of Locarno" pervaded the Saar as well, and the immediate postwar period was succeeded by a period of relative peace. The complaints by Saarlanders to the League were virtually discontinued after Germany joined that body in 1926.⁴⁰ French negotiations for a Saar settlement were opened with Germany, even less propaganda was disseminated in the Saar by French organizations and individuals, and the Saarbund was abolished. Tension over the Saar question subsided, and for nearly seven years the situation remained comparatively quiet.

In France, the drive for securité was somewhat relieved by Locarno, and even less interest was exhibited for the Saar Basin. The Socialists in particular viewed the Saar as a barrier to Franco-German rapprochement and supported the restoration of the Saar to Germany in return for favorable agreements concerning customs, mines, and the steel industry. Briand was also of this persuasion and in September, 1926, made his proposals to Stresemann of rattachement and an end to the Rhineland occupation.⁴¹ Reaction to this arose almost immediately. French steel manufacturers who had no Saar investments disliked Saar competition and wished an end to the

⁴⁰David Thomson, ed., The New Cambridge History (6 vols; Cambridge, 1960), VI, 467-468; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 100.

⁴¹Florinsky, Saar Struggle, p. 129.

Customs Union; they would obviously oppose any settlement which would continue to admit Saar steel into France duty-free. French patriotic societies voiced their opposition as well, arguing that the Saar would be of strategic value after the Rhineland evacuation and that Saar steel would be of prime importance in case of war. The public uproar which occurred forced Briand to terminate the discussions, but more interest was focused on the Saar for the moment in anticipation of a conciliatory French policy which might lead to an early rattachement.⁴²

Stresemann approached Briand in February, 1929, for a Saar settlement, and in August plans were made for further negotiations in Paris. In the meantime, study committees had been established by the French Government, leading to new popular opposition. The Paris negotiations opened as scheduled in November, 1929, but Stresemann had died in the interim and Briand had been replaced by the more conservative André Tardieu. Tardieu, who had had an important hand in drawing up the Saar statutes of the Treaty of Versailles, took the position that political questions were not to be discussed. Even though the northern French mines had been restored by this time, any deviation from Versailles meant to Tardieu a revocation of wartime victory. Accordingly, he demanded extensive German concessions (e.g., that the Customs Union should continue until 1950).⁴³ Though portions of the talks were successful and the Rhineland was evacuated in June, 1930, no agreement could be made on the Saar. For all practical purposes, this was the last chance for France to obtain concessions by means of a Saar settlement. Feelings were mixed in France over this turn of events, but public opinion was generally

⁴²New York Times, November 18, 1926, p. 4.

⁴³Cowan, France and the Saar, pp. 152-153.

complacent. The Socialists blamed the Comité des Forges for demanding too much; the Association Française de la Sarre, established at Paris in February, 1928, claimed the credit for the breakdown of negotiations. Talk still circulated that the Saar would vote in its own interest for status quo in 1935, but there was little tangible evidence to support this view.⁴⁴

With the apparent failure of negotiations with Germany in 1931, French organizations again directed their campaign for a status quo settlement toward the Saar itself. A second Saarbund movement was begun, and a new German language newspaper, the Saar Chronicle, was founded. The Association Française de la Sarre intensified its campaign to preserve the status quo and began publishing a Journal de la Sarre. The French government consistently refused to support such activities, however, and centralized organization of propaganda was lacking. The Reich, on the other hand, bombarded the Saar with pamphlets, organized demonstrations, and sponsored speeches, all with governmental financing. French propaganda stressed the economic advantages of a status quo settlement, but the German influence of nationality and language, religion, the bureaucracy, labor unions, and the schools negated any French advantages. Despite all this, many Frenchmen continued to be optimistic.

Their misplaced confidence may be shown by the position taken by French interests regarding the Saar Landesrat elections of March 13, 1932, the last before Hitler. Prior to the election, the Saarbund campaigned for abstentions to show evidence of support for the status quo. The result was the largest vote ever. Moreover, while the moderate Center party

⁴⁴New York Times, July 6, 1930, p. 11, July 8, 1930, p. 10, and January 11, 1931, p. 14; Wambaugh, Saar Flebiscite, p. 109.

retained its control with fourteen seats, the Social Democratic representation declined. The Communists gained three seats, and the National Socialist party of the Saar, running for the first time, obtained two.⁴⁵ The rise of National Socialism, in Germany as well as the Saarland, was ominous. Its emergence created a new situation in Europe and threatened the structure of peace. As the Nazis became predominant, all the elaborate arrangements which France had made in the name of securité began to crumble.

⁴⁵New York Times, July 8, 1930, p. 10; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 120-121.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST YEAR, 1933

The advent of Hitler in January, 1933, proved to be the complete undoing of fourteen years of French diplomacy. As chief enforcer of the Treaty of Versailles, France occupied a predominant position in European affairs, but was unable and sometimes unwilling to effect a permanent Franco-German reconciliation. As early as 1930, the rise of the National Socialists in Germany had given rise to the appropriate reaction in France: an intensified suspicion of German nationalism and a stiffened resolve to achieve securité.¹ In May, 1932, however, Tardieu and the French Right had been defeated at the polls, and the Left, led again by Herriot, succeeded to power. Backed by the Radical and Socialists parties, Herriot seemed amenable to a policy of reconciliation with Germany. One of the main stumbling blocks to this, however, was the question of disarmament.

The disarmament controversy, one of the most important series of diplomatic negotiations in the early thirties, was rooted in the unfulfilled provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Germany alone had been disarmed under the Treaty, but that document also stipulated that all Europe should undertake a limitation of arms. Yet only the Washington Naval Conference of 1921-1922 had been held, and its decisions had not seriously affected the position of France vis-à-vis Germany. Germany felt at a serious disadvantage opposite the greatly superior French

¹Brogan, France Under the Republic, p. 684.

military forces, and the occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 pointed up German vulnerability. Still, Germany was willing to maintain her restricted military level if only Europe would disarm to a corresponding degree. France, however, held that her future security might be imperiled by Germany's greater war potential and was determined to insure this security before disarming.² Germany, on the other hand, began to demand Gleichberechtigung (equal rights) in armaments after 1926 in opposition to the French stand. When the League-sponsored Disarmament Conference met at Geneva in February, 1932, Chancellor Heinrich Bruening immediately demanded Gleichberechtigung for his country. When Tardieu refused even to consider Germany's claims, Germany balked and eventually withdrew from the negotiations. The intransigence of France on this point contributed to the fall of Bruening, and likewise intensified German nationalism. The pressure of public opinion forced the resignation of Tardieu as well. Through British efforts, however, the German equality thesis was then accepted in principle and Germany was permitted to rejoin the disarmament talks without compromising its position.³

Facing the new French government of Herriot at the conference table in May, 1932, was a new German ministry led by the conservative Franz von Papen. The French had little sympathy for the German demands, but other factors, such as the effects of the world depression, counselled a reduction in defense spending. Herriot realized that great economies could be effected through disarmament, and he did not forget that Franco-

²Cameron, Prologue to Appeasement, pp. 14-15.

³Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1932 (London, 1933), pp. 267-268, 288-290. Hereinafter cited as Survey of International Affairs, 1932.

German reconciliation could likewise be served.⁴ Until the domestic crisis of February, 1934, the French Government would be of this mind. The premiership changed hands three times in 1933, but the Left preserved its majority in the Chamber of Deputies. Joseph Paul-Boncour was in charge at the Quai d'Orsay during the period from December, 1932, to January, 1934, and a continuity of foreign policy was thus maintained.

The growth of German nationalism in 1932 augured ill for French securité, but France did not immediately recognize the great danger. Hitler's party suffered an apparent rebuff in the Reichstag elections of November, and France seemed to breathe a little easier. On January 30, 1933, however, Hitler became German Chancellor, to the surprise and consternation of most of Europe. In France, Edouard Daladier began his first premiership the same month and set out to implement Herriot's plan to reduce military expenditures.⁵ Daladier apparently felt that Hitler would be unable to carry through his ultra-nationalistic program since the National Socialists controlled only a minority of the German cabinet.

The March elections in Germany quickly dispelled this illusion. Hitler obtained a compliant majority in the Reichstag and proceeded forthwith to expand surreptitiously the German war machine. The same month, Le Temps began publishing reports that a German air force was to be created by Hermann Goering. Still, the French reaction was not instantaneous. What Arnold Toynbee described as "superficial calmness" reigned, with the French showing "apparent cool-headedness and self-

⁴Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, Second series, IV (London, 1955), 462-464. Hereinafter cited as British Foreign Policy, IV.

⁵John T. Marcus, French Socialism in the Crisis Years, 1933-1936 (New York, 1958), p. 9.

restraint."⁶ Nevertheless, reconciliation as the foundation of French policy was almost discarded. Paul-Boncour made new overtures to Russia and to Italy, and followed a more realistic line at the Disarmament Conference. Efforts to achieve disarmament were not yet abandoned, but the French were understandably anxious and hesitant.

Outside the Government, the French reaction to the advent of Hitler was surprisingly mild. There were even apologists for the Third Reich like the eminent French journalist, Fernand de Brinon, who assured France of Hitler's moderation.⁷ French youth were often attracted by the Nazi dynamism. Moreover, German propaganda had some success in France. Such manifestations of the coming tyranny as the increasing number of refugees arriving in Paris could not be explained away, of course. French Catholics and Jews were alarmed, but the anti-Nazi outcry in France was by no means deafening. On the other hand, France began to re-evaluate her policy of bilateral agreements with small countries, and moved toward a closer relationship with Great Britain.⁸ Surprisingly enough, England's reaction to Nazi barbarities was much more vigorous than that of France. This prompted some Frenchmen to regard Hitler's accession as a blessing in disguise. It would, they said, draw the British closer to France, perhaps even to the alliance for which France had been working.⁹ A dispassionate and sober spirit prevailed even the accounts of German events in Le Temps, which carried no editorials calling for strong governmental action against

⁶Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1933 (London, 1934), pp. 161-162. Hereinafter cited as Survey of International Affairs, 1933.

⁷See Fernand de Brinon, France-Allemagne, 1918-1934 (Paris, 1934).

⁸British Foreign Policy, IV, 465-466.

⁹Alexander Werth, France in Ferment (London, 1935), pp. 20-24.

Germany. The French seemed pacific in their attitude and calm in their approach.

Not so in the Saar. There the advent of Hitler destroyed the solidity of pro-German sentiment. The Nazis had been organized in the Saar for some time before March, 1933, and Sturmabteilung (S.A.) and Schutzstaffel (S.S.) organizations had been holding nocturnal military drills.¹⁰ Yet the prevailing opinion in the region had been that Hitler would never come to power; he was regarded by most to be but a passing phenomenon of the times. Consequently, some confusion arose when Hitler was named Chancellor. Only the Saar Nazis looked upon his advent as an unmixed blessing. Saar Catholics, seventy-two per cent of the population, knew full well that their coreligionists in the Reich were almost as vulnerable to Nazi persecution as were the Jews and Communists. Saar Socialists and Communists were naturally opposed to the new Reich regime; the Center party realized that Nazi oppression might be extended to other political groups; and the labor movement of the Saarland was alienated from the Nazis by their suppression of German labor unions. Thus the so-called United Front of the Saar, which had confidently predicted a ninety-nine per cent vote for rattachement, was broken.¹¹ Yet by April, 1933, intensified German propaganda efforts persuaded virtually all groups in the Saar except the Communists and some Socialists to return to a pro-German attitude.¹²

Unlike the French, the Germans were acutely aware of the approaching plebiscite. They were also conscious of the tremendous question of

¹⁰Le Temps (Paris), February 22, 1933, p. 2.

¹¹Cowan, France and the Saar, pp. 158ff.

¹²Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 121-123.

nationalism involved. That the rattachement of the Saar to the Reich made little economic sense appears to have had little influence on the German mind; it was the factor of nationalism which counted. In Mein Kampf, Hitler had stressed German history and all it involved, and expressed an urgent desire for all Germans to come under one flag.¹³ Although the Nazis had internal crises with which to contend and were busy in Austria and elsewhere, the Saar was never forgotten. Der Führer himself made several personal trips to the Saar border¹⁴ and at more frequent intervals sent top lieutenants to evaluate the situation and coordinate the Saar campaign. To make certain that the Saar would eventually be reunited with the Reich, Hitler adopted a dual strategy: first, to insure an overwhelming pro-German plebiscite by agitation and propaganda in the region itself; and second, to win rattachement without a plebiscite through diplomatic negotiations with France, if possible.

The Nazis wasted little time in organizing the Saar populace. In July, a German Front (Deutsche Front) was established which incorporated several small parties and even the large Catholic Center. The Catholics did not actually join this group until October, and then only reluctantly and with acute misgivings. The Deutsche Front, controlled by but not including the Saar Nazi party, was a highly centralized, dictatorial organization, designed to reach every Saar family and persuade them to support National Socialism and Germany. Even a type of secret police (Ordnungsdienst) was instituted as part of the Nazi program.¹⁵ With Hitler's

¹³ Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf, tr. Ralph Manheim (Boston, c. 1943), pp. 97-119 et passim.

¹⁴ For Hitler's speeches on these occasions, see Norman H. Baynes, ed., The Speeches of Adolf Hitler (2 vols; London, 1942), II, 1084-1086, 1185-1186, 1206-1207.

¹⁵ See Florinsky, Saar Struggle, pp. 131-138.

advent, the tempo of Nazi agitation quickened. The pro-German campaign during the twenties had been relatively free of untoward events, but now this changed. Violence, intimidation, and kidnappings became almost commonplace. The Nazis intended for the Saarlanders in all districts to vote heavily for rattachement. Opposition simply could not be permitted.¹⁶

One of the first manifestations of intensified Nazi pressure occurred at Dudweiler on February 20, 1933. At the municipal election there perhaps 400 Nazis demonstrated and electioneered before the polling places. When gunfire began, the police reluctantly intervened. The Nazis retreated to their headquarters, but were soon overcome and searched. No weapons were found, and, since injury to those involved had been slight, no arrests were made. The leniency of the police is explained by the fact that they themselves were intimidated by the Nazis. Like most Saarlanders, the police believed that rattachement was inevitable; when it did come, the police wanted to keep their jobs and escape possible reprisal.¹⁷ Whether Nazi demonstrations such as the one described had much effect would be difficult to determine since the balloting was done in secret. In any case, the voting at Dudweiler was heavier than at any previous time, and the National Socialist vote doubled. By contrast, the Communist vote remained virtually unchanged, though they lost two seats and their majority.¹⁸ What is probably more significant than the results of the Dudweiler balloting is the fact that the Nazis, with the most extensive political organization in the Saar, continued this type of agitation.

¹⁶M. Epstein, ed. The Annual Register, 1933 (London, 1934), pp. 153, 175.

¹⁷Elizabeth Wissemann, "The Saar Plebiscite," The Political Quarterly, VI (January, 1935), 49-59.

¹⁸Le Temps, February 21, 1933, p. 8.

A few days later, the Governing Commission made public more information regarding Nazi actions. In November, 1932, owing to the extreme racism exhibited by the Germans, the Commission had searched Nazi headquarters. There they found evidence that the S.S. and S.A. had organized full-scale military training for assault troops, ambulance corps, motorcyclists, etc. The Governing Commission, headed by the Englishman, Geoffrey G. Knox,¹⁹ had suppressed these findings until February 22, 1933, fearing that an earlier disclosure might disrupt the Disarmament Conference. When the information was published, the Saar Nazis retreated across the German border.²⁰ The French, already concerned over the Saar's strategic position and securité, did not take the report so lightly.

Still another incident contributed to growing French concern. On March 6, Le Temps reported that German troops were massing on the Franco-German border. It was discovered that the Nazis were violating the demilitarized Rhineland zone by occupying the old barracks at Kehl. On March 10, the Germans withdrew, but left behind them a defiant challenge. Waving the imperial flag and singing Deutschland über Alles! and the Horst Wessel Lied, they warned that France would have to deal differently with the Third Reich than it had with the "Marxist Republic" of Weimar.²¹

After some hesitation, France reacted by protesting through her ambassador to Germany, André François-Poncet. To the Reichsminister of

¹⁹Besides Knox, the Commission was composed of Dr. von Ehrenrooth from Finland, Bartholomäus Kossman of the Saar, Jean Morize of France, and Dr. Milovan Zoricic of Yugoslavia, in 1933. Florinsky, Saar Struggle, p. 146.

²⁰Le Temps, February 23, 1933, p. 2.

²¹Ibid., March 6, 1933, p. 1. See also Le Temps of March 11, 1933, p. 8, March 12, 1933, p. 2, and March 16, 1933, p. 1, for other reports of the Kehl incident.

Foreign Affairs, the Frenchman pointed out the possible repercussions of such incidents on Franco-German relations. Baron Konstantin von Neurath replied somewhat laconically that only one-tenth of the Kehl force was armed, and these with pistols and hunting rifles. Furthermore, he explained, this minor force had taken a position on the Saar border to prevent reported agitation. More accurately, the Saar Socialist newspaper, Volkstimme, made it clear that the Kehl force was harrasing Saar workmen coming from Germany.²² French public reaction to the Kehl incident was subdued, and only the obscure French League made any representation at all. With the venerable Admiral Lucien Lacoaze presiding, this organization approved a petition (voeu) to persuade the French Government to actively promote a status quo vote for the "peace of Europe and ... French security."²³

Germany continued its campaign. At one time, a parade was held in Berlin with different marchers representing those territories detached from the Reich, including Bohemia, Alsace-Lorraine, and the Saar. Things were not so peaceful in the Saar where "collisions" occurred frequently, particularly between Nazis and Communists. The police seemed impotent to prevent these acts, and usually no arrests were made.²⁴

The propaganda campaign carried on by Germany showed that Hitler was willing to pay heavily, both in gold and manpower, to gain the Saar. A myriad of methods was tried. One was the beaming of German radio programs especially to the Saar. Nazi broadcasters vented their anger on the Governing Commission as had preceding German and Saar governments before

²²Ibid., March 11, 1933, p. 8, and March 16, 1933, p. 1.

²³Ibid., March 12, 1933, p. 3.

²⁴Ibid., March 21, 1933, p. 8, and March 29, 1933, p. 2.

them. Some of their more insistent complaints were that the League regime permitted the existence of pro-French organizations in the region and that German refugees were allowed to enter the Saar. This latter circumstance tended to increase the number of militant anti-Nazis in the region, creating a center of opposition against Hitler.²⁵

Probably the most usual and frequent Nazi propaganda measure was the staging of gigantic demonstrations. At times the Governing Commission interdicted such displays, ostensibly to protect minorities and property. In such cases, the Nazis simply held their mass meetings on German soil, paying or providing the Saarlanders with transportation to attend. Thus it was difficult to determine how many Saarlanders attended on principle, and how many simply took a free holiday. These demonstrations were all organized to the last detail, and usually featured an outstanding speaker such as regional Nazi leaders, Goering, Goebbels, or even Hitler in person. The message was nearly always the same: vote for the Fatherland, it will treat you well; the Nazi Revolution will solve all your problems; the Governing Commission is oppressive and degenerate; those who oppose rattachement are traitors. Undoubtedly, these demonstrations were well attended by Nazis and Saarlanders, even taking into account the Nazi penchant for exaggeration on this score.²⁶ This campaign, based primarily on patriotism but sometimes including threats of various kinds, increased Nazi strength rather rapidly among the middle and lower income groups. Youths were attracted by the vigor and militancy of National Socialism and even labor warmed toward the Nazi appeal.

At first, no organized opposition appeared to counter the Nazi effort.

²⁵New York Times, May 1, 1933, p. 8.

²⁶See Le Temps, April 4, 1933, p. 2, for a full account of one such demonstration in Deux-Fonts.

Isolated opposition was in evidence, however, as a Socialist expatriate from Germany, Max Braun, founded one newspaper and utilized another to harrass constantly the Nazis both in the Saar and in Germany. Communist publications attacked the Nazis too, but the two groups failed to coordinate their actions in 1933. Later, they would lose their ability to gain adherents to their cause. Many critics of National Socialism favored joining the Reich as soon as possible, reasoning that they could better fight Hitler from within than without. Others favored the status quo until Hitler was overthrown, as many believed he shortly would be. For example, the Communists favored status quo, but the Socialists argued that the plebiscite be postponed.²⁷ Nationalistic fervor was increased when the Governing Commission, after earlier denials, allowed the swastika to be flown.²⁸ And when Germany signed a Concordat with Rome in July, 1933,²⁹ neutral journalists began predicting that no more than a forty per cent status quo vote could be registered, and probably less. The Saarlanders themselves, retreating from their earlier boast of ninety-nine per cent pro-German sentiment, declared that status quo would receive a maximum of ten per cent. Germany assured itself repeatedly of Saar devotion to the Reich; Hitler himself said so in August, 1933.³⁰

The advent of Hitler thus rendered the Saar problem far more complex. As evidence of the lack of unity which had formerly existed, three major

²⁷ John Hison Jones, Jr., "The Foreign Policy of Louis Barthou, 1933-1934" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1958), p. 431.

²⁸ Le Temps, April 23, 1933, p. 8, and April 28, 1933, p. 8.

²⁹ See Great Britain, Foreign Office, British and Foreign State Papers, 1933, CXXVI (London, 1938), 697-706, for an English translation of this document.

³⁰ Raynes, Hitler's Speeches, II, 1084-1086.

groups held simultaneous meetings on August 27, 1933. The Nazis announced that 80,000 Saarlanders heard Hitler speak at Niederwald; the Socialists claimed that from 12,000 to 15,000 attended a rally led by Max Braun at Neunkirchen; and the Communists declared that 15,000 Saarlanders met with them at Saarbruecken.³¹ Each of these figures must be assumed to be exaggerated, but the point is clear: with Hitler at the helm in Germany the future plebiscite was no longer a foregone conclusion. The vote for rattachement had already lost Socialist and Communist support, in addition to that of an unknown number of unorganized individuals. What happened in 1933, and especially in 1934, would determine the outcome of the plebiscite.

The French reaction to German agitation in the Saarland was one of subdued pessimism. It was clear to all that the German Government was subsidizing the Deutsche Front. Germany had a clear field in this endeavor, since the League was not propagandizing for the status quo, and only a trickle of funds came from France. Ironically, the advent of Hitler revived old hopes on the part of many Frenchmen for a status quo vote. One influential French journalist stated unequivocally that the Saarlanders were anxious to obtain French protection against Nazi barbarities, and could probably be persuaded to vote for status quo if France could show some interest in the Saar.³² What interest there was in France was largely ignored, such as that of the Association Française de la Sarre. Actually, the French Left was beginning to agree with the Right that the Saar under League administration could serve as a valuable buffer against Hitlerian Germany. Some also still held onto the hope for

³¹Le Temps, August 29, 1933, pp. 1-2, 8.

³²Ludovic Naudeau, "Le Sarre et son plebiscite." L'Illustration, CLXXV (May 20, 1933), p. 90. See *infra*, pp. 34-36.

obtaining full reparations, and would retain the mines as security. The French Government did not support this view, or if it did, remained silent. What French money entered the Saar for propagandistic purposes came not from the Government but from individual Catholics, Socialists, or Jews. Perhaps a few industrialists having Saar investments or covetous of Saar coal supported the status quo.³³ But no one, apparently, had held any hope for a pro-French vote since 1923.

An article in Le Temps of April 23, 1933, illustrates with particular vividness the prevailing French attitude toward events in the Saar. Headlined "Aggression against Frenchmen," the story created a furor, but not enough to force action by the Government. Le Temps reported that three Frenchmen had engaged three Saarlanders in what appeared to be a friendly argument or conversation at Saarbruecken. As they were speaking in French, probably in loud voices at 2:00 a.m., they attracted a group of about twenty Nazis. This encounter precipitated a brawl in which a revolver was fired. The police intervened, but set free all but two of the Frenchmen. One was forced to pay a fine of 1500 francs. The other, who had been accused of firing the shot, was unable to pay his fine and was therefore incarcerated in the prison infirmary to recover from the injuries he sustained in the brawl.³⁴

This story, of little significance in itself, appeared to Le Temps as symbolic of the French position in the Saar. The Nazis ran loose creating havoc and were patronized by the police. A Frenchman in the Saarland did not have a chance -- not even a wounded one. Other French newspapers picked up the charge and the resulting publicity gave rise to

³³Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 126-127.

³⁴Le Temps, April 28, 1933, p. 2.

a mild "war scare." Rumor had it that French troops would be sent to the Saar.³⁵ Had this occurred, of course, it would have been an invasion of German-inhabited territory. For months thereafter, stories circulated of similar instances of persecution of Frenchmen. One rumor told of a French boatman on the Rhine being kidnapped, taken to Germany, and then arrested because he had criticized Hitler.³⁶

Fortunately, the French Government had no intention of sending troops to the Saar since their presence would have merely led to unnecessary bloodshed. The Governing Commission did act to curb Nazi-French clashes, however. It further bluntly informed the Saar Landesrat that "France is going to give expression to her dissatisfaction" should such incidents be repeated. This did not prevent the recurrence of incidents of that kind, but they became less frequent. While the Governing Commission had continued to request supplementary policemen since the 1926 French evacuation, no further increase of forces was authorized in 1933.³⁷

Conscious of widespread popular indifference in France to developments in the Saarland, the influential journalist, Ludovic Naudeau, published a series of articles in the May and June numbers of L'Illustration which were designed to instruct Frenchmen as to what was at stake in the region. Naudeau first explained the economic importance of the Saar to France, including the fact that the region produced enough steel to supply over one-fourth of French needs and that Saar business paid the salaries of almost 100,000 French workers.³⁸ Later articles gave more

³⁶Ibid., May 6, 1933, p. 8.

³⁷Ibid., May 7, 1933, p. 12.

³⁸Naudeau, "Le Sarre et son plebiscite," L'Illustration, CLXXXV (May 13, 1933), 56. The author was a distinguished and decorated journalist for Le Temps, and had published several works dealing with contemporary foreign events.

personal observations obtained through the author's own research and investigation. Naudeau warned that a pro-French plebiscite was highly improbable "and even undesirable," but that a status quo vote might yet be possible. He was convinced that many Saarlanders valued their economic ties with France over their cultural connections with Hitlerian Germany, no matter what sentiments they expressed publicly.³⁹ Another factor which offered hope was the possibility that many Saarlanders had been alienated by Nazi tactics and might desire French protection. Naudeau also pointed out that French traditions still persisted in certain areas of the Saar, particularly in Saarlouis, though they were of little influence or importance.

Despite the possibility of a status quo vote, Naudeau recognized that most Saarlanders hated the French. Unemployment, the school problem, all the irritations that troubled the region were laid at the door of France. While the French seemed distant and cool to the Saar population, the Germans were interested and active in winning them to their side. The Governing Commission would not campaign for the status quo; the Nazis spent profusely and were exceedingly well organized.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, Naudeau predicted, France could win the plebiscite if she chose to do so. The French must commit themselves to an unwavering support of Saarlander interests, and launch a vigorous propaganda campaign against the Nazis and for the status quo. By this means and with a fair and secret plebiscite, France might secure the Saar.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid., May 20, 1933, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁰Ibid., June 10, 1933, pp. 209-210.

⁴¹Ibid., June 17, 1933, p. 243; New York Times, September 18, 1933, p. 12.

The effect of Naudeau's articles is indeterminable, but they may well have stirred the government to more active measures. Foreign Minister Paul-Boncour created a special office for Saar affairs in the Quai d'Orsay and met often with Saar leaders. Realizing the importance of propaganda, he attempted to convince Catholic officials that they must resist the Nazis by opposing a pro-German plebiscite.⁴² Still, Paul-Boncour's stand on the Saar problem remained cautious and flexible. He hoped that by yielding a bit on the Saar, France might gain concessions on other points which were not so strongly desired by Hitler.

While the Germans gained the immediate propaganda advantage in the Saar itself during 1933, her direct diplomatic negotiations with France over the region did not meet with similar success. The year had opened with extensive Franco-German communications, ostensibly inspired by a mine disaster at Neunkirchen. In February, 1933, a gas explosion in this Saarland city had killed or injured a large number of miners.⁴³ Both France and Germany used the public attention aroused by this tragedy as a sounding board for their conflicting aspirations in the Saar Basin.

When the French Government expressed their official condolences to the League of Nations, the nominal sovereign of the Saar, Germany objected that the Saar was German territory and that any expressions of sympathy should be made through German diplomatic channels.⁴⁴ Using the

⁴²To Paul-Boncour's warning, the papal legate replied that communism constituted perhaps more of a threat to the Church in the Saar than Nazism. Though Paul-Boncour argued that Montesquieu believed in battling more than one enemy at a time, the French failed to convince Rome that the Saar should constitute a separate bishopric, and the region remained under the influence of German bishops. Joseph Paul-Boncour, Entre Deux Guerres (3 vols.; New York, c. 1946), III, 5-6.

⁴³Le Temps, February 13-20, 1933, passim.

⁴⁴Ibid., February 13, 1933, p. 4.

Neunkirchen tragedy as a pretext, Berlin attempted to establish its basic claim to the region and obtain diplomatic recognition of the fact. For some weeks the French and the Germans rivalled each other in their outpourings of aid and sympathy to the disaster victims. France proclaimed a national day of mourning and collected at least 600,000 francs for the survivors of the tragedy.⁴⁵ The French won acclaim also when they rescued a woman who had been buried five days in the debris. Vice-Chancellor Franz von Papen of Germany, on the other hand, was given a cool reception when he personally visited the disaster site, and his press conference was boycotted by many Saarland reporters. Despite the acute competition which the Neunkirchen disaster had inspired, von Papen predicted that a settlement with France might soon be reached which would return the Saar to the Fatherland.⁴⁶

The Vice-Chancellor was probably referring to a temporary easing of tension within the Disarmament Conference which had become apparent early in 1933. But later in February, the Governing Commission produced its findings concerning Nazi para-military activity in the Saar, and this disclosure seriously weakened the Reich's position at Geneva. For some time thereafter, no productive discussion was possible.⁴⁷ In the meantime, other extremist actions continued to inflame French public opinion. In August, German nationals kidnapped two French subjects while on Saar territory. Both the British and the French protested, but received only "arrogant replies" from the German Government.⁴⁸ Little hope remained for

⁴⁵Ibid., February 17, 1933, p. 8, and February 18, 1933, p. 2.

⁴⁶Ibid., February 16, 1933, p. 2.

⁴⁷Ibid., February 24, 1933, p. 1.

⁴⁸Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 125-127; Annual Register, 1933, p. 161.

a Franco-German agreement, much less a lasting rapprochement.

An even lower point in Franco-German relations was reached in October, 1933, when Hitler announced his withdrawal of Germany from the Disarmament Conference and from the League of Nations. Insofar as French policy was based upon effective disarmament and international solidarity, that policy was ruined.⁴⁹ Hitler, however, continued to vacillate between rattling the saber and appearing the man of peace. Later in October, Hitler suggested that he and Edouard Daladier, French premier since January, meet personally to discuss the situation. Indicating that he had renounced all claims to Alsace-Lorraine, Hitler further hoped that a Franco-German entente could be based on rattachement of the Saar.⁵⁰ Paul-Boncour, speaking before the Chamber of Deputies, rebuffed this effort at conciliation and reaffirmed the French policy of assuring the plebiscite to the Saarlanders. He went on to say, however, that France was more concerned with disarmament and security than with the Saar, although the problems of each were interrelated. Two days later on November 16, Hitler replied reassuringly that once the Saar question was settled, Germany would accept the letter and spirit of Locarno.⁵¹ The threat that German demands must be met before an easing of tensions could be assumed was implicit in Hitler's statement, but seems to have been lost on the French.

Hitler made numerous statements of this kind in the early thirties.

⁴⁹Edouard Bonnefous, Histoire Politique de la Troisième République (5 vols.; Paris, 1962), V, 173-174, 179.

⁵⁰Hitler also promised to build a Rhine monument commemorating their peace. Georges Bonnet, Le Quai d'Orsay sous trois républiques, 1870-1961 (Paris, 1961), p. 128.

⁵¹Journal Officiel de la République française. Débats parlementaires, November 14, 1933, 4104-4105; Russell, The Saar, p. 91.

In an attempt to alleviate French anxiety, he declared on November 21 that the Saar was the sole remaining Franco-German controversy,⁵² and followed his assertion with concrete proposals. In return for rattachement before 1935 and recognition of the principle of equality in arms for Germany, France would be granted economic concessions in the Saar. The French Cabinet declined this overture, reiterating its position that armaments control and the achievement of security must precede any other agreement.

By December, the first signs of a severe internal crisis were beginning to complicate the French position regarding Germany. Nevertheless, New York Times correspondent Frederick T. Birchall reported from Paris that public opinion was slowly being won to Franco-German reconciliation. A few days later, Hitler sent another proposal which demanded immediate rattachement. He still insisted on equality, but agreed to renounce offensive weapons and to a general and reciprocal arms control through an eight to ten year non-aggression pact. The French continued to temporize, however, and rejected this plan too.⁵³ As grounds for their refusal, the French Government implied that direct negotiations with Germany over the Saar would undercut the League's administration and prestige and would amount to an abandonment of France's commitment to a Saar plebiscite. With this stalemate, 1933 closed on the Saar dispute. Likewise, the last hopes that France would obtain lasting benefits from the Saar or, for that matter, the Treaty of Versailles, disappeared. For

⁵²New York Times, November 22, 1933, p. 1.

⁵³Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 162; New York Times, December 8, 1933, p. 12; Bonnet, Quai d'Orsay, pp. 128-129; New York Times, December 20, 1933, p. 14.

1934 would open with a grave constitutional crisis in France which left her impotent for a time in international affairs.

CHAPTER III

PLEBISCITE PREPARATIONS, 1934

The intermittent Franco-German negotiations over the Saar failed of much accomplishment in 1933, and Hitler was unable to achieve rattachement without a plebiscite. As a result, the League proceeded in 1934 with its preparations for the 1935 vote. Diplomatically, the situation was relatively calm early in the year. German diplomat Richard von Kühlmann referred to the numerous "peace" speeches Hitler made toward the end of 1933, and emphasized that Hitler and the German people realized the necessity for peace. War wounds needed time to heal, he said, and only a Franco-German rapprochement would afford that time.¹ Subsequent events did not bear out this type of optimism, however. The controversy over the Saar Territory made that area the "hot spot" of 1934 with French, German, and League prestige at stake. In the Saarland, the battle would rage around the vote for status quo. Since many Saarlanders disliked National Socialism, France came to believe they would favor a later plebiscite which could return them to a Reich more compatible with their ideas. Germany, of course, denied the possibility of a second plebiscite, implying that a vote for status quo would mean an irrecoverable loss of nationality to the Saarlanders under an international government. The

¹Richard von Kühlmann, "The Future of the Saar," Foreign Affairs, XII (April, 1934), 426-435. Von Kühlmann served as Counselor of the German Embassy, London, 1908-1914, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1917-1918, during which time he negotiated the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and the Peace of Bucharest.

League's problem may be succinctly stated. Its duty was to first provide for the plebiscite, but also to work for European peace;² should a Saar solution be found to serve both aims, all the better. Yet both Germany and France had inaugurated preparedness campaigns, and many feared that the Saar could be the fatal spark to war.³ It was a complex, difficult, and continuing problem with which the League had to deal, and the efforts to solve it strained national tempers.

The first League session of 1934 opened on January 15 in the realization that its most pressing question was the Saar plebiscite. Germany, of course, was not present at this meeting, having earlier withdrawn, although she would retain both League membership and a Council seat for two more years.⁴ France, ostensibly from a "sense of loyalty and fair play," asked that Germany be expressly notified of the impending Saar talks. More accurately, France probably desired Germany's presence so that the latter would have less cause for subsequent complaints. At any rate, France made this conciliatory gesture and Italy, who was rapporteur of the Saar question, forwarded the French message.⁵ The German reply was immediate and brusque. Their note of the following day stated that "for reasons of principle, [Germany] must abstain from taking part in the discussion." France was willing enough to delay the talks pending the German appearance, but Germany bluntly refused. Still, Germany realized that France was unwilling to negotiate away the plebiscite inasmuch as

²New York Times, January 14, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

³Ibid., May 27, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

⁴League of Nations, The Monthly Summary of the League of Nations, XIV (January, 1934), 8. Hereinafter cited as League of Nations Monthly Summary.

⁵New York Times, January 16, 1934, p. 12.

it would give the Saarlanders the opportunity to voice their opinions. Consequently, Germany informed the League that it preferred the earliest possible plebiscite date.⁶ The German Government seemed a little fearful that Saar opinion was not as strong for rattachement in 1934 as it had been before. Thus, the sooner the plebiscite, the fewer adherents National Socialism might lose.

On January 19, the first important official discussions of the Saar problem were held, and the first Franco-British dispute over the question arose. Paul-Boncour requested that the Council discussions be secret so that the problems might be more fully analyzed. Sir John Simon, representing Great Britain, disagreed; he wanted open sessions and a minimum of debate. Secret sessions were decided upon, but immediately the British and French again differed. Paul-Boncour hoped to release the deliberative results of the discussions, but Simon opposed this. The Frenchman argued that the German side of the question should be fully aired so that observers could appreciate the faults and irregularities of the Nazi regime. The British feared this would be offensive to Germany and further impair chances for disarmament. With this argument, British moderation prevailed.⁷

The next question involved the plebiscite arrangements themselves. France held that the results of the plebiscite would be more valid if the League guaranteed Saarlander rights both during and after the actual vote. Otherwise, Nazi intimidation and threats of reprisals could sway the balloting. The League decided in favor of the French argument, but

⁶Ibid., and January 14, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1; League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (January, 1934), 8.

⁷Jones, "The Foreign Policy of Louis Barthou," pp. 439-440.

authorized no specific period for its control.⁸ This was a touchy problem and one which would plague the League throughout 1934.

To investigate all aspects of the plebiscite, a study committee was suggested by the Italian member, Baron Pompeo Aloisi, and was established by the League. Chaired by Aloisi and including the Spanish and Argentinian representatives, the Committee of Three set out to smooth the plebiscite road. Specifically, the League Council charged it, in order

to secure the freedom, secrecy, and trustworthiness of the voting,...

(a) to study measures calculated to ensure by all appropriate means the regularity of the electoral proceedings;

(b) to take particularly into consideration the study of the appropriate means of safeguarding the population against pressure of any kind and the execution of any threats likely to affect the trustworthiness of the voting;

(c) to study any suggestions that may be submitted to it by the Governing Commission as regards the maintenance of order during the period of the plebiscite.⁹

The Committee of Three quickly assumed its duties. Earlier, Chairman Knox had asked the Council to provide a larger and neutral police force for the Saar. This request implied obtaining outside help. Because of Nazi terrorism, he declared, some difficulty was encountered in maintaining order in the Saar and the coming election could not be held inviolable should this situation persist.¹⁰ In February, the Committee met with Knox to discuss those legislative, executive, and judicial measures he deemed necessary for a fair and secret plebiscite. The Committee reached no decisions at this meeting although Knox reiterated his plea for a larger police force. Germany became somewhat concerned over this request, fearing that "neutral" forces might actually mean either

⁸New York Times, January 20, 1934, p. 8.

⁹League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (January, 1934), 8.

¹⁰New York Times, January 17, 1934, p. 13.

French or French-influenced troops. Germany then unilaterally requested Spain to supply such troops. If Spain complied, no action by the Council would be necessary, yet the League would be pleased that the need for police had been satisfied. Spain, however, refused the German request later the same month.¹¹

As the Committee of Three began its search for an adequate Saar solution, the Sixth of February revolt in Paris forced a convulsive change in French politics. On the heels of the Stavisky scandal, Parisian mobs marched on Parliament and obtained Edouard Daladier's resignation of the premiership. The reaction to the Stavisky affair was similar to the Dreyfus and Boulanger cases in that it shook the roots of republicanism. Fascism probably never came as close to triumph in France as it did in February, 1934.¹² The Chamber of Deputies remained oriented toward the left, but the circumstances favored a conservative or even reactionary Government. Jean Louis Barthou, a former premier and close associate of Poincaré, thus acceded to the Quai d'Orsay. Barthou's anti-German sentiments destroyed the moderation of Paul-Boncour and inaugurated a "hard line" toward Germany. Continuity of policy was thereby interrupted, although this was not apparent in the first months of 1934.

Upon taking office, Barthou immediately tackled the disarmament problem. The League continued its discussions on the ways and means of persuading Germany to cooperate with the Conference. To encourage this cooperation, Barthou agreed to accept Hitler's latest disarmament proposal but was overruled by Tardieu and Herriot who feared that this plan would

¹¹ Ibid., February 17, 1934, p. 3; League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (February, 1934), 30-31; New York Times, February 25, 1934, p. 27.

¹² Edouard Herriot, "The Future of French Democracy," Foreign Affairs, XII (July, 1934), 604-609.

permit limited German rearmament. The French Foreign Minister then tendered his resignation and only remained in office through the persuasion of Premier Gaston Doumergue. This French line toward disarmament yielded two important results: the League refused Hitler's request for limited rearmament and thus paved the way for a full-scale armaments race; to provide securité, Barthou directed his main efforts to the attainment of another Locarno, this time to protect the frontiers of Eastern Europe.¹³

While disarmament remained a leading problem, the Saar controversy awaited solution. The Committee of Three continued its work through the spring months, but little was published of its activities since the League Council had adjourned earlier. More discussions took place concerning the means for obtaining a fair and representative plebiscite. It was noted several times that Nazi activity in the Saar made this goal difficult. In March, the Committee requested a Consultation of Jurists which then made legalistic recommendations. The Committee suggested in the following month that a plebiscite commission undertake to assure the technical aspects of the plebiscite and that an ad hoc court be likewise established. Other topics dealt with finances, voter registration, voting precincts, the method by which the voting results were to be considered, and general questions of the plebiscite's administration.¹⁴ Finally, the Committee received another report from Chairman Knox to the effect that the Deutsche Front was continuing its activity, and that, as a result of this agitation, the authenticity of the plebiscite may be compromised. The Committee then adjourned with its weighty problems and set its

¹³Bonnet, Quai d'Orsay, pp. 129-130.

¹⁴League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (March, 1934), 75.

reconvention a few days prior to the next session of the Council on May 14.¹⁵

The Committee of Three's beginning was auspicious, but many of the major Saar problems could be solved only through Franco-German agreements. The League Council received the Committee's report in mid-May and accordingly authorized the establishment of a Plebiscite Commission and a Plebiscite Tribunal to aid the Governing Commission in the conduction of the voting. Further, the Council decided that those persons who were permanent residents of the Saar Territory as of June 28, 1919, and had reached the age of twenty would be considered qualified electors. No one else was to be so designated. Questions concerning the manner in which the vote would be considered were referred to a later meeting, although voting by districts was assumed acceptable. This caused Germany some anxious moments; should one or more district vote against rattachement, it might be detached from the Territory and thus from the Reich. The ticklish problems of securing a free vote and of maintaining order were also referred to a later session, as was the question of finances.¹⁶ Still vitally concerned with the problem of order, the Governing Commission reported to the League Council that "a part of the population no longer had any confidence in the impartiality and equity of the local tribunals." This was a consequence of the effects of National Socialism on the Saar and on Germany, but the Commission proposed no adequate measure to remedy the situation.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., 84; New York Times, April 14, 1934, p. 8.

¹⁶League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (April, 1934), 120.

¹⁷Ibid., "Fifty-seventh Report of the Saar Governing Commission," p. 119.

The month of May seethed with unsettling conditions in the Saar which reflected on the plebiscite preparations. Goebbels made a vigorous speech on the sixth, and its aftermath caused Chairman Knox to fear a coup de main by Germany. Shortly thereafter, French troops began movements on the Saar border, which resulted in heightening German anxiety although France denied that these maneuvers had any significance. On the twenty-fourth, the French State Mines Administration reported the theft of some documents. German agents were naturally suspected of the deed in an effort to obtain lists of those Saarlander children who attended the French schools.¹⁸

The situation was similarly tense in France. On the day of Goebbel's speech, Deputy André Fribourg, in his capacity as vice-chairman of the foreign affairs commission of the Chamber of Deputies, commented on the French position. Besides proclaiming the desirability of political, economic, social and religious freedoms in the Territory, he argued that a vote for rattachement would wreak economic disaster on the Saarlanders.

I am certain [Deputy Fribourg continued] that the majority will declare in favor of the status quo next year, but it should be properly understood that if peradventure the territory of the Saar is returned to Germany and that if we must give up the mines or property of the State or of French private ownership we shall demand, as is our strict right, payment in cash.¹⁹

This was a propaganda piece, certainly, but also a threat inasmuch as Germany was ill prepared to pay for the mines in gold, the real meaning of Fribourg's "cash."

Barthou's position was similar as French policy perceptibly stiffened.

¹⁸New York Times, May 7, 1934, p. 9, May 9, 1934, p. 3, May 17, 1934, p. 13, and May 25, 1934, p. 11.

¹⁹Ibid., May 7, 1934, p. 9.

Addressing the Chamber on May 25, he stated categorically that there would be no negotiation concerning the plebiscite and went further than Paul-Boncour by refusing to offer even the hint of an olive branch to Germany. All peoples in the Saar, he said, whether they were eligible voters or not, must be accorded their rights and freedoms so that they might express themselves openly. In a rare moment of agreement, the Chamber rose almost to a man -- Right, Center, Left, and Extreme Left -- to applaud.²⁰ In contrast to Fribourg, however, Barthou made it clear that trade and customs agreements were more important than a cash settlement over the Saar. His central policy was to support the Versailles Treaty fully, yet he was more concerned with achieving disarmament than with any other question. In desiring Germany's return to the disarmament table, Barthou seemed relatively moderate in his approach and consistent with Paul-Boncour's earlier attempts.²¹

Moderation did not characterize the Saar negotiations, however, as tension heightened to a fever pitch. In a wise move, the League Council acted in late May to suspend its discussion of the plebiscite for ten days. Tension subsided temporarily and optimism even came to be voiced. One writer expressed the opinion that the "Saar problem will be settled, ...and with good faith on all sides one old sore between France and Germany will have been healed."²² By June, the major Franco-German disputes were settled, but the preparations by the League still remained far from complete.

The relative quietude of the concerned powers allowed the Committee

²⁰Bonnefous, Histoire Politique, V, 248-249.

²¹Ibid., 247-251; New York Times, May 31, 1934, p. 11.

²²Frederick T. Birchall in New York Times, May 31, 1934, p. 11.

of Three to take major strides in its plebiscite provisions. On June 4, Baron Aloisi presented a final report to the League Council in which he enumerated the governing principles of the plebiscite: that the Treaty of Versailles should be followed both in letter and spirit; that the prestige of the Council rest on the fairness of the voting; that an improvement of Franco-German relations be considered.²³

To facilitate matters, Aloisi asked that the French and German Governments state their support for the goal of providing a free vote. In reply, he received on June 2 identical notes which resolved that

the French and German Governments, without prejudice to the provisions of paragraph 39 of the Annex to Article 50 of the Treaty of Versailles, undertook:

(a) to abstain from pressure of any kind, whether direct or indirect, likely to affect the freedom and trustworthiness of the voting;

(b) likewise to abstain from taking any proceedings or making any reprisals or discrimination against persons having the right to vote, as a result of their political attitude during the administration by the League of Nations;

(c) to take the necessary steps to prevent or punish any action by their nationals contrary to these undertakings.²⁴

Germany agreed to this statement of guarantees in negotiations with France over the proposed date of the plebiscite. In return, France permitted an early vote, which was set for Sunday, January 13, 1935.

In this June session, the League Council further charged the Plebiscite Commission with the actual administration of the plebiscite and gave it the right to decree appropriate ordinances.²⁵ The Council likewise

²³League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (June, 1934), 136.

²⁴Ibid., p. 137.

²⁵This Commission had actually been selected in early May and comprised three members plus a technical expert. Miss Sarah Wambaugh, author of Saar Plebiscite, was the expert, or technical advisor.

followed other Committee of Three suggestions concerning voting by districts, the establishment of a Supreme Plebiscite Tribunal and eight inferior courts, and attendant judicial problems. The Plebiscite Commission was to function for one year after the voting so that alleged irregularities might have a chance for redress. On the problem of maintaining order, the Council was not too successful in its deliberations and provided for only an increase in the local gendarmerie. Financing, however, was settled. The League was to pay \$50,000 for the plebiscite, with France and Germany each contributing \$250,000.²⁶ This last settlement particularly pleased Germany since she would have as great a hand in the plebiscite as France. Since the French were well satisfied with the other Council provisions, one might think another "era of good feelings" would be in store. Barthou, however, reiterated the seriousness and necessity for maintaining order and insuring political and other freedoms.²⁷ He evidently distrusted the Germans, and with good cause; Nazi intransigence toward the Versailles terms was already apparent.

Although the League Council was making progress in its attempt to provide a "secret and trustworthy" plebiscite in full accord with Wilson's 1919 stand at Paris, its efforts to provide for European peace were less fruitful. Germany was too concerned over this strategic border area to allow the League a free hand in the situation by moderating her campaign. Hitler seemed nervous and fearful that National Socialist actions would alienate Saar opinion. Yet his Nazi ideology did not admit of failure in this German area. After all, the Saar Basin was the only German-inhabited

²⁶League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (June, 1934), 138-139; New York Times, June 2, 1934, p. 9, and June 3, 1934, p. 28.

²⁷League of Nations Monthly Summary, XIV (June, 1934), 138-139.

territory which Hitler could add to the Reich at this time without resorting to force of arms. This plebiscite, he perhaps thought, must become the first victory of the Third Reich.²⁸

To retain the support of the Saarlanders and ward off a possible reaction to Nazi tactics, Hitler decided in 1934 that some moderation must be at least expressed in the Territory. Maintaining the "peace front" previously put forth, Germany had disavowed in early February any intent to influence the plebiscite. She then ordered that all overt Nazi campaigning stop, probably a propaganda move in itself.²⁹ A month later, Nazi tactics did seem more moderate and the young firebrand, Alois Spaniol, was removed from his position as leader of the Deutsche Front. Spaniol had been extremely vitriolic in pursuing his campaign, particularly against Catholics. In calling for their murder, he referred to them as "torturers of the soul of German children."³⁰ Jakob Pirro, a Catholic, replaced him and joined the Saar National Socialist party with the Deutsche Front. Later, Pirro began another intensive propaganda campaign to help achieve the German goal of a ninety-two per cent vote for rattachement. The Deutsche Front even guaranteed that its members would henceforth refrain from violence, yet the same day Saar Jews asked that their rights be protected should the League regime end. Apparently, Nazi exuberance could not or would not be quelled. Der Sturmer, a German weekly, went so far as to claim that Miss Wambaugh, technical adviser to the Plebiscite Commission and an American Protestant, was a Jew. Further, the entire

²⁸New York Times, July 25, 1934, p. 3; Edouard Herriot, Jadis: D'une guerre à l'autre (3 vols.; Paris, 1952), II, 442, 452.

²⁹Jones, "The Foreign Policy of Louis Barthou," p. 443.

³⁰Ibid., p. 445; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 151.

Commission was reviled as a Jewish conspiracy.³¹

Nazi acts gave the lie to mere statements and "guarantees" by Germany, and the well-informed Saar populace recognized this. Several events in July were especially hard for the Germans to explain. On the twenty-fourth an attempt was made to assassinate the Saarbruecken police commissioner who had raided Deutsche Front headquarters under Governing Commission orders. The German press had pilloried the commissioner as a French dupe, yet was quick to disclaim responsibility for the deed. Likewise, the Nazi purge in June and the Dollfuss assassination in July did not enhance the National Socialist image.³² Socialist Max Braun then brought forth evidence that approximately 15,000 young Saar Nazis, led by the renegade Spaniol, were being trained in German labor camps to take part in a Saar revolt. Braun felt that Hitler actually feared defeat in the plebiscite and was therefore working to incite a pro-German uprising. Braun himself had helped foster the German fear by leading a reported 70,000 Saarlanders on August 26 in a pledge to vote against Germany.³³

Nevertheless, hopeful signs appeared from time to time, as when France reportedly obtained a Reich guarantee that Saar minority rights would be protected after 1935 and that the League could continue its regime for three years more. This turned out to be just a rumor, but the feeling prevailed that Germany was nearing concessions on Socialist, Jewish, and pro-French Saarlander minorities by proscribing any subsequent reprisals. The League settled several controversial questions in

³¹New York Times, May 8, 1934, p. 15; May 15, 1934, p. 12, and July 2, 1934, p. 2.

³²Ibid., July 25, 1934, p. 7; Jones, "The Foreign Policy of Louis Barthou," pp. 464-465.

³³New York Times, August 30, 1934, p. 11, and August 27, 1934, p. 1.

June, and France was satisfied for the moment. With the Franco-German accord over the conditions, guarantees, and date of the plebiscite, "world order" was again emphasized, and Barthou was referred to as a "director" of satisfactory solutions in both the Saar and the disarmament talks.³⁴

Quiet reigned in the Franco-German relations for a short time, but within two months the propaganda wheels began turning once more -- slowly on the French side, furiously on the German. In late August, the French Government sent a communiqué to its prefectures urging all qualified electors to vote in the Saar plebiscite. France realized that her glory could be somewhat dimmed by an unfavorable vote and that Germany might receive a tremendous ideological and patriotic boost from it. Yet the French were again late in their appeal as they issued the communiqué only a week before Saar voter registration closed. Unofficial manifestations of French displeasure appeared as the press lambasted Hitler, especially berating his insincerity. Several Paris papers even urged that the faults of Briand's conciliatory policy be repaired to stop the spread of pan-Germanism and prevent war; they thereby intimated that Franco-German negotiations should be continued, but in a cautious manner.³⁵ One unnamed French official declared further that the Saar was not a Franco-German problem since the plebiscite did not involve direct French action. Yet the French economic interests at stake in the Saarland, he warned, could prevent a peaceful Franco-German relationship in case of rattachement. Moreover, Nazi terrorism and anti-Catholicism precluded any satisfaction in Hitler's spoken "guarantees."³⁶

³⁴Ibid., May 30, 1934, p. 10, May 31, 1934, p. 11, and June 3, 1934, p. 28.

³⁵Ibid., August 22, 1934, p. 7, and August 28, 1934, p. 6.

³⁶Ibid., April 28, 1934, p. 6.

Germany was not so quiescent as her neighbor and took extensive measures to insure rattachement. For example, the Deutsche Front offered to pay the expenses of former Saarlanders to return and vote in the plebiscite. In New York, a Verein der Saarlaender was set up for this purpose, while the German Government instituted a People's League for Germanism Abroad. In his harangue of May 30, Vice-Chancellor von Papen had threatened the Saarlanders with economic ruin should Germany not gain a substantial victory. And in late August Hitler traveled to Coblenz to initiate a drive for German votes. At this demonstration, Hitler as usual stressed the patriotic plea and warned France to expect an overwhelming German victory.³⁷

Hitler's words did not long dominate diplomacy over the Saar. On August 31, Barthou made his principle statement of French policy on the Saar question in the form of a memorandum to the French Cabinet. The Government approved this aide-memoire, then sent it to the League Council for its action. Barthou asserted that French interests must be protected in the Saar regardless of the plebiscite's outcome. To achieve this, he argued that certain political, juridical, and financial problems must be solved beforehand. Should Germany immediately occupy the Saar upon a rattachement vote, as was feared, the Versailles clauses dealing with the repurchase of the French mines, etc. would be difficult to enforce. France thus took the position that Germany would have to meet French demands on these problems in advance, or the post-plebiscite government would be postponed.³⁸ Barthou further believed that these necessary and unavoidable decisions should be made without the haste or inadequacy which later

³⁷Ibid., September 1, 1934, p. 6, May 31, 1934, p. 11, May 20, 1934, p. 23, May 22, 1934, p. 15, and August 27, 1934, p. 1.

³⁸Ibid., September 1, 1934, p. 6; Russell, The Saar, p. 99.

circumstances might force. Restating Fribourg's contention, the aide-memoire declared that French property in the Saarland must be redeemed in gold in case of rattachement. Otherwise, France would retain this property until Germany made adequate redemption. Furthermore, the Germans would not be allowed to confiscate those francs now circulating in the Saar; the French currency would instead be used to repurchase the mines. Thus, France attempted to secure Franco-German agreements while they were still obtainable.³⁹

Barthou told of great benefits which would accrue to the Saar if rattachement were rejected in the plebiscite. He made clear that France would conscientiously consider turning the mines over to private interests in the Saarland should the League regime be maintained. The aide-memoire elaborated on this point by requesting the League to explain the meaning of status quo. By such an explanation Barthou hoped the League would then enter the propaganda field and thus directly oppose German efforts. Also, France favored more political autonomy or responsibility for the Saarlanders and would allow them a popular constitution if a status quo vote resulted. Barthou was making his bid for Saar support and painted the status quo picture as being in the best interests of the Saar populace. Saar Socialist and even Communist demands were satisfied in this manner, giving credence to the idea that the aide-memoire compromised the previous stands taken by the French Government. Finally, should the Saarlanders vote to incorporate with France, they would then gain all the rights and privileges of Frenchmen; this was intended to be a strong

³⁹Russell, The Saar, pp. 99-100; Florinsky, Saar Struggle, pp. 170-172.

argument against National Socialism.⁴⁰

The aide-memoire thus warned Germany that Barthou was willing to wage diplomatic warfare to obtain concessions over the Saar. Further, the Saarlanders were reminded that France would be extremely lenient should rattachement fail -- a point no Nazi could miss. Germany, of course, protested such statements, correctly claiming that the French note was designed to oppose rattachement. But Germany was likewise informed that a France under Barthou would no longer passively await defeat. Several questions arose. Particularly, would the Saar have another plebiscite in case of a status quo vote, or would it remain permanently under League administration? No one answered directly, but Barthou and the Saar Socialists intimated another vote, perhaps after Hitler's demise. This strongly appealed to those Catholics and others who favored Germany but opposed Hitler. Le Temps, however, perhaps fearing that a Franco-German schism might result from this "hard line," editorialized against such an understanding of the status quo and declared that another plebiscite would be extra-legal.⁴¹

Barthou followed up the aide-memoire by demanding that the League protect the rights of Frenchmen remaining in the Saar after January 13. The Saarlanders' race and religion must be respected as well as their physical well-being. France realized the impossibility of a pro-French vote, so she fostered the status quo. By this solution, a Rhine buffer state would be perpetuated and economic advantages would not be lost.⁴²

⁴⁰Florinsky, Saar Struggle, pp. 170-172; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, p. 221; New York Times, September 5, 1934, p. 13.

⁴¹Florinsky, Saar Struggle, p. 171.

⁴²New York Times, September 5, 1934, p. 13, and September 9, 1934, sec. IV, p. 2. See also Michael T. Florinsky's article, "Opposing Forces in Saar Mobilize for the Plebiscite," New York Times, September 9, 1934, sec. VIII, p. 3.

Later in September, Barthou warned the League of the explosive Saar situation and declared that the maintenance of order was the Council's prime consideration at the moment. France, he said, was somewhat anxious of her Saar responsibilities yet wished to avoid French intervention in the Territory. Therefore, the Saar police must further be strengthened, and (again) the meaning of status quo must be explained.⁴³

One plausible interpretation of the new French attitude was offered by Quincy Howe, editor of The Living Age. Referring frequently to the nonpartisan Paris monthly, La Crapouillot, Howe argued that French capitalists supported Saar Socialist opposition to Hitler for strictly personal reasons. Contending that munitions manufacturers and other industrialists used the Saar controversy to poison Franco-German relations, he further stated that the 1934 Domergue Government was industry's tool. This was the same circumstance, Howe continued, that prompted Tardieu to defeat Briand's conciliation in 1929. Since that time, French capitalists had fostered their Saar campaign through agitation, censored reports, and false information.⁴⁴ Howe's logic seemed credible, but did not explain why French support for the status quo had been so half hearted before September's aide-memoire. In a special article for the New York Times in early October, Franz von Papen seemed to support this view by declaring that the June accord had been reached in spite of French intransigence. France, von Papen reported, had made wholly unreasonable demands, but Germany, Hitler, and he himself had bent every will towards securing agreement by "obviat[ing] every pretext that could be found for further procrastination."⁴⁵

⁴³Ibid., September 28, 1934, p. 8.

⁴⁴Quincy Howe, World Diary: 1929-1934 (New York, 1934), pp. 338-341.

⁴⁵New York Times, October 6, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

Other interpretations were propounded, of course, as the struggle in the Saar between pan-Germanism and securité continued. Writing in the London Daily Herald, Harold J. Iaski expressed the opinion that the Saar now favored the status quo over National Socialism. Since Hitler had lost support, he must intensify his campaign of persuasion and intimidation. With the apparent disorder in the Saar, such sentiments led Barthou to state that France would send troops into the Saar to maintain order if necessary. The resulting concentration of French troops on the Saar border worried the Germans. Germany called this tactic an intimidation designed to influence Saar voters, but Hitler did not regard Nazi demonstrations and actions in the same light. At Coblenz in August, Hitler spoke personally to the Saarlanders, reiterating that the Saar was the only Franco-German territorial problem. Anticipating the effects of the aide-memoire, perhaps, Hitler promised that, should rattachement occur, Germany would build a great road from Saarbruecken to the Rhine, a pipeline to Ludwigshafen, and a Saar-Rhine canal.⁴⁶ Opposing him, Max Braun took another tack by promising modified socialism, self-government under a League-drawn constitution, and the probability of another plebiscite when Hitler fell from power should the status quo win.

During September, status quo forces seemed to be gaining on the Deutsche Front as the aide-memoire held out the hope that France would officially press for a neutral Saar. Unfortunately, Barthou's program ended abruptly with his assassination at Marseilles on October 9, 1934. He had clearly improved French chances in the Saar, but only at the cost of drawing France a little farther from the mainstream of Briand's dreams of a Franco-German rapprochement and the peace of Europe based upon the

⁴⁶Russell, The Saar, pp. 95-96; Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 219-221.

settlement of the Saar problem. Under Barthou, a Franco-German rapprochement would have been extremely difficult; but then he had confronted Adolph Hitler.

Eight days after Barthou's death, more evidence of Saar irregularities appeared. Although estimates of eligible Saar voters ranged from 250,000-300,000, some 520,000 signed up. Strong suspicion existed that married women had registered under their present and maiden names, that divorcees registered in a similar way, and that laborers living in one district and working in another registered in both. Such complications suggested that more time was needed for the plebiscite preparations to obtain a truly trustworthy vote. A postponement seemed inevitable, and this thought added another controversy to the already embittered atmosphere.⁴⁷

Barthou's death, which many Saarlanders felt was Nazi-inspired, served to continue the Saar confusion without that hope for a happy solution which his side-memoire evoked. Political opinion was drastically split, with the Deutsche Front in opposition to a somewhat smaller but equally vocal organization of Socialists and Communists. The great number of Roman Catholics were known to have qualms about Nazism, yet would not publicly embrace the status quo. They were the mainstays of the majority Center party which had ceased its activity in 1933, following the example of its Reich counterpart. Thus, outspoken opinion in the Saar was largely extremist -- right or left -- but the plebiscite's outcome was still unpredictable. Political, economic, and social factors favored France; one estimate was that ten to twenty years of austerity would have to be

⁴⁷Bonnefous, Histoire Politique, V, 283; New York Times, September 18, 1934, p. 8. For a brief survey of Barthou's career, see Bonnefous, Histoire Politique, V, 283-289.

borne by the Saarlanders before the Territory could become economically integrated into the Reich.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the population was German, and the outcome would be critical. With the tremendous questions left unanswered at Barthou's death, particularly the mines payment and the maintenance of order, an advantageous solution for France seemed impossible.

⁴⁸New York Times, January 14, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

CHAPTER IV

THE CRISIS ENDS

Pierre Laval now made serious efforts to obtain such an advantageous solution for France as he came to the Quai d'Orsay in October, 1934, toward the end of the Saar controversy. A former Socialist, Laval was no less intent than his predecessors on securité, and his immediate concerns included forging alliances with Italy and the Soviet Union. Realizing the greater potential of the German population and industry, Laval hoped these new and major allies would be the French answer to Hitler's threat, particularly toward Eastern Europe. M. Laval, pacifically inclined, agreed with the League's idea of a community of nations and with collective security, yet in addition desired ententes with the larger states.

France had been unsuccessful in her earlier attempts to build a system of collective security. Barthou had failed to forge an Eastern Locarno which included Germany, and a Franco-British-Italian pact had miscarried. Thus the French alliance system in October, 1934, included only Poland and the nations of the Petite Entente, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia, who themselves had no common policy. Laval believed England to be indispensable to French security, but Britain and France often disagreed diplomatically. He further feared an Italo-German understanding, yet the often poor Italo-French relations did not seem adequate to prevent this. Hitlerian Germany -- powerful, dynamic, disciplined -- was the great problem of French diplomacy. In this connection, Laval faced a major dilemma: had circumstances altered the anti-French expressions of Mein Kampf,

or was Hitler sincere with his peace protestations?

Of the Versailles settlement, only the final disposition of the Saar remained. Interallied debts and reparations had virtually been dropped, and disarmament was fast becoming only an illusion. Hitler never wavered over the Saar and neither did French vigilance. Militarily, France was oriented toward the doctrines of defensive warfare, and Laval preferred to negotiate rather than exert force. Conciliation, in fact, dominated his Saar policy, and under it Hitler won his first territorial victory.¹

During Barthou's tenure, the Committee of Three had recognized the inadequacy of Saar policing. Since much agitation resulted from the Saar problem, France had demanded that a maintenance of order be assured in order to prevent such intimidation and reprisals as might invalidate the plebiscite. The first step taken by the League was to rely on local recruiting to augment the Territory's forces. Since this was ineffective, France proposed an international force under League auspices together with certain guarantees by Germany. Such guarantees -- protection of minorities, preservation of the plebiscite's integrity, assurances against reprisals -- were not easily obtained and became a bargaining point by which Germany hoped to gain an early plebiscite. Eventually France and Germany reached an agreement; Germany gave her guarantees and France specified the date of January 13, 1935, for the vote.² Unfortunately, however, the German guarantees were not as stringent and binding as France would have liked.

The question of order had dominated the late summer of 1934 and prompted concern from many quarters. In September, Chairman Knox reported

¹Alfred Mallet, Pierre Laval (2 vols.; Paris, 1955), I, 55-64.

²Wambaugh, Saar Plebiscite, pp. 177-180.

that 16,000 Saarlanders were receiving military training at German expense in preparation for the 1935 plebiscite. Verified by other sources, this information disturbed the French and gave rise to their fear of a Nazi putsch. Barthou then indicated his readiness to send French troops into the Territory to maintain order. This in all probability would have precipitated calamity, and the French readily agreed that an international force was preferable to French intervention.³ Nevertheless, the French asserted that securité would not admit of German troops on the French border. The French Minister of War, Marshal Henri Pétain, considered that a putsch was unlikely, but in any case had a contingency plan for such an event. Chairman Knox likewise noticed the deterioration of Franco-German relations and added his voice in asking for the creation of a League police force.⁴ With the possibility of French and German troops coming face to face, war seemed dangerously near. French garrisons in Alsace and Lorraine held themselves ready, and the civilian population in these departments was in a highly nervous state. Even the pro-German Saar was anxious as, in October, two economic and labor organizations in the Saarland reiterated the supposed Nazi intent to invade the territory and similarly called for neutral police.

Laval's accession to the Quai d'Orsay changed this scene. He opposed the use of force, yet French opinion anticipated the need for extra troops in the Saar. Most observers seemed to think that Knox's request could not be filled voluntarily and that the Governing Commission would then request France to honor her obligation to maintain order in the Saar. But Laval

³Alexander Werth, The Twilight of France, 1933-1940 (London, 1942), p. 40.

⁴Russell, The Saar, pp. 95-96; New York Times, October 31, 1934, pp. 1, 4.

decried French preparedness in Alsace-Lorraine and strove to establish direct communications with Berlin. In this way he hoped to reach a friendly, or at least workable, settlement. Great Britain supported this idea of a Franco-German dialogue and expressed the opinion that tensions were already being alleviated. A sour note interposed, however, as reports were broadcast that disguised Nazi storm troopers were entering the Saar.⁵

The French became anxious and believed that the Saar could easily precipitate another international explosion. By the first of November, "high quarters" saw in the widely-quoted German press a "clear indication that the Nazis have been thinking of seizing the rich industrial area." The Saar, however, was unimportant to Germany in an economic sense; nationalism provided the main Nazi drive for the Saar. While war talk increased, Laval negotiated. He urged the British to send troops to maintain order in the Saarland but they at first declined. France appeared ready to accept its responsibilities in the Saar, even if it meant disaster.⁶

By November 5, the British relented. At first the Foreign Secretary denied any necessity for outside troops. Then Parliament discovered that British subjects were being accepted "for service in the Saar police." Later, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald declared in Commons that the League had requested volunteers for this duty. Britain, he said, simply offered its offices as a member of the League to forward their applications. Other governments were doing the same, and there was no national

⁵New York Times, October 31, 1934, p. 4, and November 1, 1934, p. 2.

⁶Ibid., November 2, 1934, p. 6, November 3, 1934, p. 2, and November 4, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

recruitment. The Saar Governing Commission would employ these police for the purpose of relieving France of its responsibility in the Saar. By the same token, this first internationally-sanctioned force was intended to foster more peaceful European relations.⁷

Laval's policy triumphed for the moment and German agitation slackened. Chairman Knox, however, was the real engineer of the relative calm after November, for it was he who forced Britain to take an active interest in the Saar problem. But the trickle of men provided by such voluntarism was not enough. Knox intimated this as he requested the continuation of French troops on the border and then asked the League for a larger force. The persistent inadequacy of the Saar police virtually compelled France to insist on the presence of her troops at the plebiscite. On December 5, the ever conciliatory and peaceful Laval personally petitioned the League to send more troops. In a surprise move, Anthony Eden immediately supported this plea and contributed several British regiments for Saar service provided other nations would do likewise. Russia, Italy, and Czechoslovakia quickly concurred in this move and the crisis passed.⁸

Britain also made her contribution of troops contingent on French and German approval. Laval was of course happy to comply and the Germans consented too. France had several reasons to be thankful. The interest of peace was served, but France was concerned that Germany had attributed secret aims to her use of force. The "war scare" subsided and Paris was relieved that danger had evidently passed. Laval received much praise at this time, and even Le Temps expressed pleasure.⁹ Momentarily, at least,

⁷M. Epstein, ed., The Annual Register, 1934 (London, 1935), p. 90.

⁸Ibid., pp. 98-99; Russell, The Saar, p. 97.

⁹New York Times, December 6, 1934, pp. 1, 13, and December 7, 1934, p. 18.

the peace of France was secured; but another vital question, French prestige, still hinged on the rapidly approaching plebiscite.

Barthou's aim had been to inflict a "moral defeat on Germany" by means of the Saar plebiscite. With this in mind, France accordingly supported the status quo. Laval's purpose was that of conciliation, and he regarded the plebiscite as a nasty but necessary business. Even before 1935 he hoped for a Franco-German rapprochement and evidently believed this possible once the controversy over the Saar was settled.¹⁰ In a way, one is reminded of Briand's 1929 policy, but the Germany of 1935 was vastly different from that of Stresemann's era.

As he had done on the question of Saar order, Laval tried to resolve other disputes through direct negotiation with Germany. In October, 1934, François-Poncet had expressed confidence that the mines issue could be easily settled, and Laval thus began a new evaluation of the problem. The Treaty of Versailles had provided that, in case of rattachement, Saar mines were to be bought from France in gold. But Germany's gold situation in 1934-1935 was not too bright. With Hitler's accession, prospective creditors disappeared, loans were difficult to obtain, and the domestic situation often contributed to anything but an economic boom. Barthou had earlier stated unequivocally that this financial problem must be settled, and even threatened a postponement of the plebiscite if it were not. By contrast, Laval exchanged assurances with German officials to relieve Saar tension.¹¹ Even when he made a "strong" stand, Laval vacillated, as when he reaffirmed the right to use troops in the Saar. Fundamentally, the French position had not changed, but Laval temporized just the same.

¹⁰Werth, Twilight of France, p. 40.

¹¹New York Times, December 6, 1934, pp. 1, 13, and December 7, 1934, p. 18.

French concern over reports of German rearmament continued and a reaction to Ribbentrop's denunciation of the Versailles military clauses disturbed France. Yet Franco-German trade negotiations were begun and Laval honestly hoped for favorable terms.¹²

On November 15, Laval proposed that France force Germany to negotiate with the League rather than France over the remaining Saar questions. In this way, perhaps, France would at least be partially removed from the controversy. He further denied all German claims of authority in the Saar, but would defend only Versailles and the League, not French interests, in this respect. Two days later, Hitler returned the olive branch by renouncing any plans for annexation, and promised his support of the plebiscite's result. Although he reiterated his opposition to war ("which wipes out the elite"), Hitler pointedly did not agree to support the League's decision,¹³ which may or may not correspond to the voting results.

During this time, the Saar economic situation had deteriorated. With the plebiscite imminent, Saarlanders hoarded their francs and thus reduced the amount of circulating capital. It was feared that Germany would force the Saarlanders to turn their francs, or the equivalent in gold, over to the Reichsbank in return for the less valuable mark. Many thus banked their savings in France or Switzerland. The French estimated the francs in the Saar to amount to 1.8 billion, and asked for Germany's pledge to return them in partial payment for the coal mines should rattachement result. Germany, claiming that only six hundred million francs were there, would rather use them to bolster its own foreign trade and to buy raw

¹²Ibid., November 8, 1934, p. 12, and November 10, 1934, p. 7.

¹³Ibid., November 16, 1934, p. 12, and November 18, 1934, p. 7.

materials. Laval's policy seemed to end this controversy as, on November 26, an accord was reached. Apparently, Laval agreed not to push an anti-Hitler policy in the Saar in return for Hitler's agreement to negotiate a financial settlement as soon as possible.¹⁴

Opposition, particularly from Herriot, arose to this deviation from Barthou's policy, and Laval valiantly defended his policy before the Chamber of Deputies. The Foreign Minister declared that no territorial question existed between France and Germany since the Saar was properly under an international framework. He continued:

It depends on Germany that the plebiscite takes place under regular conditions. For our part, we have no other desire than to see a free and secret vote assured. We accept in advance the result of the plebiscite. We express hope that order will not be disturbed, and if it is, France will remain ready to do her duty in assuming all her international obligations.

Bibbentrop was in Paris at the time, and Laval was inviting a non-aggression pact. He rejected a bilateral treaty, however, and disassociated France from the Saar. In this manner he seemed to be working for an Eastern Locarno.¹⁵

Laval was obviously trying to shuttle the Saar into relative obscurity in order to foster better Franco-German relations. By doing so, of course, French interest in the Territory decreased; and the Saarlanders were the first to notice this. One contemporary believed that Laval wished to subordinate the territorial aspect and confine Franco-German relations to a pro and con argument over militarism. This would naturally redound to France's advantage in world opinion and also serve to quiet

¹⁴Ibid., November 27, 1934, p. 9. The French Foreign Office denied this report.

¹⁵New York Times, December 1, 1934, p. 6.

talk of a French drive for European hegemony. On the other hand, negotiations over the mines settlement were not complete, and Laval may have hoped to reap certain benefits from that.¹⁶ Nevertheless, because of Laval's policy, the French were no longer able to influence the outcome of the Saar struggle.

On December 3, 1934, came the announcement that the long-awaited Franco-German accord over financial, economic, and political problems had been reached at Rome. With the Committee of Three as intermediary, it was agreed that all French property in the Saar would be redeemed by a German payment of nine hundred million francs in case of rattachement. In addition, the private French companies operating in the Warndt district were to receive eleven million tons of coal from the Saar over a period of five years or until the money payment was completed. This provision was designed also to aid the German government in their payments. Laval thus declined to embarrass Hitler financially. Germany also agreed to protect minority rights in the Saar, but this promise was probably just window dressing to help Laval sell the agreement to the French.¹⁷

On the fifth of December, Baron Aloisi reported the accord to the League amid expressions of surprise. In 1919, Germany had placed the value of the Saar very high, yet during the League's administration she charged that the French were wasting Saar resources through "illegal" operations. After 1920, Germany took the position that the French had been fully repaid and were thus entitled to no German payment in 1935. France had in fact been repaid for the wartime destruction to her mines since about 1925. In light of Germany's previous attitude, then, her agreement in

¹⁶Ibid., December 2, 1934, sec. IV, p. 1.

¹⁷Ibid., December 4, 1934, p. 1, and December 6, 1934, p. 12.

1934 was a remarkable concession.¹⁸ Politically, it deterred the French from making a major effort to win a status quo plebiscite and left the campaign almost entirely in German hands. Had Germany feared the consequences of the plebiscite, she could have made no better bargain than the Rome accord with Laval. Coupled with the British support of an international police force, this repurchase agreement enabled France to remove herself from the Saar without damage to prestige or pocket book. Thus, the proposed "duel between dictatorial and democratic systems" did not occur, and Hitler had in fact benefitted from the first French effort at appeasement.¹⁹

Paul-Boncour, in describing these times a decade later, charged that the chances for a status quo settlement were quite good in 1934, but were sabotaged by Laval in the Rome accord. By this measure, France had abandoned the Saar in the belief that she was fostering peace. Supporters of the status quo readily embraced this plan which seemed mutually beneficial to French and German capitalists. With the resulting lack of interest in propaganda and the maintenance of an international regime, the Saar was handed over by default. Even many Socialists, while still favoring status quo, helped Hitler's campaign by leaving the Saarland and going into voluntary exile.²⁰

On the heels of the Franco-German accord, the Saar situation continued much as before with only the predictable final maneuverings added by the opposing forces in the Saar. Earlier, 50,000 Saar residents were

¹⁸Russell, The Saar, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹The Annual Register, 1934, pp. 161-163; New York Times, November 5, 1934, p. 2.

²⁰Paul-Boncour, Entre Deux Guerres, III, 6-7; cf. Louis de Vienne, "Le problème de la Sarre," L'illustration, CXC (January 5, 1935), 7-8.

said to have proclaimed their intent to seek refuge in France should rattachement occur. Saar Socialists and Communists continued to oppose Hitler and the scheduled plebiscite. On November 15, 1934, for example, their loosely organized Common Front charged that no less than 10,000 dead men had been registered as voters. On the other side, the Deutsche Front purchased an opposition newspaper in the Saar and continued to reduce status quo support.²¹

On the diplomatic level, the Rome accord had the auxiliary effect of improving Franco-Italian relations, and Laval moved to secure his Mediterranean pact. The Soviets, too, were said to have engaged in more discussions with the French as a result of this crisis. The formation of an international policing force in the Saar appeared to assure an orderly plebiscite. This was much to be desired over the earlier expected violence. Franco-German relations were eased considerably, but the French remained wary. By utilizing the Warndt mines, France believed itself able to counteract any German default of the mines payments by mining Saar coal through French pit-heads. Such operations were frowned upon by international law, however, and Germany was not pleased by the possibility.²²

In France, preparations were underway toward the end of 1934 to counter the possible effects of rattachement. A decision by the Chamber of Deputies on December 20 gave the Government emergency powers to decree quotas and tariff regulations. In this manner, France might quickly repair any economic disruption in trade with Alsace and Lorraine through heavy duties on Saar products. Perhaps this action was also pointed

²¹New York Times, November 5, 1934, p. 2, November 16, 1934, p. 12, and December 26, 1934, p. 12.

²²Ibid., December 8, 1934, p. 8, December 12, 1934, p. 15, and December 26, 1934, p. 12.

toward Saar voters who would find themselves at a disadvantage should France so act. Otherwise, the French seemed satisfied that the Rome accord was a good bargain. As the first British troops began their trek toward the Saarland, they received tumultuous welcomes from the French towns through which they passed.²³

One week before the plebiscite, Propaganda Minister Goebbels and deputy party chief Rudolph Hess acknowledged the French conciliation by stating that a German vote in the Saar would "help the cause of peace, in that economic problems would be solved." The two Nazi leaders promised that Hitler would henceforth be less hostile to France and repudiate his earlier denunciations, and predicted that a solution in the Saar would remove Franco-German "territorial strife." Thus, from Goebbels and Hess came the admission that French action was instrumental in removing barriers to German policy.²⁴

For its own part, France attempted to remove the possibility of disorder on the eve of the plebiscite. In response to the expected hordes of refugees in case of rattachement, the Government sent additional forces and established first-aid stations on the Franco-German border. French Saarlanders returning to vote did not receive direct governmental assistance as did those from Germany and elsewhere, but did have their fares and expenses paid by the private Franco-Saar Union. France seemed to be taking those precautions necessary for the immediate peace of Europe, yet was largely oblivious of its opportunities in the Saar for lasting harmony. The plebiscite itself was elaborate, with the secrecy and neutrality of

²³Ibid., December 21, 1934, p. 10.

²⁴Ibid., January 7, 1935, p. 14.

the vote assured to the greatest degree possible.²⁵

The political situation within the Saar Basin had remained virtually unchanged since Barthou's ministry. The Rome accord largely settled the financial questions in French favor, yet status quo was still not fully explained. Through negotiation, France had apparently assured the maintenance of order for the Saar, but had also undermined the French position by abandoning the pro-status quo forces. To the end, Socialists and Communists under Max Braun protested against a Hitlerian Saar, and were vigorously opposed by the Deutsche Front.²⁶

The work of the Plebiscite Commission, the center of Saar authority in 1935, continued and was greatly facilitated by the presence of the international troops. The massive demonstrations which marked 1934 were severely limited, and violence and agitation correspondingly decreased. The expected invasion force from Germany, led by Spaniol, had been neutralized by the international force. Only a few isolated incidents, and those impossible to control, marred the scene.

Another element intruded upon this situation a few days before the voting. The bishops of Trier and Speyer prompted the Saar clergy to embrace rattachement wholeheartedly. Church bells began to toll for Germany, public prayers for rattachement were called for January 13, and the clergy placed itself on record as recommending a German vote. Churches were illuminated at night to symbolize their total commitment to the great national movement. On the hills surrounding the Saar border, massive

²⁵ Ibid., January 13, 1935, pp. 1, 31.

²⁶ De Vienne, "Le problème de la Sarre," L'illustration, CXC (January 5, 1935), 7-8; "Veille de plebiscite," L'illustration, CXC (January 12, 1935), 35.

bonfires were lit "to salute the Germans of the Saar."²⁷ No avenue was left untraveled in the German attempt to impress upon the Saarlanders their responsibility to the Third Reich and to discourage anti-German sentiments.

The day of the plebiscite was clearly a victory for the democratic process -- when supported by overwhelming force. Although the Nazi vehemence against anything not favoring the Reich continued, no incidents were reported. The Saarlanders turned out in massive numbers to vote, with the elderly, the infirm, and the ill being conducted to the 944 voting bureaus in any manner possible. In each bureau was a three-man examining board headed by a president recruited from a neutral country such as Holland, Switzerland, or Luxembourg. Two additional observers were present, one each from the Deutsche Front and from the re-created and opposing United Front. When the polls closed at eight o'clock, the sealed ballot boxes were transported under maximum security to Saarbruecken. The counting began the next day and continued all night under the direct scrutiny of the Plebiscite Commission. By 5:00 a. m. on January 15, the counting was completed, but the announcement of the results was delayed for two hours more.²⁸

Of the 539,541 votes cast, 11,536 abstentions and 2249 nullifications left 525,756 valid ballots. 477,119 of these favored Germany, 46,513 were for the status quo, and 2124 favored France. Thus, 90.36 per cent of the vote went to Germany, 8.81 per cent to status quo, and 0.4 per cent to France. The proportion differed but little throughout the Territory. In

²⁷"Vielle de plebiscite," L'illustration, CXC (January 12, 1935), 35; Naudeau, "Le plebiscite de la Sarre," L'illustration, CXC (January 19, 1935), 62.

²⁸"Les resultats officiels," L'illustration, CXC (January, 1935), 66-67.

Saarlouis, France received its greatest support from one district with 727 votes; 85,230 voted for Germany. Saarbruecken tallied the largest status quo vote, almost 23,000, yet gave Germany nearly 200,000.²⁹

That night joyful manifestations were in evidence by the residents of Saarbruecken, and an estimated 100,000 persons took part in a triumphant torchlight march. Significantly, Hitler's voice was also heard as he asserted by radio the indestructible attachment to the Fatherland exhibited by the Saarlanders. Fifteen years of injustice, he said, were removed by the plebiscite, the results of which reaffirmed that Providence had chosen him "as chief of a great nation." The Saar, Hitler continued, was a first step to the reconciliation of wartime enemies and toward the pacification of Europe. No more territorial disputes remained between France and Germany, and de facto equality had been accorded the Reich through the pre-plebiscite negotiations. All that remained for European peace was the de jure assurance to Germany of equal rights, a necessary step in the institution of "a sincere solidarity of nations in face of the dangers and the distress of present times." French Premier Pierre Laval was said to have made corresponding declarations at the same time.³⁰

The ninety per cent Saar vote for rattachement was a bitter judgment for the French Government, but one which it accepted without equivocation. Individually, Frenchmen were not so magnanimous. Despite the overwhelming decision, Ludovic Naudeau argued that numerous Saarlanders had hoped for status quo. Economic, political, and financial advantages were

²⁹Ibid., p. 66.

³⁰Ibid., p. 67; Naudeau, "Histoire et morale du plebiscite sarrois," L'Illustration, CXC (January 26, 1935), 94.

overthrown by rattachement, and anxiety permeated the Saarland in contemplation of its fate under National Socialism. Yet the moral obligation to the Fatherland emphasized by the German leaders carried the day, and a German victory resulted. The determining factor seems to have been the Catholic vote. Whereas many had earlier favored status quo, Catholic opposition to Hitler seemed to wither in the face of the declarations for rattachement by the bishops of Speyer and Trier. Naudeau alleged that these bishops reluctantly decided to support National Socialism in the Saar for fear that should they not do so, reprisals would be directed against Catholics in Germany. Thus the support of the Church provided the final impetus in the plebiscite, and profoundly affected its outcome.³¹

French opinion continued to insist that the plebiscite would facilitate a European peace. Since the League authored the Saar vote, and the Rome negotiations in December concluded its preparations, France did not contest the plebiscite results in any fashion. To do so would have compromised France's position in respect to her international treaties which formed the basis of her foreign policy. Popular opinion, anxious as it was for European accord, hoped that the Saar experience would lead to Franco-German rapport, and Premier Flandin's statements, which cited the Saar solution as a successful beginning of a new French policy, encouraged this hope. The Rome accord, he argued, had granted definite guarantees to French financial interests and commerce, and had provided for minority rights against repression. Furthermore, the Premier asserted, Germany had now returned to the community of nations, and this would lead

³¹Naudeau, "Le plebiscite de la Sarre," L'Illustration, CXC (January 19, 1935), 62.

to many other improvements in European relations. Flandin foresaw an arms settlement, envisioned a guarantee for Austrian independence through the Franco-Italian pact, and even characterized the long-deferred Eastern Locarno as at last possible. The end of the Saar question eased Franco-German relations. Only the question of German sincerity and peacefulness remained.³²

Still, the Saar's overwhelming rejection of France in the plebiscite had not been expected, and gave rise to a gamut of reactions ranging from stolid acquiescence to bitter disappointment. The French Government moved to expedite the final transfer of the territory to German sovereignty, and prepared to admit refugees from the Saar. Rightists called for more emphasis on military preparedness and asked that the armed forces be increased. Leftists, many of whom had believed a status quo vote possible, declared that the Saar had voted for slavery, and they feared that a revival of French nationalism might result from it. The French Socialists were in fact surprised that a "proletarianized, heavily industrialized region" such as the Saar could embrace National Socialism, and considered the plebiscite a manifestation of the generally increasing tension in Franco-German relations.³³ French miners, already suffering from considerable unemployment, feared that Saar refugees would be employed in Lorraine mines and that the deliveries of Saar coal to French companies would further decrease the number of jobs. Yet no organized outcry on the part of Frenchmen was heard, and the mood of France as a whole remained

³²Les resultats officiels," L'illustration, CXC (January 19, 1935), 67; Naudeau, "Histoire et morale du plebiscite sarrois," L'illustration, CXC (January 26, 1935), 95.

³³Marcus, French Socialism in the Crisis Years, pp. 98-99.

moderate.³⁴

The expected rush of refugees from the Saar did not materialize. Expecting some 40,000 France received only about one-tenth of that number in the first days. In preparation for the exodus, France closed the Saar border on January 13 and channelled traffic toward check points at Forbach for processing. The French consulate in Saarbruecken began issuing visas to anti-Nazis on the fifteenth of January, street-car fares were reduced to help the impoverished, and the French Red Cross made provisions for food and shelter. As days passed, the flow of refugees increased, but the number reached only 10,000 by February 20. The French Government took the position that Saarlanders were still under League authority and accordingly asked that the League assist with the financial burden. The Committee of Three agreed and advanced 20,000 Swiss francs for administrative purposes. In the following year the League would finance and establish a Saarlander settlement in Paraguay.³⁵

On the sixteenth of January, 1935, the Franco-Saar Customs Union ended. Anticipating the austerity which they believed would result from rattachement, the Saarlanders had been laying in French supplies, particularly foodstuffs and iron ore, for the previous three weeks. Saar tariffs were imposed on French imports on the eighteenth, thus breaking the economic tie. At the same time an agreement was signed at Naples which transferred mines, railroads and other French properties as well as the economic administration of the Territory to Germany. Included in this agreement were provisions concerning private insurance policies and

³⁴New York Times, January 20, 1935, sec. IV, p. 2.

³⁵Ibid., January 14, 1935, p. 3, January 16, 1935, p. 13, January 17, 1935, p. 15, January 20, 1935, p. 31, and February 21, 1935, p. 9; Wambaugh, Saar Flebiscite, pp. 309-310.

social insurance. On January 18, 1935, then, the French left the Saar after sixteen years of occupation.³⁶

Immediately after the plebiscite, France had presented a demand to the League that the Rhineland demilitarization provisions be extended to the Saarland. When the League resolved to transfer the Territory to Germany by March 1, Laval reiterated this demand, but the Reich made no comment other than a statement accepting the transfer date. A militarized Saar was unacceptable to most French newspapers as well, and they attempted to camouflage their error in belittling pro-German sentiment in the Territory by voicing their opposition to new Franco-German negotiations. Germany must first adhere to an Eastern Locarno and guarantee the independence of Austria; only then might agreements be reached on demilitarization and equality of armaments. By March, however, other outstanding questions concerning the completed transfer were entirely subject to Hitler's endorsement.³⁷

The French had apparently become too dependent on Hitler's good will. Their Government made the necessary agreements with Germany for the transfer of the Territory, and in return Laval gained his extension of demilitarization to the Saar. Laval's conciliation had, in fact, reduced the Saar question to nothing; it was his gift to the Third Reich. To be sure, Laval's negotiations and agreements with Italy and the Soviet Union would provide France with the illusion of securité; she was no longer isolated as she had been at the end of 1933. But the Franco-German problem and the question of European peace had not been solved. Two

³⁶New York Times, January 17, 1935, pp. 8, 15, and January 19, 1935, p. 5.

³⁷Ibid., January 18, 1935, pp. 1, 2, January 20, 1935, sec. IV, p. 2.

months after the Saar plebiscite, Hitler announced German rearmament and by that measure abrogated the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles.³⁸

³⁸Mallet, Pierre Laval, p. 66; Bonnefous, Histoire Politique, V, 323-324; Paul-Boncour, Entre Deux Guerres, III, 7-9.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The unification of all Germans under the Third Reich was one of Hitler's cardinal goals, and he wasted no time in pursuit of his aims. Austria was one of the areas which early engaged his attention. The Saar Basin was another and became the pivotal area of Nazi designs in 1934-1935. France had been given a fifteen year period of control with which to overcome German influence in the Saarland, yet failed to utilize her obvious political, economic, and cultural resources for this purpose. Although the strategic value of the Territory was recognized by the French, their government seemed interested only in the immediate economic advantages to be gained. As a result, Hitler's propaganda campaign was unchallenged by the French Government, and the Nazi ideology alone was permitted to impress the Saarlanders. The impact of nationalism and the vigor of National Socialism were, in fact, Hitler's only weapons. The more undesirable consequences of his policies, including the persecution of religious groups and the suppression of labor, were not emphasized in the Saar except by a relatively few renegade fanatics such as Spaniol. The sensitivity of the predominantly Catholic and proletarian Saar was therefore spared and what should have been the primary argument against joining the Reich was not a major factor in the results of the plebiscite. Still, the Saar favored only Germany, not Hitler. It opposed the League administration as a foreign oppressor and a French tool, and castigated France as a colonial power.

The critical stage in the Saar came in December, 1934. Up to that time, a status quo settlement enjoyed considerable support. But the final withdrawal of French interest in the Saarland through the Rome agreement, and the advocacy of rattachement by the Catholic Church precluded any other plebiscite decision. The Nazis were then able to gain their first major victory, a prelude to their future demands for Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

Though a minor point in itself, the Saar plebiscite was an illustrious victory for the League, too. The Plebiscite Commission provided a secure and valid vote under extremely difficult conditions, and the international force carried out its duties in the Saarland impartially and with good effect. League administration of the Saar was clouded, however, by the discontent of the Saarlanders with the Governing Commission. In addition, French inconsistency in its Saar policy did not contribute to European peace, and no lasting Franco-German agreement resulted from the plebiscite. More accurately, the administrative success of the plebiscite resulted from French unconcern and conciliation which left further German pressure unnecessary.

During the nineteen twenties and early thirties, various French foreign ministers had hoped that rattachement would lead to a Franco-German reconciliation. An agreement with the Weimar Republic seemed feasible and even desirable, but the advent of Hitler compounded the complexity of the situation. Even in 1933, a Saar agreement, perhaps in conjunction with an effective disarmament scheme, still appeared to offer a valuable basis for European peace. But Barthou's inability and later unwillingness to bargain with Hitler in 1934 destroyed this opportunity. Instead of promoting a compromise settlement, the French minister pursued the policy of encircling Germany through bilateral treaties, a policy which further

aggravated Franco-German relations. The murder of Barthou brought an end to these machinations and opened a new era of negotiations and conciliation. Laval sought only to rid France of the Saar thorn in the erroneous belief that rattachement would be an effective means to a future rapprochement. He apparently failed to recognize the anti-French attitude inherent in National Socialism, and accordingly refused to utilize the Saar struggle in opposing Nazi designs. Laval thus wasted the last chance for France to gain concessions from rattachement.

The overwhelming pro-German vote in the Saar pointed up the unpopularity of France and the League at the same time that it vindicated Nazi nationalistic claims. This rebuff reverberated through Europe and gave rise to the belief that French policies were not only mistaken but impotent. Further, Hitler was given a measure of confidence by the plebiscite's results and appeared to be emboldened in his pursuit of other plans, specifically in regard to Austria and rearmament. In Germany, he proclaimed the Saar solution to be a great victory for the Third Reich and one which removed the first shackle of Versailles. Yet this victory and the optimism to which it gave rise resulted after Hitler had first doubted the Nazi effect on the completely Germanized Saarland.

Finally, the inconsistency of the foreign policy of France undermined her securité. Paul-Boncour in his moderation desired a rapprochement with Germany and was willing to use the Saar question for this purpose. The conservative change under Barthou, his "hard line" of insuring a plebiscite, and his demand for definite German guarantees, negated any favorable effects from the earlier policy. Further, Barthou was engaged in repairing French defenses and shoring up the alliance system in the belief that securité could best be protected through force or the threat of force. But Laval's policy now supervened to destroy the gains of Barthou.

Laval's conciliatory effort was reminiscent of the Briand-Stresemann dialogue of the Weimar era but was incongruous in the era of the Third Reich. The 1935 plebiscite was the end product of Laval's futile effort to produce a Franco-German rapprochement and thereby provide for the peace of Europe: its only result was to lower French prestige and increase Nazi confidence. Thus, during Hitler's first two years, French foreign policy had relied upon three separate methods so that no one plan was really tested for its effectiveness in providing securité.

The failure of France in the Saarland between 1933 and 1935 was only one phase in the continuing Franco-German conflict, but unfortunately became the pattern for later Franco-German relations.¹

¹For a well-reasoned and interesting argument that the tragedy of the years 1936-1939 came about as the natural result of the 1933-1936 events, see Cameron's Prologue to Appeasement.

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APPENDIX A

Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers of France,
1933-1935

Paul-Boncour Ministry (December 18, 1932 - January 28, 1933)

President of the Council of Ministers and
Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Paul-Boncour

Daladier Ministry (January 31, 1933 - October 24, 1933)

President of the Council of Ministers Edouard Daladier
Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Paul-Boncour

Sarraut Ministry (October 26, 1933 - November 23, 1933)

President of the Council of Ministers Albert Sarraut
Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Paul-Boncour

Chautemps Ministry (November 26, 1933 - January 27, 1934)

President of the Council of Ministers Camille Chautemps
Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Paul-Boncour

Second Daladier Ministry (January 30, 1934 - February 7, 1934)

President of the Council of Ministers and
Minister of Foreign Affairs Edouard Daladier

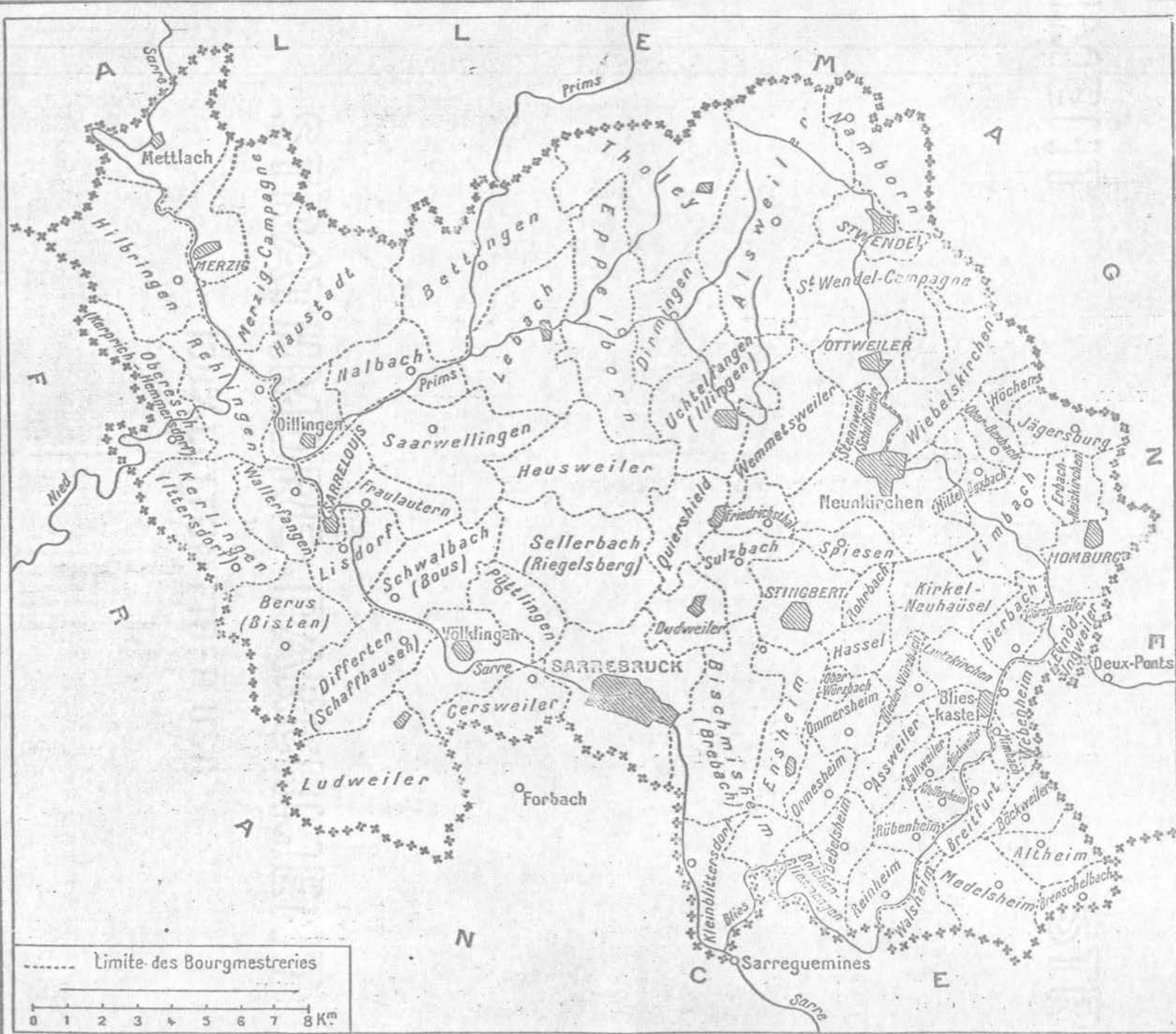
Doumergue Ministry (February 9, 1934 - November 8, 1934)

President of the Council of Ministers Gaston Doumergue
Minister of Foreign Affairs Louis Barthou*
Ministers of State. Edouard Herriot and
André Tardieu

Flandin Ministry (November 8, 1934 - May 31, 1935)

President of the Council of Ministers Pierre-Etienne Flandin
Minister of Foreign Affairs Pierre Laval
Ministers of State. Edouard Herriot and
Louis Marin

* Assassinated on October 9, 1934; succeeded on October 13, 1934, by
Pierre Laval



Map of the Saarland

VITA

J. Frederick Neet, Jr.

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Thesis: FRANCE, HITLER, AND THE SAAR, 1933-1935

Major Field: History

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, May 27, 1940, the son of J. F. Neet and Hazle Boss Neet.

Education: Attended grade school in Pawnee and Alva, Oklahoma, and Arkansas City, Kansas; graduated from Arkansas City High School in 1958; received the Bachelor of Arts degree from the Oklahoma State University, with a major in History, in August, 1962; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree in May, 1965.

Professional experience: Served as a Graduate Assistant in the History Department, Oklahoma State University, 1963-1964.

Publication: Article entitled "Stand Watie, Confederate General in Indian Territory," accepted for future publication by the Journal of the Great Plains.