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THE RUHR IN ANGLO-FRENCH DIPLOMACY: FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE OCCUPATION UNTIL THE END OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE

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PREFACE

On January 11, 1923, French and Belgian engineers and officials, accompanied by one French cavalry and two infantry divisions, as well as a Belgian detachment, entered the Ruhr district, industrial heartland of Germany. The previous day the French government had informed the German government and the Ruhr population that a Mission of Control was to supervise German resources and insure execution of the reparations clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. France and Belgium, requesting German cooperation in the endeavor, justified their action by reference to the Reparation Commission's December 26, 1922, and January 9, 1923, declarations of German default in the delivery of reparations timber and coal. The German government, however, forbade the Ruhr populace to assist the invaders, and Germany began a massive program of passive resistance, which, in turn, resulted in an extension of the occupation zone and a rigid military operation. Upon Germany the economic impact of the struggle was disastrous; after inflation reached unprecedented levels, Gustav Stresemann, the new Chancellor, on September 26 issued a decree ending passive resistance. Germany's economy lay shattered. The occupation had also

had a detrimental financial effect upon France and Belgium, which received less German coal and coke in 1923 than in 1922. Furthermore, the occupation had unfortunate political repercussions for France because it had, in engaging in a military occupation of the Ruhr, acted in defiance of official British opinion and thereby antagonized the British government. After the Ruhr experience, France would not pursue an independent foreign policy in the face of British opposition, and in the 1930's this French deference to British leadership was to produce cataclysmic consequences for the people of Europe.

Since the Ruhr occupation has been termed a turning point in inter-war Anglo-French diplomacy, a detailed examination of relations between the two countries during the crucial period of January 1 to September 26, 1923, is of value. Many points need to be considered and questions answered. First, the Ruhr occupation must be placed in historical perspective by determining how closely the French and British governments cooperated in making and enforcing the Treaty of Versailles, over what basic issues they disagreed, and what combination of events in the 1919-1922 period led the French government to take independent action against Germany. Then France's motives for occupying the Ruhr must be examined. Once the occupation was in progress, did the British government encourage Germany to pursue passive resistance or did it attempt to make the occupation

difficult for France and thus encourage it to evacuate the Ruhr? Finally, what was the effect of the occupation on the issues of reparations and security, and why did it mark the end of an independent French foreign policy?

As the fiftieth anniversary of the Ruhr occupation approaches, the historian can point to myriad articles and books which mention the occupation. Almost all of the works, however, were written either during the period of the occupation or within ten years after the evacuation of the Ruhr, and most of them are polemical and nationalistic.

Recently, two books and two dissertations have appeared which consider some aspect of the Ruhr struggle. Eric Roman's "The Ruhrkampf in History" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1965), is a general survey of the occupation through September, 1923. Focusing upon no particular aspect, it is based almost exclusively on secondary sources and is poorly written. Roman's brief discussion of Anglo-French relations is drawn entirely from previously-printed materials, and to him France is an imperialistic aggressor. Very similar to Roman's work in many ways is Royal J. Schmidt, Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968). It, too, is badly written, lacks unity, and is based almost entirely upon secondary works. Schmidt's approach was also basically anti-French and his study of British policy superficial. Neither of the two authors utilized the three

French Documents diplomatiques volumes published in 1923. Alfred Emile Cornebise's "Some Aspects of the German Response to the Ruhr Occupation, January-September, 1923" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1965), though a work of fine quality, deals primarily with internal German affairs and mentions Anglo-French diplomacy only peripherally. The excellent work by Jean-Claude Favez, Le Reich devant l'occupation franco-belge de la Ruhr en 1923 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1969), is, like that of Cornebise, based upon German documents. It also focuses almost exclusively upon domestic events in Germany during the occupation period.

No French or English book or article located in this study considers in detail Anglo-French diplomacy during the Ruhr occupation. Although a portion of Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928) does discuss the May 2 to August 20, 1923, segment of events, the work is based almost entirely upon the few documents published in that year by the French, Belgian, and British governments. No published work on the Ruhr venture is based upon the Anglo-French diplomatic correspondence contained in the Public Record Office in London. These records are vital to any study of the Ruhr in Anglo-French diplomacy, for the small collection of documents published by Britain and France in 1923 covers only the period after May 2, 1923. Thus the correspondence exchanged

between Britain and France during the critical first four months of the occupation has not been utilized in earlier works dealing with the Ruhr. This manuscript deals extensively with those indispensable documents.

The labors, thoughtfulness, and concern of many people have enabled me to complete the course of graduate study at the University of Oklahoma and the preparation of this manuscript. Although I now express sincere gratitude to all of them, I feel that there are several persons to whom I am especially indebted.

Three members of my committee have closely supervised the preparation of this work and have given much valuable and constructive criticism; for this assistance I thank Professors Robert A. Nye, Gordon D. Drummond, and William H. Maehl, Jr. An extra word of appreciation must, however, be given to Professor Gordon D. Drummond, who gave most unselfishly of his own time in order to aid me in meeting crucial deadlines and without whose aid completion of the manuscript would have been delayed. To Mrs. Marjorie Bradley, Assistant to the Dean, Graduate College, The University of Oklahoma, I am grateful for constant encouragement, advice, and numerous acts of kindness freely given since my arrival on this campus in September, 1966.

Several people who made significant contributions during the course of my research in Europe in 1971 deserve

special mention. R. R. Mellor, M.B.E., Records Branch, Library and Records Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London, made available ten indispensable volumes of Foreign Office Correspondence which had been removed from the Public Record Office. During the time I was researching in his office, he not only showed much interest in my work, but also provided a pleasant place to work and led me to other valuable material. The staff of the Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine, Université de Paris, Nanterre, was extremely cooperative and provided excellent typing facilities which greatly accelerated the pace of research in their fine collection. To Mademoiselle Suzanne Guyotat of that staff I am especially grateful, for after introducing me to the Library she served as translator when I needed one, showed concern about my progress, and at times extended hospitality after work hours ended. From the day of my arrival in England, my new friend, Patricia A. Gajda, Garfield Heights, Ohio, gave most helpful hints about researching in the Public Record Office and other facilities in London, as well as an introduction to the city itself, and she has also answered many questions during the course of the writing of this dissertation.

While I am indebted to numerous relatives, friends, and colleagues, several of them merit individual recognition. My family has throughout given encouragement and material support, as well as understanding; for this I am

deeply thankful. Especially during my first year in Norman, Jerold A. and Josephine Wilke were a source of encouragement and aid, and all during my stay at the University I looked forward to Saturday evenings in their home. In addition, I must express appreciation to Jo for helping me proofread this manuscript. To Edwin A. and Beverly Graeter, of Wiesbaden, Germany, I am extremely grateful for giving both assistance and inspiration during the period of my research in Europe; furthermore, to my dear friend Beverly I am particularly indebted for constant concern, interest in my progress, and priceless moral support--even at the times I failed and became most discouraged. Edwin D. and Lenore Piekarsky, David and Daniel, deserve much credit for completion of this degree. During my last two years in Norman they allowed me to become a part of their family each Wednesday evening, as well as on many other occasions, and at every crucial stage of my academic career at the University they have been a source of strength and have most graciously made their home mine for extended periods of time. To my dear friend Lenore I will always be grateful for typing this manuscript in her usual meticulous, conscientious fashion and completely relieving me of all concern about the quality of its appearance, but especially for accomplishing the task in such a brief period of time.

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CHAPTER I

THE ROAD TO THE RUHR: ANGLO-FRENCH DIPLOMACY FROM 1871 TO THE CLOSE OF THE PARIS CONFERENCE, JANUARY 4, 1923

As 1923 opened, France, feeling deserted by Britain and threatened by Germany's resentment toward the Versailles Treaty and failure to execute its Treaty obligations, occupied the Ruhr district in an effort to attain both reparations and security. The British government criticized the occupation, for it believed that the French policy of coercion would retard Germany's economic recovery and disrupt trade, as well as stimulate German nationalism. After Franco-Belgian troops entered the Ruhr, many British politicians and newspapers angrily declared that the Entente no longer existed and called for a severing of all ties with France. Because, however, the Bonar Law and Baldwin governments believed in the necessity of maintaining the Entente, they failed to exercise pressure to compel France to withdraw from the newly occupied territory; in fact, they indirectly aided the French government and enabled it

to pursue the occupation. Even though Britain had acquiesced and had assisted France, animosity between the two countries was more intense at the close of 1923 than it had been since the Fashoda crisis in 1898.

The primary source of Anglo-French antagonism was the question of how to deal with Germany--the nation which had played such a vital role in strengthening the ties between Britain and France early in the twentieth century. The respective British and French attitudes toward the German problem reflect certain basic characteristics of the foreign policy of the two nations both before 1914 and after 1918. A desire for security, and at times for revenge, against an increasingly powerful Germany had been the most consistent theme of French foreign policy since the Franco-Prussian War. During the same period, British policy was marked by both isolationism and an interest in maintaining a European balance of power--goals which at times conflicted. During most of the last three decades of the nineteenth century the balance of power had operated without British intervention, for Russia, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary checked each other, but this situation began to change at the turn of the century. Believing that the Germany of William II threatened the balance of power and feeling its Empire threatened by the growing naval strength of other world powers, Britain, aided by the realpolitik of French leaders such as Théophile Delcassé and

Paul Cambon, settled its outstanding colonial differences with France in 1904.[1] After observing continued German intransigence and thirst for power, as reflected in the first Moroccan crisis and the passage of several naval laws, Britain also made a colonial settlement with France's ally, Russia. During the years from 1907 until the outbreak of World War I, Anglo-French ties remained strong, and after the assassination at Sarajevo they cooperated closely to defeat the power whose threat had helped bring them together. At the close of the war, however, Britain faced a dilemma: while it wanted to withdraw from an active role in Continental politics it also wanted to rebuild Germany as a counterweight to the militarily powerful, yet insecure France. This traditional two-fold British aim was to cause much friction with the neighbor across the Channel.

Relations between France and Britain had become strained even before Germany formally capitulated, with the first overt contention coming between October 25 and November 11, 1918, as Allied commanders met to discuss the terms of the armistice requested by Germany. When Marshal Ferdinand Foch met with Generals Henri-Philippe Pétain, John J.

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[1]A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 281-285, 413-417, 427-428; George Monger, The End of Isolation: British Foreign Policy, 1900-1917 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), pp. 2-10; Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 13-17, 21, 27-28.

Pershing, Douglas Haig, and Armando Diaz at Senlis on October 25, Pétain and Haig very quickly disagreed over armistice terms, and in this disagreement lay the seeds of five years of Anglo-French friction. On all except one of the issues dividing the French and British commanders, the French advocated more harsh treatment of Germany than did their Allies: they wanted the victors to disarm German troops almost completely, to occupy both the left bank of the Rhine and a zone fifty kilometers wide on the right bank, and to mention reparations in the armistice terms. Although the British opposed all of these demands, they were more severe than the French about the disposition of the German fleet. While the armistice terms presented to the German representatives on November 8, 1918, followed French desires more closely than British,[2] the victory could be considered Pyrrhic, for the absence of agreement concerning the terms indicated that France and England might follow divergent paths in the post-war world.

Soon after the Paris Peace Conference opened on January 18, 1919, the basic Anglo-French differences foreshadowed during the armistice negotiations began to delay the completion of a treaty with Germany. The French Premier, Georges Clemenceau, presented his views on the points vital

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[2]Arthur H. Furnia, The Diplomacy of Appeasement: Anglo-French Relations and the Prelude to World War II, 1931-1938 (Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1960), pp. 1-3.

to his nation: the future of the Saar Basin and of the Rhineland, as well as the question of reparations. On each he encountered Anglo-American opposition. In reality, the primary interests of France centered around security and reparations, and it sought to attain the first of these through re-drawing its eastern boundaries. The Saar Basin, rich in coal resources, had belonged to France from 1793 to 1815, and Clemenceau, President Raymond Poincaré, and French parliamentary leaders called for the re-annexation of that section of the Saarland which had belonged to France in 1814, along with international control of the mining district north of the former French section and French ownership of the mines in both sections. Although Prime Minister David Lloyd George rejected the annexation proposal, he was willing to discuss the other two items, and a compromise eventually settled the dispute: the Saar was to be governed by a League of Nations Commission for fifteen years, and then a plebiscite was to be held; in compensation for the coal mines of northeastern France destroyed by Germany, France received the coal mines of the Saar.[3]

Clemenceau likewise encountered American and British opposition to the two basic solutions proposed by various French leaders for the future of the Rhineland. Supported

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[3]J. Hampden Jackson, Clemenceau and the Third Republic (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 140, 144; Jacques Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisieme République, Vol. V: Les années d'illusions, 1918-1931 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1960), pp. 35, 37, 39.

by Poincaré, Foch advocated that all the left bank territory be separated from Germany and, preferably, given outright to France; if this goal could not be attained, France would accept a separate Rhenish state detached from Germany and occupied by French or inter-Allied troops. Several objectives were involved in the French concern with the Rhineland. While some French nationalists, using various historic and economic arguments, wanted a detached Rhineland that would eventually become an integral part of France, the question of security lay at the heart of the demands of most Frenchmen: France wanted the Rhine for protection from its enemy, Germany. Moreover, a Rhineland under French or inter-Allied control would have further strategic value in that it would enable France and its allies to protect the new states of central and southeastern Europe. Since a Germany in possession of the Rhine could attack and defeat Czechoslovakia and Poland before France or Britain could come to their aid, it must not control the Rhine.

President Woodrow Wilson and Lloyd George opposed even Clemenceau's plan for an autonomous Rhineland, saying that the proposal smacked too much of outright annexation of an area that was German in language, economy, and culture. On March 14, Lloyd George and Wilson told the French Premier that if France would renounce the permanent occupation and separation of the Rhineland, the United States and England would guarantee it against unprovoked German

aggression. Although Clemenceau, an admirer of Anglo-Saxon democracies, was pleased, Poincaré, feeling that promises were worth less than sureties, failed to share his elation, and Foch, who did not abandon his position, stated on March 31 that if France did not hold the Rhine permanently, nothing could stop Germany from inflicting complete defeat upon it. After a five-week stalemate, Clemenceau again compromised and withdrew his demand for separation. He accepted joint Allied occupation of the Rhineland for a fifteen year period, but he did so only after his colleagues agreed to add an important qualification which was written into Article 429 of the Treaty, which stated that if Germany failed to keep its Treaty engagements the period might be extended or the occupation renewed. Thus Clemenceau exchanged French demands for a Rhine frontier for the Anglo-American guarantee treaties, the fifteen-year joint occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, and the permanent demilitarization of both the left bank and a fifty kilometer strip of the right bank.[4]

Neither Foch nor Poincaré ever forgave the Premier for the capitulation or appreciated the agony of choice involved. Clemenceau felt the necessity of compromising on the Rhineland and Saar questions because he realized

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[4]Ernst Fraenkl, Military Occupation and the Rule of Law: Occupation Government in the Rhineland, 1918-1923 (London: Oxford University Press, 1944), p. 6; Jackson, Clemenceau, pp. 141-142; Chastenet, Troisieme République, V, 35-37.

that France had not won the war alone. Since he believed that France could hold Germany in check only with the assistance of the Allies and that the continued existence of the Entente Cordiale was more important than a French Rhineland, he chose to give up the territorial benefits of victory in order to avoid diplomatic isolation. Once the choice had been made, even Poincaré was to be unable to retract it.[5]

The friction between Britain and France foreshadowed in pre-armistice disagreements and divergent viewpoints during the peace negotiations soon came to the surface, and a major cause of the difficulty was the British failure to understand the French feeling of insecurity; in fact, in the three or four years after 1919, the British became convinced that the French aspired to European hegemony. Viscount D'Abernon, British Ambassador in Berlin, was typical of those who believed that France, supported by its large army and system of alliances in eastern and central Europe, sought to be supreme on the Continent. Having acted to re-establish the balance of power by helping defeat the German bid to control Europe, Britain did not want France to assume that position.[6] As several French historians have revealed,

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[5]Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), p. 16; David Thomson, Democracy in France Since 1870 (4th ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 203.

[6]Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace. Pages from the Diary of Viscount D'Abernon (Berlin, 1920-1926),

French leaders realized that Britain feared their hegemony, and this awareness increased tension between the two nations. Paul Cambon, long-time French Ambassador to England, aptly characterized the British outlook when he remarked to his successor, Comte Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, "The misfortune . . . is that the English do not yet know that Napoleon is dead." Frenchmen resented the charges of militarism, imperialism, and thirst for power that assailed them when they clung to the protection given by the Treaty of Versailles.[7]

Instead of striving for hegemony, France, which had the spirit of a martyr rather than a victor, had entered a pacific period of its history, and the French peasants and masses wanted only peace. Britain, nevertheless, listening to the extreme French nationalists, failed to perceive this and to understand that France maintained a big military machine out of nervousness rather than a desire to dominate. Although few observers realized it, French power had been declining in the pre-war years, and the war, which appeared

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Vol. II: The Years of Crisis: June 1922-December 1923 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 22; Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, Vol. VII: Les crises du XXe siècle, I. De 1914 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957), p. 237; Bertrand de Jouvenel, D'une guerre à l'autre, Vol. I: De Versailles à Locarno (Paris: Calman-Lévy, Éditeurs, 1940), p. 282.

[7]Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), p. 536; Etienne Mantoux, The Carthaginian Peace or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 22.

to enhance French power greatly, had actually hastened the decline.[8] Many Frenchmen were aware, however, that the war had severely weakened the nation: war deaths numbered 1,427,800, and 700,000 had been crippled, 2,344,000 wounded, 453,000 captured or missing, and the birth rate cut in half; 7 per cent of French territory lay devastated, and many villages and factories had totally disappeared. In addition, France had lost its Russian investments and had been forced to liquidate many of its foreign assets, its industry suffered from disorganization, and many of the recovered coal mines were flooded. Furthermore, although it possessed the greatest military force in Europe, France had a small navy with which to control its vast colonial domain.[9]

Soon after the Paris Peace Conference, three trends in British policy convinced France that the task of enforcing the peace treaties lay primarily on its shoulders: a revival of a policy based on the balance of power, a reawakening of isolationist sentiment, and a re-emphasis of

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[8]Paul Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe (2 vols.; Paris: Flammarion, 1947), I, 37; André Siegfried, France: A Study in Nationality (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), p. 55; Sir Arthur Willert, Aspects of British Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), p. 43; René Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe and the Two World Wars (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), p. 41.

[9]Frederick Lewis Schuman, War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. An Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), p. 255; Maxime Mourin, Histoire des nations européens, Vol. I: De la première a la deuxieme guerre mondiale (1918-1939) (Paris: Payot, 1962), p. 86.

commercial interests. According to Harold Nicolson, "The constant motive or principle which runs through all British foreign policy is the principle of the Balance of Power,"[10] and in keeping with this tradition, Britain after World War I sought to prevent domination of the European continent by France, which it considered the strongest power; therefore, it supported the second power, Germany, as a counterweight to the first. On the other hand, while Britain was concerned with the balance of power and was to take an active role in all major inter-war conferences, it also dreamed of returning to isolation and to its own interests, for there were enough economic and imperial problems with which to deal. In some respects the English, characterized by excessive insularity, were content to let Europe drift.[11]

In 1923, however, economic interests concerned the British more vitally than did either the balance of power or a desire for isolation, and their interest in German recovery further embittered Anglo-French relations. This emphasis upon the economic factor--certainly a part of traditional British diplomacy--was evident even during the Peace Conference, for Lloyd George desired a settlement that would

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[10]Harold Nicolson, Diplomacy (2nd ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 135.

[11]René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 301; Willert, Aspects of Policy, p. 43; Frank Herbert Simonds and Brooks Enemy, The Great Powers in World Politics. International Relations and Economic Nationalism (New York: American Book Company, 1939), p. 566.

allow wounds to heal quickly so that international trade would recover. From the beginning, the British wanted to restore Germany so that it could purchase from them, and this desire was enhanced after the post-war boom turned into a severe slump: in 1921, British exports were 47.9 per cent less than in 1920 and imports 43.7 per cent lower; wages fell sharply; and unemployment became a major problem, never to fall below the 1,000,000 figure between the wars. Most of the unemployed were from the previously important export trades--coal, cotton, and shipbuilding--which had either over expanded or been battered by new competition from the Far East and the United States.[12] Thus Britain was, after the war, primarily interested in recovering its western European markets and concentrating upon economic affairs: "Over all British foreign policy during this [inter-war] period, over Lloyd George's and Bonar Law's disagreements with the French on German reparations . . . hung the nostalgia for the old world of peaceful trade, with armaments and political feuds finally laid aside."[13]

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[12]Jacques Chastenet, Vingt ans d'histoire diplomatique, 1919-1939 (Geneva: Éditions du Milieu du Monde, 1945), p. 28; Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 125-126; F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), pp. 620, 92, 88-89, 161, 625.

[13]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 626.

Britain was, however, unable either to lay aside the political feud with France or return to isolation, and for this the German problem was largely responsible:

> The basic issue underlying the controversy between Britain and France was not a matter of general attitudes, but the concrete political problem of Germany's power and position. How strong could Germany be permitted to become without menacing the vital interests of the two countries? The British and the French disagreed on the answer to this question; this disagreement accounts for most of the discord between them.[14]

While French foreign policy between the wars centered on trying to keep Germany in its place and seeking British support against it, Britain resisted both efforts.[15] During the 1919-1923 period, the so-called German problem consisted of three basic elements--security, reparations, and the enforcement of the Versailles Treaty--over each of which France and Britain disagreed.

The security question, as E. H. Carr wrote, was predominant for France: "The most important and persistent single factor in European affairs in the years following 1919 was the French demand for security." The word "security," the keynote of French policy, had several facets: since France feared a new war with Germany, it meant a guarantee against future German invasion of French territory, but it also meant that France wanted the preservation of the entire status quo established by the peace

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[14]Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 381.

[15]Ibid., p. 76.

treaties.[16] Several factors interacted to instill an overwhelming sense of insecurity in the French people. By the time the Versailles Conference ended, almost all of France's great Allies had deserted it, and soon afterwards the rejection by the United States and Britain of the June 28, 1919, pact of guarantee clearly revealed French isolation. When the two primary war-time Allies refused to accept the pact, France felt cheated, for after having previously given up demands for an autonomous Rhineland state in exchange for the guarantee, it now had lost its minimum requirements for security. Had the British government offered to continue the guarantee, many of the difficulties between 1920 and 1923 might have been averted,[17] but since it failed to do so, France believed firmly that it would have to depend primarily upon itself if Germany were to attack.

Both the fear of German revenge and geopolitical factors added to the feeling of insecurity. German military prestige was extremely high even at the close of the war, and Germany--the country of "Prussian militarism"--was dissatisfied with the terms of the Versailles Treaty. France feared revenge above all because it had the principal

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[16] E. H. Carr, International Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 25; Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 11-12, 20.

[17] B. T. Reynolds, Prelude to Hitler (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p. 64; Robert Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister. The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), p. 483; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 256; Willert, Aspects of Policy, p. 39.

responsibility for the execution of the hated Treaty.[18] Moreover, France and Germany shared a common border, and invaders had on numerous occasions come across the vulnerable French left flank, close to which lay the nation's most important industrial section and Paris itself. During the war French manpower losses had been staggering, and while the German population, still growing, numbered 63,000,000, France's stationary population reached only 39,000,000. Twice invaded within fifty years, France had been the scene of four years of devastating warfare while Germany lay relatively unscathed, and there was also a great disparity between German and French industrial development. All of these factors acquired added importance as Britain began to lose interest in rigid maintenance of the peace settlement.

British declining interest in some aspects of Treaty maintenance stemmed from several conditions, one of the most important being the absence of a strong sense of insecurity. After the victory in 1918, any threat of war appeared remote to the British, for they had little fear of Germany, communications with the various parts of the Empire were secure, and they failed to perceive the intensity of European dissension. In the early post-war years as France was demanding increased security along the Rhine,

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[18]Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 33-34; Furnia, Diplomacy of Appeasement, p. 1.

Britain, feeling that the British Isles were entirely safe, grew irritated and failed to understand French fears, partly because the fighting, destructiveness, and horrors of the war had not occurred on its own soil and because the scuttled German fleet lay rusting at Scapa Flow and the German colonial empire had disappeared.[19]

Having little fear of Germany, Britain strongly disagreed with the French desire to build up overpowering military and diplomatic force as a deterrent against future German attack. While France sought to maintain a formidable war machine and build a system of alliances on Germany's eastern border in order to discourage an attack on the established order, the British government favored the opposite strategy. Believing that French preponderance would increase Germany's resentment and cause a nationalistic explosion, it attempted to resolve disputes peacefully and remove incentives for rebellion; it wanted to relax, trust, forgive, forget, and save Germany.[20]

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[19]W. N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963 (2nd ed.; London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968), p. xvii; Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 203-204, 231; Chastenet, Vingt ans, p. 203; Albrecht-Carrié, Diplomatic History, p. 388; Carr, International Relations, p. 50; M. R. D. Foot, British Foreign Policy Since 1898 (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1956), p. 87; Raymond Recouly, La Ruhr. Ce quelle représentait pour l'allemagne. Ce qu'elle représente pour la France. Pourquoi nous avons pris ce gage (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, Éditeurs, 1923), p. 173.

[20]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 224; Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 5, 13, 233; P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), p. 12; Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe, p. 106.

The reparations problem, which was closely related to and more complicated than the security question, was a constant source of friction between the Allies in the five years following the end of the war. Whereas a Frenchman, writing in 1923, linked the two questions when he stated that reparations gravely troubled Europe because the security problem had not been solved,[21] Britain saw them as distinct and disagreed with France about the nature of reparations:

> The essence of Anglo-French differences over German reparations was that British politicians saw reparations as a contractual liability arising from an engagement, the Versailles Treaty, the legality of much of which they doubted, whereas for the French governments reparations were an aspect of Franco-German power relations.[22]

Reparations as an economic problem involved three basic questions: how much damage had been done, how much of it should Germany pay for, and how could it do so? When the peacemakers at Versailles, after much controversy, decided that Germany should pay for damage done to the Allied civilian population and its property, including the cost of pensions, they were unable to determine a total sum and created the Reparation Commission, to which they left the tasks of assessing the amount of the final claim and establishing the manner of its

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[21]André Honnorat, Un des problèmes de la paix. La sécurité de la France. Textes et documents (Paris: Alfred Costes, 1923), p. 157.

[22]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 223.

payment. Attempts to fulfill these two tasks were to poison relations among the powers.

France viewed the reparations problem from both the economic and political standpoint, and soon after the war ended the first of these was predominant. Needing to repair the physical damage to the devastated northeastern departments, Frenchmen believed that the Treaty of Versailles provided the solution in the reparations section and remembered that after the Franco-Prussian War they had paid an indemnity even though German soil had not been invaded. Furthermore, since the French government was hesitant to rely on taxation in order to set its finances in order it needed reparations desperately. The political aspect, however, was always important, and from the beginning some French leaders envisaged reparations as a tool to use in keeping the former enemy in a politically, economically, and militarily inferior position. They, in fact, seemed to desire German weakness almost more than French recovery and were attracted by the vision of a Germany crippled by large reparations payments.[23]

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[23]Frank H. Simonds, How Europe Made Peace Without America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), pp. 99-100; Chester E. Sipple, British Foreign Policy Since the World War, University of Iowa Studies in the Social Sciences, Vol. X, No. 1 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1932), p. 106; Thomson, France, p. 193; Willert, Aspects of Policy, p. 41; Philip Dorf, Europe at the Crossroads (New York: Oxford Book Company, 1935), p. 40.

Although there were inconsistencies in the British position on reparations,[24] the general tendency after 1919 was to call for an easing of the reparations burden placed upon Germany, and this approach stemmed primarily from the British stress on economic interests. Unlike the French, the British seldom questioned Germany's will to pay, but they doubted that it was able to raise the necessary sums and convert them into foreign currencies. In addition, they wondered if Allied countries could absorb these payments without damaging their economy through impairing their export industries and increasing unemployment. Britain also began to oppose the exaction of large sums because it felt that such payments would result in the politically and economically undesirable ruin of Germany. When its economic position remained precarious in the early post-war years, Britain, believing that one of the chief causes was French demands on Germany, began to lose interest in reparations and to attempt to have the German indebtedness scaled down.[25] These British moves, of course, frightened France and made it feel increasingly insecure.

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[24]Frank H. Simonds pointed out that when, in 1919, the British believed that they could get large sums from Germany, they made large demands. When, around 1922 and 1923, they saw that Germany could pay only in undesirable reparations in kind, they attacked the French for wanting to collect even moderate amounts. See Europe Made Peace, pp. 116-117.

[25]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 188; Henri Lichtenberger, Relations Between France and Germany (Washington:

Although some French leaders recognized the interdependence of the two keynotes of French diplomacy, almost all of them failed to realize that reparations and security --both highly desirable goals--were basically incompatible. It was true that France needed reparations from Germany, but Germany's industrial power would have to be restored to enable it to make payments, and when this occurred it would have the military potential that France feared. Should, on the other hand, the German economy be kept weak enough to prevent a threat to French security, Germany would be unable to make reparations payments. This paradox, seemingly insoluble, plagued French leaders in the inter-war period:

> No French statesman can accept either horn of the dilemma to the exclusion of the other, since, to the nation, security and reparations are equally important. No one can devise a program of attaining both, in a fashion not involving an apparent diminution of the one or the other which the nation, as yet, is unprepared to accept. Between 1920 and 1925 no French Premier dares to yield security in order to obtain reparations, nor to yield reparations in order to obtain security. . . .[26]

On the third element of the German problem, the issue of the enforcement of the Versailles Treaty, French

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Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1923), p. 86; Maurice Baumont, Gloires et tragédies de la Troisième République (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1956), p. 338; Sisley Huddleston, La politique anglaise et la France (Boulogne-sur-Seine: Imprimerie d'Études sociales et politiques, 1924), p. 6.

[26] Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 258; see also Renouvin, Relations internationales, Vol. VII, Part I, pp. 234-235.

and British policy again diverged. Although Poincaré, Foch, and other prominent French leaders had been severely disappointed with the terms of the Treaty, they insisted on its strict execution once it became law, for it was, despite shortcomings, the legal instrument capable of assuring hegemony over Germany and providing French security. Particularly after the failure of the Anglo-American guarantee pact France clung obstinately to the remnants and sought to defend the whole new status quo across the Continent.[27] To the dismay of France, Britain, failing to view the Treaty as sacrosanct, very quickly began to take a revisionist position. First, Britain, which traditionally regarded almost all settlements as temporary ones likely to be changed sometime in the future, did not regard the Treaty as a permanent arrangement. Furthermore, soon after the close of the Paris Peace Conference the British began to feel that the peacemakers had been too harsh and to believe that the Treaty must be applied lightly and its harshest clauses attenuated.[28] France, however, believed that Britain had an additional motive for desiring revision: it

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[27]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 256-257; Simonds and Enemy, Great Powers, p. 566; Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 78; Mantoux, Carthaginian Peace, p. 22; Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 203, 212, 18.

[28]Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 202, 212; Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 426; Charles D. Herisson, Les nations anglo-saxonnes et la paix (Paris: Librairie du Recueil Sirey, 1936), pp. 88, 91.

wanted to modify the Treaty because it impeded trade and could be enforced only with the intervention of a too-powerful France. As Britain came to support German insistence upon Treaty revision, the French grew increasingly bitter, for they realized that Germany's demands affected them more directly than the British, who, they charged, were willing to diminish France's share of the spoils since they already possessed the most coveted war prizes: Germany's navy and colonies.[29] This outlook made the French bitter and further poisoned relations between the two countries.

The Ruhr district had become a diplomatic focal point before January, 1923, for on four occasions in 1920 and 1921 one or more of the Allied powers either occupied or threatened to occupy a portion of it. An examination of the British and French position on each instance helps to place the 1923 occupation in historical perspective. The Ruhr first became the scene of diplomatic tension in March, 1920, when the Kapp putsch led to a series of violent left-wing revolts and Germany, without Allied consent, marched Reichswehr troops into the demilitarized zone to quell the rebellion. In response, French troops on April 6

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[29]Charles d'Ydewalle, Vingt ans d'Europe, 1919-1939 (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1939), p. 23; Chastenet, Troisieme République, V, pp. 78-79; Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 221; Lichtenberger, France and Germany, p. 24.

occupied the German cities of Frankfurt, Hanau, Darmstadt, Homburg, and Dieburg. Fearing that this French action was intended to separate the Ruhr from the rest of the country and to encourage separatist movements, the German government protested and tense moments followed. The British government was in a dilemma: while disapproving of French action, it feared that dissociating itself from the invasion would cause Allied unity to suffer a heavy blow; yet to remain silent would indicate approval. As days passed, however, it came to support the German protest, refused to let British troops participate in the occupation, and warned that France was endangering the Entente. France, reluctant to risk alienation of its most important ally, yielded and withdrew its troops on May 17. The incident carried a twofold historical significance in that it marked the first use of military sanctions against Germany and caused an open breach in Anglo-French relations.[30]

Less than two months after the departure of French troops from the five German towns, a new threat to occupy the Ruhr grew out of an Allied conference held at Spa on

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[30]S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918-1933 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 188-190; Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of the Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 156; Northedge, Troubled Giant, pp. 162, 164; Royal J. Schmidt, Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 29.

July 5-16, 1920, where the delegates discussed German disarmament, the prosecution of war criminals, the establishment of the amount of German coal deliveries for the next six months, and distribution of reparations payments among the Allies. As the Spa Conference opened, Alexandre Millerand, French Foreign Minister and President of the Council, complained that Germany was behind in coal deliveries due the Allies, and the Allied representatives, after discussion, agreed to reduce monthly coal deliveries to 2,000,000 tons for the next six months. When the German industrialist, Hugo Stinnes, protested bitterly and insisted upon a lower figure, the Allies threatened to occupy the Ruhr.[31] Moreover, the German failure to comply with the Treaty terms limiting its army to 100,000 men elicited another threat from the Allied Premiers: should Germany fail to carry out the military provisions of the Versailles Treaty, the Allies would occupy the Ruhr.[32]

During the Spa crisis, unlike that of April, England and France stood side by side in dealing with Germany. Germany's failure to disarm and execute the military provisions

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[31]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 263-264; Coal Protocol Signed at Spa, July 16, 1920, in Great Britain, Public Record Office, FO 371/4771, C 1777/192/18. Public Record Office documents will hereafter be cited as follows: name of document, date, volume, registry number. See Appendix I for note on Foreign Office citations.

[32]Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 82; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 263; Protocol of the Conference of Spa, July 9, 1920, FO 371/4756, C 1700/113/18.

of the Treaty, the gains made by extremist parties in the June 6 German elections, alleged discrimination against Allied trade, and the absence of any sign of German cooperation--all of these factors led to a new approach by Lloyd George. Faced with German intransigence, the Allies called Marshal Foch and the English Commanding General, Henry Wilson, to come to Spa to begin preparing for Allied action, but at the last moment Germany capitulated and signed the Protocol. England, it should be noted, had set forth conditions before agreeing to the inclusion in the Spa protocols of the sanction of the Ruhr occupation: it had stipulated that it should be an inter-Allied occupation, that it should terminate as soon as coal deficiencies had been made up, and that Allied forces should stay away from villages and towns. Even though Britain, through these limitations, had modified the nature of the threatened occupation, it had, significantly, accepted the principle of the occupation of the Ruhr as a sanction.[33] Since the joint Anglo-French threat to occupy the Ruhr had produced German acquiescence, the weapon was soon to be used again.

After delivering the required amount of coal for a few months, Germany began to fall behind toward the end of

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[33]Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 168; Northedge, Troubled Giant, pp. 168-170; Maximilian Harden, Germany, France and England, trans. and ed. by William Cranston Lawton (London: Brentano's, Ltd., 1924), p. 42; Carl Bergmann, The History of Reparations (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), p. 179.

1920, and in January, 1921, German and Allied experts met in Paris in an unsuccessful attempt to agree about the total amount of German reparations indebtedness. Then the Supreme Council, meeting late in January, drew up the Paris Resolutions (which called for a "final" settlement based on a fixed scale of payments over a forty-two year period) and, after presenting the Resolutions to the German government, invited it to attend a conference in London. At the London Conference, March 1-14, 1921, the German delegates announced that the Paris Resolutions were unacceptable. They declared, moreover, that they had already paid over 20,000,000,000 gold marks and owed only 30,000,000,000 additional gold marks. Since this amount was only approximately one-seventh of the 226,000,000,000 gold marks proposed in the Paris Resolutions, both Lloyd George--who called the German proposals a mockery of the Treaty--and Premier Aristide Briand, as well as the whole of the British and French press, attacked the German offer as an overt challenge. On March 3, Lloyd George told the Germans that if they had not accepted the Resolutions by March 7 the Allies would occupy Duisburg, Ruhrort, and Dusseldorf, located at the mouth of the Ruhr Valley, and would engage in other economic sanctions.[34] When the threat failed to move Germany, Belgian and French troops occupied the three towns on March 8, 1921, and established

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[34]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 264-265; C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 112.

a customs cordon between occupied and unoccupied territory. This occasion differed greatly from that of April, 1920, for British detachments participated in the occupation along with the French and Belgians.

Although Lloyd George had agreed to this measure of force in order to avoid a clash with France, he let Germany know, through Lord D'Abernon, that if it proposed more reasonable figures the occupation would not last long.[35] British participation in the occupation was, nevertheless, extremely significant, for Britain had, at least for the moment, followed the French policy of severity rather than conciliation and had, by participating in the occupation of additional German territory, weakened the argument it was to raise against similar French action in 1923.

Only two months later, Germany was faced with an extension of the occupation. On April 27, the Reparation Commission finally established the total German reparations indebtedness at 132,000,000,000 gold marks, and a conference of Allied representatives meeting in London from April 29 to May 5 accepted the figure[36] and devised the London

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[35]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 266; Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 86; Schmidt, Versailles and Ruhr, p. 75; Bergmann, Reparations, p. 180. France did not withdraw its troops in 1921; thus, in 1923 it began the Ruhr occupation from Dusseldorf. See David Lloyd George, The Truth about Reparations and War Debts (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), p. 58; Schmidt, Versailles and Ruhr, p. 30.

[36]When Lloyd George learned of the total debt figure established by the Reparation Commission, he asked Sir John

Schedule of Payments, which set forth a plan by which Germany could repay the debt. The Allies presented the London Schedule to Germany on May 5 and announced that if it failed to accept the entire Schedule within six days an Allied occupation of the Ruhr Valley itself would occur. When the German government protested, thinking that the 132,000,000,000 gold mark figure was much more than it was capable of paying, the Allies failed to budge, and the government of Konstantin Fehrenbach resigned on May 4, creating a new crisis. Germany, however, was unable to resist, and after Josef Wirth formed a Cabinet on May 10 it accepted the financial settlement and fulfilled the terms of the London Schedule until December, 1921, when it again threatened a default and requested a moratorium for the January 15 and February 15, 1922, payments.[37]

At the close of 1921, European observers looking back upon the years of 1920 and 1921 could thus point to four occasions on which various Allied powers had threatened to occupy a few towns or the whole of the Ruhr Valley, Germany's industrial heartland. France had been involved

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Bradbury, the British member of the Commission, whether the figure was a moderate, fair amount, and Bradbury replied that he did not believe it excessive. Premier Briand, however, said that he would be criticized in France for not insisting on a larger sum. See Lloyd George, Reparations, pp. 58-59.

[37]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 266-267, 269; C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 113; Halperin, Germany, pp. 202-203.

in all four of the threats, England in three; French troops had occupied German territory on two occasions, English on one. From the beginning, therefore, the menace of a Ruhr occupation forced German compliance. Furthermore, France observed that the Ruhr could be used as a tool to break German resistance and obtain payments and that England, even if it did not participate in an occupation, would not compel its ally to abstain.

Although not openly proclaimed at the time, the breach between England and France had been widened during 1921 by the German problem, the question of Upper Silesia, and the problems in the Near East with the Turkey of Mustapha Kemal; during 1922, events on both the French and English domestic scenes created additional friction. Trends in France were particularly important, for since the latter part of 1921 Premier Briand's policies had met strong criticism in the French legislature, where voices were insisting that France occupy more German territory as a coercive measure. When the December, 1921, German request for a moratorium led to the Cannes Conference in January, 1922, many French politicians feared that Briand would, under British pressure, make too many financial concessions to Germany. Although Briand, like his countrymen, wanted both security and

reparations, he felt that neither could be attained without close Allied cooperation; the French opposition, however, considered this attitude anglophile and termed it a sign of weakness. When the President of the Council appeared to be on the verge of consenting to new economic concessions to Germany at the Cannes Conference, parliamentary criticism mounted, and he returned to Paris on January 12 to defend his position before the Cabinet and the Chamber of Deputies. Receiving little support and feeling that he lacked the confidence of the nation and political leaders, he startled everyone by resigning that day without calling for a formal vote of confidence.[38]

The replacement of Briand by Raymond Poincaré distressed England, especially Lloyd George, who, though biased, painted an accurate picture of basic differences between the two French statesmen: Briand, born in Brittany, an area which had not been invaded for centuries, was "congenial, humorous, tolerant"; Poincaré, a native of Lorraine who had seen his country invaded by Germany in 1870, was "cold, reserved, rigid, with a mind of unimaginative and ungovernable idealism." He pointed out that although Poincaré was extremely fair in his ordinary activities, he was unfair so far as Germany was concerned, his "opinions on everything German" being "those

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[38]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 268-272; Jouvenel, D'une guerre à l'autre, p. 282.

of a Salvation Army captain about the devil."[39] When Poincaré came to power, British observers agreed with Lloyd George that French diplomacy was moving away from a policy of reconciliation with England toward a showdown with Germany,[40] for the new Premier's post-war activities and personal characteristics convinced them that he would lead France to exert more pressure upon the defeated Germans. They remembered that the patriotic Poincaré, who indeed loved France above all, had come into office in 1912 on a wave of nationalism and was himself the outstanding spokesman and symbol of the 1911-1914 nationalist revival. They had also heard that instead of being the traditional "gesticulating, bragging" Frenchman he was a fine, strictly disciplined, and virtually ascetic lawyer who could not be budged from an idea or conviction when he believed he was right.[41]

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[39]Lloyd George, Reparations, pp. 67-68.

[40]Piotr S. Wandycz, France and Her Eastern Allies, 1919-1925: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), p. 269; Sisley Huddleston, Poincaré: A Biographical Portrait (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), p. 19; D. W. Brogan, The French Nation: From Napoleon to Pétain, 1814-1940 (London: Arrow Books, Ltd., 1961), p. 258; Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 241.

[41]Gabriel Hanotaux, Raymond Poincaré (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1934), p. 12; Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times, 1760 to the Present (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1960), pp. 339, 390; Huddleston, Poincaré, pp. 32-34; Pierre Miquel, Poincaré (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1961), p. 467.

Since he stepped down from the President's office in 1920, this obstinate Frenchman had become convinced that France was being mistreated and defrauded by its Allies and that Germany must not be allowed to elude its legal responsibilities. This message he proclaimed throughout 1921 as he became France's most powerful journalist.[42] Twice each month he wrote the article on current political affairs in La Revue des deux mondes, France's most prestigious intellectual magazine; his articles also appeared frequently in Le Matin, the country's leading popular newspaper, and in the semi-official and extremely influential Le Temps. When he became Premier in January, 1922, he had little time for writing anti-German articles, but he preached the same sermon through a new instrument. Almost every Sunday he went to some town or village to speak and dedicate a memorial to the local war victims, and on these occasions he repeatedly declared that Germany had caused the war and was trying to cheat France of reparations. These bitter sermons and articles, which led his French followers to demand decisive action against Germany, made the English nervous.[43]

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[42]Simonds, Europe Made Peace, p. 215; Raoul Persil, Alexandre Millerand, 1859-1943 (Paris: Société d'éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1949), p. 147; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 103.

[43]M. Baumont, La faillite de la paix, 1918-1919, Vol. I: De Rethondes a Stresa (1918-1935) (5th ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 257; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 277.

Nervousness, however, also characterized the French attitude toward English policy, for the activities and personality of Lloyd George disturbed the French just as those of Poincaré perturbed the British. If Poincaré had more enthusiastic French support than that given any Premier since Clemenceau, it was Lloyd George who was primarily responsible: Frenchmen welcomed his appointment because they felt that he would stand up to Lloyd George more firmly than any other French statesman and insist on the protection of their rights. Since 1919, the policies of the British Prime Minister had tended to destroy confidence in Britain, for the French felt that he had practiced a policy hostile to them and had tried to stir up Europe against them with charges of militarism and imperialism.[44] When, therefore, the Chanak incident precipitated the resignation of Lloyd George on October 19, 1922, they were elated and felt that Poincaré had won a victory in the Anglo-French duel.

The French admired and liked Andrew Bonar Law, the new Prime Minister, who had lost a son in the war. Although they felt that he was a true friend of France who wanted Anglo-French cooperation, the French were soon to learn that Bonar Law did not condone their reparations policy.[45] By

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[44]The Pomp of Power (6th ed.; London: Hutchinson & Co., n.d.), pp. 174-175; Simonds, Europe Made Peace, p. 242; Baumont, Faillite, I, 274; Camille Georges Picavet, L'Europe politique de 1919 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931), p. 75.

[45]Baumont, Faillite, I, 274; Wandycz, Eastern Allies, p. 269; Saint-Aulaire, Confession, p. 636.

the close of 1922, moreover, discord between the two countries had grown to the point that no change in personnel was likely to mitigate the effects of nearly four years of frequent disagreement and mistrust.

During 1922, in the midst of the change of ministries in both France and England, several key diplomatic events had increased friction between the two countries, the first of these being the Cannes Conference. At Cannes, where the Supreme Council met on January 5-13, 1922, to consider the December 14, 1921, German request for a moratorium on the January 15 and February 15 reparations installments, discussions between Lloyd George and Briand were the focal point of the Conference. The former wanted to improve the economic condition of Europe, including Russia, and in order to obtain economic concessions from France he offered it an Anglo-French security pact similar to the abortive one. The French delegates, feeling that Lloyd George offered this guarantee in order to compel the French government to renounce the material guarantee of an occupation of the right bank of the Rhine, objected strongly to the British proposals. Furthermore, the terms of the proposed pact displeased them, for it contained no precise military convention and was a unilateral pact--which they considered humiliating--that would last only ten years, place no obligations on the Dominions, and guarantee France's border with Germany but not its strategic interests in eastern

Europe. At this point French leaders, as mentioned earlier, grew concerned that the conciliatory Briand might subordinate French policy to English direction and accept the pact, which they considered a mirage. When the French Cabinet fell, the unsuccessful Cannes Conference adjourned, and the Reparation Commission had to assume the task of dealing with the German request for a moratorium.[46]

Delegates at the Cannes Conference had agreed, under the leadership of Lloyd George,[47] that representatives of all the major powers would meet to discuss economic questions; when they met to do so in Genoa on April 10-May 19, 1922, both German and Russian delegates were present. Since, however, Poincaré believed that Lloyd George wanted to draw France to Genoa in order to revise the Treaty of Versailles, he refused to attend, sent Louis Barthou to represent France, and insisted that the question of reparations and Allied debts not be placed on the agenda. Although in his opening address Lloyd George called the conference the "greatest gathering of European nations" ever assembled and discussed

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[46] Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 269-270; Albrecht-Carrié, Diplomatic History, p. 393; C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 113; P. Rain, L'Europe de Versailles (1919-1939). Les traités de paix--leur application--leur mutilisation (Paris: Payot, 1945), p. 166; Jouvenel, D'une guerre a l'autre, p. 282.

[47] Quincy Howe, A World History of Our Own Times, Vol. II: The World Between the Wars (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 151. Howe suggested that it was only in 1922 that Lloyd George began "to pry himself loose from France when he sponsored a momentous international conference at Genoa" and invited the Germans and Russians.

broad conditions for the economic and political reconstruction of Europe, disappointments soon clouded the scene. The Russians began to cause difficulties about disarmament and pre-revolutionary debts, and on April 16 they concluded the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany, a step which other powers considered an act of defiance and which increased French distrust of Germany. Then Poincaré, in a speech at Bar-le-Duc on April 24, also helped undermine the Conference: he stated that France would continue to participate in the Conference only if no concessions were made to Germany; furthermore, should Germany fail to meet its reparations installment due at the close of May, France would invade the Ruhr on its own.[48] The Genoa Conference thus ended in failure, and the strain on Anglo-French relations was great.

Meanwhile, the problem of reparations continued to plague Europe both during and after the Cannes and Genoa Conferences. When Germany frequently mentioned its desire for some kind of moratorium, the French delegates to the Reparation Commission were hostile and refused even to consider any moratorium that did not grant "guarantees" in the shape of extensive Allied control of German finances. After long negotiations, Germany on July 12 requested

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[48]René Pinon, Le redressement de la politique française, 1922 (Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1923), p. iii; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 275-276; C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 114; Lloyd George, Reparations, p. 69.

complete release from cash payments during the balance of 1922 and stated that its financial condition would also make such payments impossible in 1923 and 1924. The French chairman of the Reparation Commission, Louis Dubois, refused to consider this request. Then in August, 1922, trouble came from another source. That year America called frequently upon the European debtors for payment of their war debts, and this American insistence was the first decisive step on the road to the occupation of the Ruhr, for it led to the Balfour Note.[49]

On August 1, Arthur Balfour, temporarily in charge of the Foreign Office, published a note, addressed to the French government, stating that Britain, which sought a general economic settlement, would abandon all claims to reparations and all further claims for payment. If, however, the United States refused to cancel the debts that European nations owed it, Britain would have to receive enough from its debtors to pay what it owed the American government. The effect of the Balfour Note was disastrous, for the Americans resented the burden being placed on their shoulder, and the French insisted that if England were to press them to pay their debt they would have to exert increased pressure to extract payments from Germany. Thus the Note indirectly pushed France toward the occupation of

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[49]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 274-277; Simonds, Europe Made Peace, p. 231.

the Ruhr and wounded its diplomatic image, for it made French insistence upon payments from Germany appear to be the principal obstacle to an international financial settlement.[50] In addition, the Balfour Note reduced the likelihood of an agreement between France and Britain at the forthcoming London Conference.

The London Conference, called by Lloyd George to deal with the July 12 German request for a moratorium on payments for the next two and a half years, met August 7-14, with both Poincaré and Lloyd George present. When Poincaré refused to grant a moratorium and insisted upon "productive pledges" from Germany, including exploitation of the state mines in the Ruhr and the appropriation of 60 per cent of the capital of left bank German dyestuff factories, Lloyd George and the Germans found the French proposals unacceptable. On August 14, the last day of the Conference, Lloyd George, sensing that France might soon occupy the Ruhr, said that if the French knew of a sure method to get money from Germany, they should try to do so. Doubtlessly they would meet serious disappointments, but they must have the right to convince themselves of the facts by the method they judged best. After a week of controversy, the Conference ended in deadlock--the first time since the

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[50] C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 161; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 130; Schmidt, Versailles and Ruhr, pp. 39, 83; Chastenet, Vingt ans, p. 48.

armistice that a conference of British and French heads of state had ended in a clear and official admission of conflict.[51]

During the late summer months of 1922, the Franco-British conflict became increasingly intense as events in the Near East in mid-September complicated the controversy over the reparations question. When Poincaré withdrew the French troops reinforcing British troops at Chanak, the strain was almost overwhelming, and Lord Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, immediately went to Paris to consult Poincaré. An extremely stormy interview ensued, and Curzon left the room crying and in a fit of rage; the situation exacerbated relations between the two diplomats, and memories of the encounter haunted Curzon thereafter, increasing his hatred of Poincaré.[52]

Meanwhile, in France "political leaders, journalists, industrialists, merchants, shopkeepers, taxpayers, peasants, artisans" were growing impatient with seemingly

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[51]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 276-277; Etienne Weill-Raynal, Les réparations allemandes et la France, Vol. II: L'Application de l'état des paiements, l'occupation de la Ruhr et l'institution du Plan Dawes (mai 1921-avril 1924) (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1947), p. 371; Georges Suarez, Briand, sa vie, son oeuvres, avec son journal et de nombreux documents inédits, Vol. V: L'Artisan de la Paix, 1918-1923 (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1941), p. 426. It should be noted that Lloyd George did not question the legality of the threatened French independent action against Germany.

[52]C. L. Mowat, Britain, p. 118.

endless and useless conferences and delays: having been led to believe that they could collect large sums from Germany, they were insistent upon using pressure to do so. Poincaré, in order to stay in office, had to act in tune with the demands of public opinion and his supporters, and his increasingly full Sunday speaking schedule fanned the flames even more. Repeatedly he stated that only by seizing "productive guarantees" could France break down German resistance and secure its own rights. All of the speeches received wide circulation and helped prepare Frenchmen for the next step--the Ruhr occupation: "The Ruhr became a catchword, a symbol, a magic panacea for all the ills the Republic had fallen heir to."[53]

During the same period, Germany was experiencing severe financial problems as the mark's value declined from 490 to the dollar in July to 3,012 in October and was to reach 7,353 in December. After the British tried unsuccessfully to draft a moratorium scheme acceptable to France, Germany on November 14 asked the Reparation Commission for a moratorium of three or four years on all payments except a few deliveries in kind. Poincaré refused to consider either a moratorium or the November 4 German request for stabilization of the mark, for he considered both a reduction of Germany's total indebtedness. Finally, he and

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[53]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 277-278.

Bonar Law, together with Mussolini, decided to hold a conference in London in December to discuss reparations and inter-Allied debts.[54]

The French government was, however, pessimistic about the forthcoming encounter. On November 17, Poincaré explained to the Chamber of Deputies the main points of the plan he would propose to the London Conference: its outstanding feature was the insistence that only if France were allowed to seize productive guarantees would it consent to a moratorium. After he warned that France would resort to force if the Treaty could not be executed in a spirit of harmony by all of the Allies, the President of the Council requested and received a postponement of discussion for one month. Doubting that Poincaré's proposal would receive support at the London Conference, the French began to make other plans. On November 27, 1922, President Millerand presided over a meeting of the Cabinet at the Elysée Palace, and the next day an article in Le Temps announced that France was planning to extend the Rhenish occupation, replace German functionaries by French ones, and occupy two-thirds of the Ruhr; this would be carried out either with or without allies if France failed to win over the British at the London Conference.[55]

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[54] Ibid., pp. 282-283.

[55] Ibid., p. 284; Jean-Claude Favez, Le Reich devant l'occupation franco-belge de la Ruhr en 1923 (Geneva:

At the London Conference, December 9-11, 1922, Bonar Law presented a plan--transmitted by Germany--for a moratorium and stabilization of the mark, as well as a proposal for an international gold loan from which reduced reparations payments could be made. Poincaré, moving that the plan be rejected, asserted that the French legislature would refuse to consent to any reduction of the German indebtedness and would agree to no moratorium without pledges, particularly the Ruhr mines. He called for both the occupation of the Ruhr and the imposition of certain other financial sanctions to force Germany to make serious offers and to insure that it carried them out. When the Conference ended on December 11 with plans to meet again in Paris on January 2, 1923,[56] the deadlock was complete. Returning to Paris, Poincaré, although he found that most French political leaders clearly favored the use of force, hesitated to take action. Only after long talks with President Millerand and André Maginot, Minister of War, did the Premier agree to occupy the Ruhr, and even then he refused to act until after he tried once more in the upcoming Paris Conference to get British cooperation.[57]

Librairie Droz, 1969), p. 51; Jacques Seydoux, De Versailles au Plan Young: Réparations, dettes interalliées, reconstruction européene (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1932), p. 116.

[56]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 284; Jacques Chastenet, Raymond Poincaré (Paris: René Julliard, 1948), pp. 239-240.

[57]Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 101; Persil, Millerand, p. 148; Favez, Le Reich, p. 56.

When Bonar Law and Poincaré discussed the divergent British and French viewpoints in their respective legislative bodies soon after the breakdown of the London Conference, this further aroused public opinion in the two countries. In the House of Commons on December 14, 1922, Bonar Law said that even though Germany had indeed fallen behind in reparations payments, he felt that it had been through no deliberate action. He warned France that Britain "could not remain indifferent" to any French actions that would make it more difficult for Germany to make payments. The next day, Poincaré appeared before the Chamber of Deputies to discuss the results of the London Conference. Although he tried to minimize the differences between France and England and said that he hoped that they could reach an agreement, he affirmed that France could not consent to an unconditional reduction of the German payments and insisted that war debts and reparations must be considered separately. Warning that the sanctions set forth in Article 232 of the Treaty of Versailles might have to be utilized, he asked for parliamentary support in the forthcoming Paris Conference; after a long discussion he received overwhelming support in the Chamber and the following week secured a unanimous Senate vote.[58]

Meanwhile, the French government began actual preparation for the occupation which would be carried out if

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[58]Halperin, Germany, p. 247; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 285.

Poincaré failed to win over the English at the Paris Conference. Jacques Seydoux, Director of the Commercial Relations section of the Political and Commercial Affairs division of the Quai d'Orsay, worked incessantly in December preparing for the occupation and planning how to make it economically profitable. One key element was nevertheless absent--a legal pretext for the threatened occupation: in order to justify the occupation on legal grounds, Poincaré believed that he would need the Reparation Commission to declare Germany in default. Fortunately, Germany had provided him with an opening by informing the Reparation Commission on December 2 that it could not make timber deliveries on time and requesting an extension until April 1, 1923. On the basis of a French motion, the Commission on December 26 declared Germany in arrears in 1922 timber deliveries to France and decreed, against the vote of Sir John Bradbury, the British delegate, that this German failure constituted a voluntary default.[59] Part of Poincaré's legal scaffolding lay ready to use should the Paris Conference prove unsatisfactory.

When the Paris Conference opened on January 2, 1923, the prevalent mood was one of pessimism.[60] Because it is

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[59]Seydoux, Réparations, p. 116; Halperin, Germany, p. 248; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 284.

[60]On the eve of the Conference, Bonar Law wrote to Curzon, who was at Lausanne, saying that he had no hope unless the unexpected occurred; see Blake, Bonar Law, p. 486.

unlikely that either France or Britain seriously expected the other party to change its basic position, the Conference was virtually doomed to failure. Poincaré presided at the opening of the Conference, and he, Bonar Law, and the Italian delegate, the Marquis della Toretta, presented their respective plans for a settlement of the reparations and inter-Allied debts questions. While the Italian plan received little consideration, basic differences marked the French and British plans.

The extremely complicated Bonar Law plan (as the British proposals came to be known),[61] covered the issues of reparations and inter-Allied debts. It called for a reduction of the German debt from 132,000,000,000 gold marks to 50,000,000,000 gold marks and said that for four years Germany would make no payments except certain limited deliveries in kind; after the end of the four-year moratorium, it would pay 2,000,000,000 gold marks per year for four years, 2,500,000,000 gold marks annually for the following two years, and after that 3,333,000,000 gold marks per year. This plan would be offered to Germany only if it agreed to stabilize the mark, restore budget equilibrium, and accept Allied financial supervision in carrying out the

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[61]Bertrand de Jouvenel called it the most complicated of the innumerable plans suggested between the wars for the settlement of the reparations question; see D'une guerre à l'autre, I, 306. Carl Bergmann, the German financial expert, is reported to have said: "I would prefer to pay reparations than to try to understand the Bonar Law plan." See Weill-Raynal, Réparations, II, 336.

economic reforms. Should it fail to satisfy the supervising authorities in carrying out the economic reforms or in making revised payments, it should be subject

> to any measures which Allied Powers, upon a report of such failure from the supervising authority, may unanimously decide to be necessary. Such measures may include the forcible seizure of German revenues and assets and the taking over of German fiscal machinery and the military occupation of German territories outside the treaty occupation area.

Allied financial supervision would be carried out by a Foreign Finance Council, located in Berlin. Britain, Belgium, France, and Italy would each appoint one member of the Council, and one American and one person of neutral European nationality would also be members; the German Finance Minister would serve as ex officio chairman, who could vote only in case of a tie. The Council, which would have wide-ranging control over German currency legislation, budget, public expenditure and general financial administration, would be independent of the Reparation Commission sitting in Paris and would, in effect, alter the position of the Reparation Commission: "If the Reparation Commission is retained at all it should be as a purely judicial body with such changes of constitution as may appear desirable."[62] With reference to the question of inter-Allied debts, the Bonar Law plan offered to cancel the war debts owed Britain by its Allies if they would waive the Belgian priority in

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[62]Plan for General Settlement of Reparation and European Inter-Allied Debts, January 2, 1923, FO 371/8625, C 162/1/18.

reparations payments and apply the gold deposits held by Britain to the repayment of the war debts owed it.[63]

Jacques Seydoux immediately studied the plan, and on the basis of his comments Poincaré criticized it the following day. The Premier declared that the British proposals were not even a base for discussion because they directly infringed the Versailles Treaty by calling for a reduction of the German debt as fixed in the 1921 Schedule of Payments and proposing to modify the functions and membership of the Reparation Commission. He also attacked the role to be assigned to the German Finance Minister in the proposed Foreign Finance Council and objected to the four-year moratorium and the absence of productive pledges.[64]

Whereas the Bonar Law plan was worded in a detached, businesslike fashion, the plan presented by Poincaré on January 2, 1923, was written in a highly emotional tone, its first paragraph declaring that France was not able "to forget that it is Germany who declared war on her, who invaded ten French departments and systematically devastated them." France would consider a reduction of the 132,000,000,000 gold mark figure only if the other Allies

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[63]During the war Italy and France deposited gold with Great Britain as security for loans made to them to enable them to carry on the war. Ibid.

[64]Seydoux, Réparations, p. 117. On January 4, the British delegation submitted a lengthy memorandum defending its plan and denying that it was contrary to the Treaty; see FO 371/8626, C 445/1/18.

increased its percentage of the proceeds or granted a priority for the reconstruction of its devastated districts. Even then it could grant only a partial moratorium, limited to two years, which would be subject to certain conditions: in order to supervise the continuation of coal deliveries, an Interallied Coal Commission must be created in Essen and chaired by a Frenchman; the Allies should control the state-owned forests in occupied Germany and be able to seize the coal tax and customs receipts in the occupied Rhineland and the Ruhr if Germany defaulted; German failure to comply with the terms of the plan would result in the military occupation of Essen, Bochum, and any other part of the Ruhr designated by Marshal Foch; finally, a customs border would be drawn to the east of occupied territory.[65]

The British delegates, who believed that the French plan would prevent the restoration of Germany's credit and destroy the possibility of German payments, objected strongly to the provisions calling for a moratorium with productive pledges and the continuation of deliveries in kind during the moratorium period. Bonar Law quickly became discouraged and wanted to leave after the first session; on January 3, Lord Crewe, the British Ambassador to France, sent a message from the Prime Minister to the Cabinet saying that the divergence between the British and

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[65]Programme de la Conférence, January 2, 1923, FO 371/8625, C 212/1/18.

French views was so great and Poincaré so obstinate that he saw hardly any chance of reaching an agreement.[66]

At the opening of the session on the afternoon of January 4, the President of the Council stated that the ditch which separated Britain and France was the question of a moratorium with pledges; since the difference in principle between them could not be overcome, further attempts to compromise would be useless and perhaps harmful. Speaking to a group of journalists later in the day, Bonar Law, disagreeing with Poincaré's assessment, said that the basic difference was whether or not the proposed steps would permit German economic recovery.[67]

When the Conference ended that afternoon, it seemed to many observers that Bonar Law had given up too easily and that neither side had seriously searched for a way to avert the impasse. Given the emotional reaction of each of the powers involved, however, it is doubtful that a solution could have been reached; each one, feeling that the plan of the other injured its own interests, declared the other's proposals unacceptable. The viewpoints appeared irreconcilable.[68] Although the proceedings had been

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[66]Blake, Bonar Law, p. 486; Crewe to FO [Foreign Office], January 3, 1923, FO 371/8625, C 180/1/18.

[67]The Times (London), January 5, 1923, p. 10.

[68]Huddleston, Poincaré, pp. 137-138; Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 232; Mourin, Nations européenes, I, 56; Edouard Driault, La paix de la France. La politique internationale de l'après-guerre, 1918-1935 (Paris: Éditions G. Ficker, 1936), p. 128.

carried on in a friendly fashion and the Conference broke up amidst mutual expressions of cordiality, few people failed to realize that a chasm, which had been widening since late 1918, clearly separated the two former Allied powers. Almost everyone wondered whether the next French step would be toward the Ruhr.

CHAPTER II

FRENCH AGGRESSIVENESS AND BRITISH ASSISTANCE: THE RUHR OCCUPATION, JANUARY 5-FEBRUARY 28, 1923

By January 5, 1923, French leaders had decided to occupy the Ruhr district of Germany. The momentous decision having been made, they steadily pursued their course, not hesitating to use harsh methods when necessary. Although the British government had long feared that France would move into the Ruhr, it was caught unprepared and had no clearly defined policy. While sections of Parliament and the press assailed the occupation, the British government during the first two months of the occupation did little to impede French action. Instead, it in several ways rendered assistance.

Although most observers agree that the decision to occupy the Ruhr was not hastily made, there is broad disagreement over the reasons which impelled the French to initiate the occupation.[1] No simple explanation is accurate,

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[1]One cannot say firmly why Poincaré decided to take this course, for many of his papers were burned, and the remaining ones will be available to researchers only in 1990; see Pierre Miquel, Poincaré (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1961), p. 7.

for several factors interacted to make France act without the consent of its neighbor across the Channel. Economic ones have been most frequently emphasized. Since the coming into force of the Versailles Treaty, Germany had almost always been in arrears in cash payments and deliveries and had sought deferments and moratoriums. At the close of 1922, it was 20 per cent behind in coal deliveries demanded by the Reparation Commission, and both French patience and the French Treasury had reached a breaking point. Reparations receipts were needed to finance reconstruction of the devastated departments, and the French decided to occupy the Ruhr in order to obtain them: should Germany, after the occupation, fail to pay as scheduled, France would control its key productive resources. Since methods previously used had failed to make Germany pay, France decided to try new ones--methods foreshadowed in previous threats to occupy the Ruhr. Believing that the mere threat of force would, as on previous occasions, bring about German compliance, France never seriously anticipated German resistance.[2]

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[2]Hajo Holborn, The Political Collapse of Europe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p. 120; A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (2nd ed.; Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcet Publications, Inc., 1965), pp. 47, 53; J.-B. Duroselle, Histoire diplomatique de 1919 a nos jours (4th ed.; Paris: Librairie Dalloz, 1966), p. 77; Jacques Chastenet, Raymond Poincaré (Paris: René Julliard, 1948), p. 245; Edouard Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la IIIe République, Vol. III: L'apres-guerre, 1919-1924 (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1959), p. 346; Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), pp. 57-58; Miquel, Poincaré,

The Ruhr district, an extremely important section of Germany, was an area approximately sixty miles long and twenty-eight miles wide lying between the Ruhr and Lippe rivers. Containing 10 per cent of the German people, it was the most thickly populated area on the Continent and had fourteen towns with a population of over 100,000. It abounded in natural resources and at the time of the occupation produced about 85 per cent of Germany's coal, 80 per cent of the steel and pig iron, and 70 per cent of the railway traffic. Because France could find there the fuel needed by its Lorraine iron industry,[3] Poincaré believed that with the Ruhr in his hands he could either force Germany to pay or exploit the resources of the area.

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p. 456; Sisley Huddleston, Poincaré: A Biographical Portrait (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), p. 23; Frank H. Simonds, How Europe Made Peace Without America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), p. 216.

[3]Frederick Lewis Schuman, War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. In Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), p. 290; Royal J. Schmidt, Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 7-8; Joseph King, The Ruhr. The History of the French Occupation of the Ruhr: Its Meaning and Consequences (London: British Bureau for Ruhr Information, 1924), p. 4; F. Lee Benns, European History Since 1870 (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1938), p. 545; Guy Greer, The Ruhr-Lorraine Industrial Problem: A Study of the Economic Inter-Dependence of the Two Regions and Their Relation to the Reparation Question (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1925), p. 179. Although it has been alleged that the Comité des Forges, representing the French mining interests, urged the occupation of the Ruhr, Schuman stated that he found no convincing evidence to substantiate the charge; see War and Diplomacy, p. 279.

Several political motives also led France to occupy the Ruhr. One of these was closely related to economic goals: because France believed that the Germans had willfully evaded reparations payments, it wanted to force them to pay in order to break their resistance. In addition, the French government realized that failing to insist upon payment would mean giving up its most important method of controlling German affairs. Feeling that German resistance to fulfillment of the Versailles Treaty left it no choice, France intended the occupation as a showdown and a method of forcing Germany to cede.[4]

Additional political considerations played a role in creating widespread French support for the Ruhr venture. Some French nationalists, such as Marshal Foch, wanted their country to move into the Ruhr in order to regain the position held in 1918 and make itself supreme in Europe. They believed that control of the Ruhr resources could, by weakening Germany, enhance France's power position.[5] France

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[4]René Albrecht-Carrié, France Europe and the Two World Wars (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), p. 136; Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 58; Jacques Chastenet, Vingt ans d'histoire diplomatique, 1919-1939 (Geneva: Éditions du Milieu du Monde, 1945), p. 204; Miquel, Poincaré, p. 456; René Pinon, L'avenir de l'Entente franco-anglaise (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1924), p. 138; Raymond Recouly, De Bismarck à Poincaré. Soixante ans de diplomatie républicaine (Paris: les Éditions de France, 1932), p. 491. T. W. Foerster wrote that Poincaré moved into the Ruhr to force Germany to pay reparations and thus "re-establish the reign of law in Europe"; see Europe and the German Question (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), p. 279.

[5]Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace. Pages from the Diary of Viscount D'Abernon (Berlin, 1920-1926),

also decided to act, as mentioned earlier, because it felt that the Versailles Treaty was being evaded in two ways. First, of course, Germany had failed to make the required reparations payments and deliveries and had failed to disarm according to Treaty stipulations and try the Kaiser and war criminals.[6] Second, the French believed that they had been constantly called upon to make concessions which constituted an evasion of the Treaty: during several of the twenty-three international conferences held between 1920 and 1923, they had sacrificed part of their claims. France, feeling that it had been humiliated since World War I and sensing itself estranged from Britain, decided to defend its interests and to prove that it could, if necessary, enforce the Versailles settlement alone.[7] The occupation was also

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Vol. II: The Years of Crisis: June 1922-December 1923 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 23; Jacques Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième République, Vol. V: Les années d'illusions, 1918-1931 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1960), pp. 103-104; Raoul Persil, Alexandre Millerand, 1859-1943 (Paris: Société d'éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1949), p. 150; S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918-1933 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 247.

[6]Lindley Fraser, Germany Between Two Wars: A Study of Propaganda and War Guilt (London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 69; Raymond Leslie Buell, Europe: A History of Ten Years (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 40-42.

[7]Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 192; Lieutenant-Colonel Reboul, Pourquoi nous sommes dans la Ruhr (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1923), p. v; Jules Laroche, Au Quai d'Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré, 1913-1926 (Paris: Hachette, 1957), p. 179;

intended as a showdown with England. For four years Lloyd George had, in conference after conference, destroyed French confidence and made Frenchmen feel that England was forcing France to play a subordinate role. They felt that Poincaré could lead them in the fight to restore French prestige and make France independent of England.[8]

France's chronic sense of insecurity also led toward the occupation. Some of the French leaders believed that Germany was planning a coup and building armaments in the Ruhr valley itself. They declared that France invaded the Ruhr to solve the problem of security against future German attack.[9] Adding to the insecurity was the fact that France

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L.-L. Klotz, De la guerre à la paix. Souvenirs et documents (Paris: Payot, 1924), p. 150; René Pinon, Le redressement de la politique française, 1922 (Paris: Perrin et Cie., 1923), p. ii; W. M. Jordan, Great Britain, France, and the German Problem, 1918-1939: A Study of Anglo-French Relations in the Making and Maintenance of the Versailles Settlement (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 52; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 17.

[8]Huddleston, Poincaré, pp. 19-20; Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 58; Holborn, Collapse, p. 120; Simonds, Europe Made Peace, p. 242; Chastenet, Vingt ans, p. 204.

[9]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 280; H. Brenier, Why France is in the Ruhr (Marseille: Comité de Relations Internationales, 1923), pp. 16-17; Greer, Ruhr-Lorraine Problem, p. 178. During the period of the occupation surveyed in this study, statements made in French newspapers and journals and in public pronouncements most frequently mentioned reparations and security as the objects of the occupation. Sometimes the former appeared to be the goal, at other times the latter. Bertrand de Jouvenel quotes a November 16, 1923, speech in which Poincaré was discussing the 166,000,000 net cost of the occupation to that point. Speaking of the deficit, Poincaré said: "It is not too expensive for buying our security"; see D'une guerre a l'autre, Vol. I: De Versailles à Locarno (Paris: Calman-Levy, Editeurs, 1940), p. 314.

felt abandoned because both Britain and the United States misunderstood and showed little sympathy for their former ally.[10]

Finally, Poincaré decided to occupy the Ruhr because French public opinion, which he had helped shape by speech and pen, urged him to do so. After nine years of war-time suffering and post-war disappointment and disillusionment, the French people called for a new course, and the government had to show that it could act to force German compliance with the Treaty.[11] The President of the Council remembered that Briand had been criticized for failing to be firm with both Germany and Britain. In addition, President Millerand, Marshal Foch, and most Cabinet members were calling for the occupation.[12]

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[10]William L. Shirer, The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940 (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 126; Jean-Claude Favez, Le Reich devant l'occupation franco-belge de la Ruhr en 1923 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1969), p. 59.

[11]Chastenet, Poincaré, p. 299; Henri Lichtenberger, The Ruhr Conflict: A Report Supplementing the Report Entitled "Relations Between France and Germany" (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1923), p. 4; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 137; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 277; Simonds, Europe Made Peace, p. 105; Maximilian Harden, Germany, France and England, trans. and ed. by William Cranston Lawton (London: Brentano's, Ltd., 1924), p. 186.

[12]André François-Poncet, De Versailles à Potsdam--La France et le problème allemand contemporain, 1919-1945 (Paris: Flammarion, 1948), p. 101; Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, Vol. VII: Les crises du XXe siecle, I. De 1914 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957), pp. 250-251; Maxime Mourin, Histoire des

Several factors, then, interacted to bring about the Ruhr occupation, and throughout its course there was to be confusion about French goals. Poincaré wanted to make Germany pay reparations in order to help solve French financial difficulties, to enforce the Versailles Treaty, to exert some control over Germany's affairs, and, it seems, to retard Germany's industrial and financial recovery. He believed that these results would also help protect France against the threat of German aggression. Although Foch and some French nationalists viewed the Ruhr venture as a potential means of territorial aggrandizement, Poincaré failed to share their aspirations. Repeatedly he was to state that France had no annexationist ambitions in the Ruhr, and when Germany surrendered in September he was to refuse to discuss any attempts to detach part of the Ruhr.

Even though Lord Crewe, British Ambassador to France, reported on January 9 that France had made no decision to occupy the Ruhr,[13] three pieces of correspondence dated January 8, 1923, reveal that France had made concrete plans

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nations européenes, Vol. I: De la première à la deuxième guerre mondiale (1918-1939) (Paris: Payot, 1962), p. 90; Persil, Millerand, pp. 149-150. Mourin, as well as several other writers, said that Poincaré would have preferred action which would not bring British disapproval. They indicate that at the last moment he hesitated, and Millerand pushed him into action; see Mourin, Nations européenes, I, 50.

[13]Crewe to FO, No. 28, January 9, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 509/313/18.

for the occupation. First, in a letter to Louis Barthou, French delegate to the Reparation Commission, Poincaré enclosed a copy of four documents: a letter to General Degoutte, Commander of the French Army of the Rhine; a letter to Monsieur Coste, Inspector General of Mines; a proclamation to the population of the Ruhr; and a notification to the German government. He explained that he had asked the Belgian government to make a similar notification to the German government at the appointed time and added that the Belgian and Italian governments had, at his request, agreed to send engineers to Dusseldorf to join the Coste mission.[14]

In his letter to Coste, Poincaré sent two enclosures setting forth the powers of the control mission to be established at Essen.[15] The first enclosure, which had no date, created and placed under Coste a Mission of Control of the Mines and Factories of the occupied territories (Mission de Contrôle des mines et des usines, commonly referred to as MICUM). It gave vast powers to the MICUM--including the right to compel cooperation from administrative organs, chambers of commerce, and industrial associations--and authorized MICUM officials to enter offices, mines, and

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[14]Poincaré to Barthou, January 8, 1923, in France, Archives nationales, collection number F30 [Finances. Administration centrale], carton 582. Archives nationales documents will hereafter be cited as follows: name of document, date, A.N., collection number and carton.

[15]Poincaré to Coste, January 8, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

factories and demand access to all accounting records. German employees of both government and industry were to place themselves at the complete disposal of MICUM officials. The second enclosure, dated January 5, 1923, stated that after January 11, 1923, the coal distribution duties usually performed by the German Kohlensyndikat would be submitted to the approval of the MICUM, which could modify them when necessary. Should the Kohlensyndikat fail to make the necessary deliveries to the Entente countries and the occupied territories of the left bank of the Rhine, severe penalties would result.[16]

Writing to General Degoutte on January 8, Poincaré sent a copy of his instructions to Coste. He placed Coste and all his personnel under Degoutte's authority and included a copy of the notification to be made to the population of the Ruhr at the beginning of the occupation. Then the French premier emphasized that Degoutte's mission must be pacific in nature, having as its object only the protection of MICUM operations.[17]

France had thus, by January 8, made the necessary preparations for the occupation. When would the move into the Ruhr begin? One would assume that Raymond Poincaré,

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[16]Pouvoirs de la Mission de Contrôle, A.N., F30 582; Controle de la repartition des charbons, January 5, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

[17]Poincaré to Degoutte, January 8, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

the lawyer and advocate of strict enforcement of the Treaty, would act only after he had both a legal and a moral pretext for invading the Ruhr. In the documents, for example, Poincaré recalled that on December 26, 1922, the Reparation Commission had declared Germany in default on timber deliveries, but realized that the Ruhr had relatively small timber resources. If, however, the Reparation Commission would declare Germany in default on coal deliveries, France would have the necessary justification. Barthou, the French delegate, had already proposed that the Commission declare Germany in default because it had delivered only 11,710,365 of the 13,864,100 tons of coal demanded during 1922 and had been behind in deliveries in 1921 as well. When the Reparation Commission on January 9 decided by a three-to-one vote, Sir John Bradbury opposing, that Germany was in voluntary default in coal deliveries, Poincaré, according to the secondary sources consulted in this study, used the decision as justification for the move into the Ruhr.[18]

Although many works imply that Poincaré would not have acted without the declaration, portions of his January 8 letter to Degoutte, as well as those to Barthou and

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[18]Etienne Weill-Raynal, Les réparations allemandes et la France, Vol. II: L'Application de l'état des paiements, l'occupation de la Ruhr et l'institution du Plan Dawes (mai 1921-avril 1924) (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1947), p. 368; Bonnefous, Histoire politique, III, 345; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 288-289.

Coste, reveal that France definitely intended to occupy the Ruhr whether or not the Reparation Commission signaled German default in coal deliveries. The President of the Council and Foreign Minister called Degoutte's attention to the proclamation to the Ruhr population, the notification to the German government, and one of the enclosures sent to Coste. For each of the three documents alternative opening paragraphs, marked A and B, were given. He directed that alternative B was to be used if the Reparation Commission the next day declared Germany in default on coal deliveries and alternative A if it failed to do so.[19] The Commission, as indicated, gave Poincaré the legal pretext he desired.

Wasting no time, France and Belgium on January 10 informed the German government of the action they planned to take. In the notification to Germany, France declared that because Germany had, as noted by the Reparation Commission, defaulted in coal and timber deliveries it was, in accordance with Paragraphs 17 and 18 of Annex II to Part VIII of the Versailles Treaty,[20] sending a control mission of engineers into the Ruhr to supervise the activities of the Kohlensyndikat. The notification asked that the German officials cooperate with the MICUM. France, it affirmed, had no intention of carrying out a military

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[19]Poincaré to Degoutte, January 8, 1923, cited above.

[20]See Appendix II.

operation or a political occupation and was sending only enough troops to guard the MICUM and guarantee fulfillment of its duties. The proclamation to the people of the Ruhr explained more fully the nature of the occupation. It stated that the French and Belgian governments planned to cause no change in the ordinary life of the residents, "who can continue to work in order and tranquility." The two occupying powers encouraged the German government to assist the MICUM and the troops sent to protect it and warned local authorities and workers that if they created difficulties for either MICUM officials or military personnel, coercive measures and sanctions would immediately result.[21]

On January 11, 1923, the MICUM, accompanied by two French infantry divisions, one cavalry division, and a Belgian detachment, moved into Essen. General Degoutte declared a state of siege, stated that German civil authorities were under the orders of French military officials, demanded that all German citizens in the newly occupied territory surrender their arms, and forbade the publication of anything designed to incite disorder and resistance to French and Belgian troops.[22]

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[21]Notification au gouvernement allemand, A.N., F30 582; Proclamation à la population de la Ruhr, January 11, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

[22]Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 270.

The British government had learned officially of the impending French move two days before the occupation began. Saint-Aulaire, French Ambassador to England, called at the Foreign Office and said that since the Reparation Commission had that day declared Germany in default on coal deliveries, France was going to act upon the rights given it in Paragraph 18 of Annex II to Part VIII of the Treaty. The French government interpreted the word "respective" in that paragraph to mean that it could act alone, for Austen Chamberlain had over two years ago in the House of Commons made a similar interpretation.[23] France, therefore, was sending engineers into the Ruhr, and it hoped that Britain would soon do likewise. Saint-Aulaire said in closing that French troops were to accompany the engineers only because the British government had refused to participate in the occupation.[24]

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[23]Saint-Aulaire was referring to the October 28, 1920, statement by Austen Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer. Chamberlain answered a question about the British government's decision not to exercise its rights under Paragraph 18 to seize the property of German nationals in Britain if Germany voluntarily defaulted in reparations payments. He stated: ". . . I would say that the words of the paragraph clearly leave it 'to the respective Governments' to determine what action may be necessary under the paragraph." See Great Britain, Parliament, House of Commons, Official Report, Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Vol. 133, col. 1922. Parliamentary debates will hereafter be cited as follows: Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons or House of Lords, volume number, and column.

[24]Memorandum by Ralph F. Wigram, Foreign Office Second Secretary, January 9, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 541/313/18.

The following day, January 10, Saint-Aulaire called on Sir Eyre Crowe, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to receive Prime Minister Bonar Law's response to his verbal communication of the previous evening. Through Crowe, Bonar Law informed the French Ambassador that the British government was unable to agree that only British abstention necessitated the sending of French and Belgian troops into the Ruhr, for at the recent London and Paris Conferences he had said that it would be necessary to send troops if any Allied officials, even British ones, entered the Ruhr. Crowe added that because the British government, as Bonar Law stated at the close of the Paris Conference, could in no way participate in or accept responsibility for measures enacted by France, it could send no engineers. In closing, he stated that the Prime Minister wished to avoid discussing technical questions pertaining to the legality of French action.[25]

From the beginning of the occupation, some key French diplomats tried to avoid irritating Britain as much as possible. In a telegram received by the Quai d'Orsay on January 10, Saint-Aulaire reported that the French military attaché had found the British War Office concerned about the reactions that French troop movements on the Rhine would produce on British public opinion. The Ambassador,

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[25]Note by Sir Eyre Crowe, January 10, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 601/313/18.

who felt that British public opinion shared this concern, suggested that France give more precise information about its plans and warned that if the British learned of French actions only through German sources they would be much more perturbed. At the beginning of the second week of the occupation, Poincaré urged Paul Tirard, President of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, to instruct all local French authorities to do everything possible to avoid incidents in the British occupation zone which might necessitate the intervention of British troops.[26]

In spite of these efforts to avoid friction with Britain, Poincaré in his January 11 Senate address criticized British post-war policy, devoting more of the speech to British shortcomings than to German misdeeds. In his first appearance before the Senate since the day after the close of the London Conference, he began by giving an account of the major diplomatic events since that time. First, he pointed out that at the London Conference France had not been alone in requiring pledges from Germany, for both Belgium and Italy had concurred. Thus it was England, not France, that had isolated itself on the question of productive pledges.

Discussing the French plan presented at the Paris Conference, Poincaré stated that he had tried to make it

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[26]Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 22-23 [January 9 or 10, 1923], A.N., AJ9 [Haute Commission interalliée du Rhénanie] 3918; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 43, January 19, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904.

acceptable to the British government by discarding "any appearance of military or political combination" and eliminating the re-establishment of a customs cordon surrounding the occupied territory.[27] He then outlined the French plan and said that it was a very moderate program which sought only modest guarantees to be exacted should the Allies grant Germany a moratorium. Despite the moderation of the French plan, the British had disagreed with France, Italy, and Belgium. Although he regretted this, Poincaré was not surprised because for several years and in numerous conferences France and Britain had discussed the reparations problem with very little success.

Poincaré next criticized the Bonar Law plan. He prefaced his remarks by saying that because the Treaty of Versailles was a "painfully obtained minimum" less favorable to French interests than desired, France would not let it be dismantled even though the British regarded the Treaty as "a theoretical maximum from which it would be desirable to retreat as much as possible."[28] Establishing the finance council and the arbitral committee proposed in the Bonar Law plan would, according to him, modify the Treaty, and France's interests would not be protected by

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[27]France, Journal officiel de la République française, Débats Parlementaires, Sénat, January 12, 1923, p. 30. Débats Parlementaires entries will hereafter be cited as follows: J.O., Sénat or Chambre, date, page.

[28]Ibid., p. 31.

those bodies. In addition, the plan proposed severely reducing France's credit. France could accept neither this nor the four-year moratorium to be granted to Germany, for during the moratorium period coercion could be applied only with the unanimous consent of the Allies, and experience in the Reparation Commission had shown that unanimity was difficult to attain.

Then he mentioned reasons why the French government had that day taken action. It did so because of the need to balance the budget and rebuild the ruins in ten departments and because of Germany's refusal to pay. The Reparation Commission had, by its January 9 declaration, given France the opportunity to collect from the Germans, who possessed sufficient wood and coal but had refused to make deliveries. Whether the subject was roads, nitrogen, or anything else, Germany had always delayed in complying with Treaty provisions. France had reached the end of its patience and had moved into the Ruhr to execute the Treaty of Versailles. He added that if England had participated in enforcing sanctions and requiring guarantees it would have been unnecessary to send soldiers into the Ruhr, for the Germans would not have considered resistance.[29] Finally, he discussed motives again: "We are going in search of coal and it is all there. . . ." France felt no intoxication with victory and was not trying to humiliate or crush

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[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

a defeated people. "She only demands respect for obligations undertaken and, above all, her security and reparations for her damages."[30] Thus the President of the Council had, on the opening day of the occupation, affirmed the French desire for both reparations and security.

On the same day, Poincaré, greeted by enthusiastic cheers, appeared before the Chamber of Deputies and presented another lengthy explanation and defense of his policies. When Léon Blum, a leader of the Socialist party, criticized the occupation, disorder ensued, causing the session to be suspended briefly. Poincaré then asked that all questions on foreign policy be postponed until the first Friday in February. In the scene which followed, the left and right hurled insults at each other, but when the vote occurred, the Chamber approved Poincaré's request by a 478 to 86 vote.[31]

As reflected in the press during the first two weeks of the year, French public opinion concerning the reparations issue and the alliance with Britain moved from crescendo to diminuendo and then back to crescendo. When the Bonar Law plan was published on January 3, bitter disappointment and anger filled French newspapers. Le Matin,

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[30] Ibid., p. 32.

[31] J.O., Chambre, January 12, 1923, pp. 14-26. The Senate had earlier that day, without a formal vote, agreed to postpone interpellation on foreign policy until after February 2. See J.O., Sénat, January 12, 1923, p. 32.

a non-partisan organ, said that the plan was the poorest offer Britain had ever made, and the semi-official Le Temps concluded a rather violent article by saying that the ties which bound Britain and France during the war had disappeared.[32] The note of intense anglophobia persisted for about two days and then began to wane at the close of the Paris Conference. Although Philippe Millet, writing for the popular Le Petit Parisien, blamed the Bonar Law plan for Anglo-French disagreement, he expressed disappointment at the failure to reach an agreement in Paris and, unlike his colleagues in most other papers, hoped that the rift between the two countries would not widen so much that it could not later be bridged. Le Temps, noting that the Anglo-French separation took place cordially, stated that France, Belgium, and Italy had to deal with the crisis as best as they could and that their task would be more difficult because the British attitude would encourage German resistance. In Le Journal des Débats, a newspaper of the right-center, Auguste Gauvain spoke sorrowfully of the basic disagreement among the Allies.[33]

Most Paris newspapers praised both the Franco-Belgian occupation of the Ruhr and Poincaré's January 11 speeches.

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[32]Le Matin, January 3, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, January 4, 1923, p. 1. See Appendix IV for a brief discussion of French newspapers surveyed in this study.

[33]Le Petit Parisien, January 5, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, January 6, 1923, p. 1; Le Journal des Débats, January 6, 1923, p. 1.

Typifying the general tone of relief that the government had acted were the opening words of an article in Le Petit Parisien: "It is done; we have turned the key and the door is wide open." While it lauded Millerand and Poincaré for personifying the will and policy of France, Le Temps warned that it would take time before financial results of the occupation were visible. L'Écho de Paris stated that Poincaré had defended French rights with authority and force, presented very clearly German bad faith and ill will, and justified the position of the French government in the recent conferences. On the other hand, L'Oeuvre and L'Ère Nouvelle, organs of the Bloc des Gauches, called attention to the part of the speech which stated that the Ruhr pledges might become productive slowly. L'Oeuvre said in an incisive article that while waiting to see the result of the Ruhr venture it could weigh the factors "for" and "against." The article listed more factors "against" than "for."[34]

When France informed Britain of its plans to send troops and engineers into the Ruhr, a critical phase in the history of the occupation began. As the troops advanced, the eyes of the diplomatic world focused upon London as much as upon the Ruhr itself, for Britain, the only nation capable of opposing France, held a crucial

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[34]Le Petit Parisien, January 12, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, January 12, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, January 12, 1923, p. 1; L'Oeuvre, January 13, 1923, p. 1.

position. What action would the British take in face of the French resort to force to execute the Treaty? Would they assist or try to make obstinate France withdraw?[35] Although the British government on January 10 shunned participation in French coercive measures, it stopped at that point and neither opposed the occupation nor took a firm stand against the French. For this it was criticized by those who felt that a strong British protest at the beginning of the occupation might have caused France to hesitate or withdraw. While the government was passive, a large segment of the British public attacked the French moves, and this encouraged Germany to resist, hoping for British aid and a breakup of the Entente.[36]

Since research in the British Foreign Office correspondence revealed no official British protest against French Ruhr activities during the early weeks of the occupation, one wonders why the British government failed to condemn action which many of its officials felt would be unsuccessful and detrimental to the peace and prosperity

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[35]Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe, pp. 133, 135. Erich Eyck said that had England collaborated with France, Poincaré would have been forced constantly to heed British wishes; see Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of the Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 232.

[36]Lichtenberger, Ruhr, p. 2; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 138; King, Ruhr, p. 9; Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 232.

of Europe. Although none of them provides an entirely satisfactory explanation, several reasons could be advanced for British behavior in the early stages of the occupation. First, Bonar Law had promised British neutrality and wanted to do nothing that would hinder the French government. Second, as Miles W. Lampson, Foreign Office Counsellor, told an official of the United States Embassy on January 9, Britain disagreed with France only over the method to be used to make Germany pay: it too was anxious to collect as much as possible and would be glad if events proved that it had misjudged the effectiveness of French methods.[37] Finally, the absence in Lausanne of Lord Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, accounted for part of Britain's inaction.

Not only did the British government refrain from condemning France: it also failed to respond to German protests against French and Belgian action. When Herr Sthamer, the German Ambassador, on January 11 officially protested and declared Franco-Belgian action illegal, both Crowe and Lampson concluded that no answer was required. Later in the month Sthamer protested special ordinances of the Rhineland Commission concerning coal distribution and

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[37]Weill-Raynal, Réparations, II, 371; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 148, February 14, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3918; Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), January 8, 1923, FO 371/8768, C 593/593/18; Minute by Lampson, January 9, 1923, FO 371/8627, C 545/1/18. See Appendix III for a partial list of diplomatic, political, and military personnel to whom reference is made in this study.

the seizure of customs, and Lampson, Curzon, and Bonar Law decided that no reply should be made. The same thing happened again when the German government condemned the expulsion of thirty-eight German officials and their families, and as late as March the British government continued to turn a deaf ear to numerous German complaints.[38]

Instead of responding positively to German protests by officially condemning France, Britain in the earliest stages of the occupation assisted it in the crucial matter of transportation. The British zone of occupation in the Rhineland lay between France and the Ruhr, and the major railroad connections between the French zone and Dusseldorf passed through it. On January 7, General Degoutte informed Colonel Fuller, at General Headquarters, British Rhine Army, that he had received orders from the French government to begin a preliminary concentration of troops. To do this, he would need to utilize the railroads in the British zone in order to send sixty-six troop trains to Dusseldorf, and he requested Fuller to insure their safe transit.

British Foreign Office officials considered the French request the following day. Although some of them felt that it entailed a legal breach of the Rhineland

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[38]Minutes on communications from Sthamer to FO, January 11, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 655/313/18; January 23, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1407/313/18; January 26, 1923, FO 371/8707, C 1693/313/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 212, March 2, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3897.

Agreement, they recalled that in March, 1921, troops had been moved through the Rhineland in the occupation of Dusseldorf. Lampson concluded that since Bonar Law had promised continued friendship and since the Rhine Army had made no objections, it would be both unwise and useless to attempt to prohibit French movement through the British zone. Sir Eyre Crowe agreed with him that the British forces should follow a "friendly but passive attitude throughout" and request instructions concerning cases in which they were in doubt. On January 9, Tirard telegraphed Poincaré that Lord Kilmarnock, British High Commissioner of the Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, had informed him that British military authorities in Cologne had agreed to protect the railways in order to assure passage of French troops.[39]

At this point, the attitude of Lord Kilmarnock should be considered, for during the occupation he was the most important British official in the occupied Rhineland. Along with many other British residents in the Rhineland, Kilmarnock sympathized with France and believed that the French could not afford to be defeated in their Ruhr venture.[40] Even though Britain failed to approve the

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[39]General Headquarters, Rhine Army, to War Office, January 7, 1923, and Minutes on this telegram, FO 371/8703, C 680/313/18; Tirard to Poincaré, No. 2, January 9, 1923, A.N., AJ9 4312.

[40]Other British personnel in the Rhineland, including General Alex J. Godley, General Officer in Command of

occupation it could not let France be defeated, he said, for if the Germans won "the last shot of the allies would have been fired and would have failed of its effect. No other really effective means of pressure would remain and Germany would be in a position practically to defy further execution of the Treaty of Versailles." In mid-February, Kilmarnock declared that British policy until that time had worked more to German than French advantage.[41] The attitude of its officials on the Rhine undoubtedly played a role in the British government's failure to protest Franco-Belgian action.

Even before French and Belgian troops marched into the Ruhr, Kilmarnock sensed himself about to be plunged into the maelstrom of diplomatic activity. In a January 10 telegram, marked "Urgent," he reported that impending French moves were already raising delicate questions upon which the Rhineland High Commission would be asked to make decisions. He requested instructions about the line of action he should take and asked if he "should assent to measures of a minor

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the British Army of the Rhine, sought to facilitate the French task as much as possible without disobeying their own instructions; see Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 92, January 27, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3918; Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), p. 651; Paul Tirard, La France sur le Rhin. Douze années d'occupation rhénane (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930), p. 396; B. T. Reynolds, Prelude to Hitler (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p. 66.

[41]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 15, January 23, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1300/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 55, February 10, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2581/313/18.

character calculated to facilitate French operations. . . ." Since Foreign Office personnel had as early as January 8 discussed the impact French action could have on British participation in both the Rhineland High Commission and the Reparation Commission, they were able to respond quickly. First, they reminded Kilmarnock that because Bonar Law had recently assured France of continued friendship, the British government wanted to minimize the ill effects of French action upon Anglo-French relations. He was, therefore, to continue attending High Commission meetings. Should the Commission have to deal with any questions growing out of French independent action, he must refuse to take part in those decisions and declare that neither he nor his government associated themselves with them.[42]

The British press in the first two weeks of January failed, for the most part, to follow Foreign Office policy of abstaining from overt criticism of French action. Predictably, the Conservative Daily Telegraph and the semi-official and moderately-Conservative The Times were, though disturbed about French attitudes and moves, guarded in their criticism. The Liberal Manchester Guardian and Labour's Daily Herald attacked France. Unlike the other papers, the Daily Mail, which claimed to have the world's largest net daily sale, took a strongly pro-French and anti-German stand.

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[42]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 3, January 10, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 566/313/18; Curzon to Kilmarnock, No. 35, January 11, 1923, FO 371/8768, C 593/593/18.

After the breakdown of the Paris Conference, most of these papers reflected a sense of uncertainty about impending French moves and their impact upon Anglo-French relations. The Times praised the Bonar Law plan, expressed concern about the risks France was taking upon itself, and said that French independent action would deal the Versailles Treaty a heavy blow. It refused to say that the Entente Cordiale had been broken even though Britain and France were following separate lines of action. The Daily Telegraph felt that good could result from getting down to the fundamentals in the reparations controversy.[43] When, however, French forces moved into the Ruhr, opinion diverged. France, declared the Manchester Guardian, was trying to detach the Rhineland from Germany, and British forces must stay in Cologne to prevent it. On January 10, The Times stated that although the French plan to exert pressure on the important German industrialists would fail, Britain could only stand aside and wait. Five days later it labeled French action "a sheer disaster," but nevertheless reminded its readers of the disappointments France had suffered since 1919. While the Daily Herald and Labour leaders in England, France, and Belgium were condemning the French march into the Ruhr, the Daily Mail entitled its January 11 leading article "God-Speed to France!" The article

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[43]The Times (London), January 5, 1923, p. 12; January 8, 1923, p. 11; Daily Telegraph, January 5, 1923, p. 8.

said that France was pursuing the correct course and that "for the first time Germany will have to think seriously about paying up."[44] Thus press opinion in Britain was as divided and uncertain as the government itself.

Before returning to an account of the diplomacy of the Ruhr, it would be helpful to take a glimpse at those British and French figures who were most directly responsible for foreign policy during the early weeks of the occupation. When 1923 opened, Lord Curzon was in Lausanne, and Prime Minister Bonar Law had to deal with the reparations crisis. Although he grasped economic problems and had been interested in the reparations question as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Bonar Law had never been seriously interested in foreign affairs and had played an important part in none of the major reparations conferences. Nevertheless, it was he who had to face Poincaré in the Paris Conference, and Curzon quickly began to criticize his handling of the Conference. That Curzon was critical of Bonar Law should be no surprise,

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[44] Manchester Guardian, January 11, 1923, p. 6; The Times (London), January 10, 1923, p. 11; January 15, 1923, p. 11; Daily Herald, January 15, 1923, p. 3; Daily Mail, January 11, 1923, p. 6. Beginning January 9, the Daily Mail in every issue printed letters to the editor applauding his stand on the Franco-German situation. Most of these letter writers sympathized with France, believed that a club must be used to make Germany pay, and felt that the editor was standing almost alone in upholding the French position. On January 9 there were about five letters, and by January 13 the number had increased to approximately twenty.

for he held a low opinion of many of his associates. That he should condemn his chief's handling of a reparations conference is somewhat amazing, for he did not understand economics, was bewildered by the reparations problem, and knew little about Continental politics.[45]

Curzon, one of the most intelligent and industrious men to direct British foreign policy in the twentieth century, had hoped to revive the prestige of the Foreign Office, which had declined under Lloyd George. Instead, it plummeted while he was in control, and for this he was partially responsible. Because the Foreign Secretary tried to do all the work himself and cared little for his Foreign Office colleagues, whom he frequently insulted, both they and foreign diplomats had difficulty in working with him.[46]

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[45]Robert Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister. The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), pp. 482-483, 489; Nicolson, Curzon, p. 58; Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Curzon (3 vols.; London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1928), III, 345.

[46]Nicolson, Curzon, p. 5; Gordon A. Craig, "The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain," in The Diplomats, 1919-1939, Vol. I: The Twenties, ed. by Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (New York: Atheneum, 1967), pp. 26, 28, 32-33; Saint-Aulaire, Confession, pp. 547-548; Leonard O. Mosley, Curzon. The End of an Epoch (London: Longmans, 1960), p. 195. George M. Young said that Curzon was "impetuous, passionate and self-important," and A. J. P. Taylor called him "one of nature's rats"; see Young, Stanley Baldwin (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), p. 61; Taylor, English History, 1914-1945, Vol. XV of The Oxford History of England, ed. by Sir George Clark (15 vols.; London: Oxford University Press, 1934-1965), p. 204. Mosley, by pointing to Curzon's severe illness in 1923 and to his numerous domestic problems with his daughters and second wife, also sheds light on his behavior; see Curzon, pp. 198-200.

In addition, his relationship with the Cabinet was often stormy, for he considered his "office as a thing apart, rarely to be submitted to Cabinet debate and even less frequently to Cabinet dictation."[47] The proud Curzon, unfortunately, also had difficult relations with the French. Harold Nicolson indicated that the Foreign Secretary considered French demands with a spirit of "irritated personal competitiveness," and Lord Crewe's biographer talked of Curzon's amazing capacity for hatred, which was directed toward loathing Poincaré. Saint-Aulaire reported that during the critical first phase of the occupation his task was easy, thanks to the loyalty of Bonar Law, whom he saw almost daily, and the absence of Curzon at Lausanne.[48]

Assisting Curzon were three able men: Sir Eyre Crowe, Sir William Tyrrell, and Lord Crewe. Crowe, who had worked at the Foreign Office since 1885 and was currently Permanent Under-Secretary, rendered distinguished service. Both he and Assistant Under-Secretary Tyrrell, who had been Lord Grey's Private Secretary, were skilled,

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[47]Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 178.

[48]See Nicolson, Curzon, p. 195; James Pope-Hennessy, Lord Crewe: 1858-1945: The Likeness of a Liberal (London: Constable & Co., Ltd., 1955), p. 164; Saint-Aulaire, Confession, p. 652. Curzon wrote to Crewe: "I do not think that in public life I have ever known a man of Poincaré's position whose mind and nature were so essentially insular or whose temper was under such imperfect control"; see Curzon to Crewe, February 20, 1923, FO 800/154.

perceptive, and courageous diplomats respected by all their associates. Lord Crewe had been Ambassador to France only since December, 1922, and his selection was unusual in that Curzon, a Conservative, asked the Opposition's official leader in the House of Lords to take the Paris post. Curzon took this unorthodox step, he said, because he considered Paris the pivot of British Continental diplomacy and wanted the Embassy headed by a man of great authority and influence who loved France, knew it well, and would please the French official world.[49]

Curzon and Poincaré, though they detested each other, had some things in common. The French Foreign Minister and President of the Council, like Curzon, wanted little parliamentary interference with foreign policy direction, preferred strong executive leadership, and wanted the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate to leave the initiative to him. His power was virtually unchecked, for parliament could criticize, but not construct. He, too, worked unbelievably long hours, but unlike Curzon he dealt closely with the Ruhr situation throughout the occupation, seldom taking a vacation, staying in telephone contact with the Quai d'Orsay, and working on speeches and dispatches on the train when forced to be away.

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[49]Craig, "British Foreign Office," pp. 26-27; Pope-Hennessy, Crewe, pp. 156, 160.

Poincaré's temperament led him to do most of his work alone, and he had few collaborators. He depended most upon Peretti de la Rocca, Director of Political and Commercial Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay since October, 1920. The Political Director--who saw Poincaré at least twice a day, traveled with him and conducted many interviews for him--reported that his relations with other diplomatic personnel were business-like and firm, but cordial. The French Ambassador to England, the Comte de Saint-Aulaire, had been serving in that capacity since November, 1920. Although Saint-Aulaire was in close personal touch with Poincaré, Curzon told Crewe that the Ambassador did not have his chief's confidence.[50]

When French and Belgian troops and engineers occupied the Essen district on January 11, 1923, the German government faced a dilemma: should it submit to the occupation and make new reparations proposals, or should it resist Franco-Belgian efforts? Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno quickly labeled French action illegal, withdrew the German Ambassador from Paris and Minister from Brussels, and

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[50]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 280, 286; Miquel, Poincaré, p. 467; Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 29; Peretti de la Rocca, "Briand et Poincaré: Souvenirs," La Revue de Paris, 43rd Year, No. 6 (1936), 776-778; Pope-Hennessy, Crewe, p. 164. The article by Peretti de la Rocca gives excellent insight into the temperament and habits of Poincaré but fails to discuss the Ruhr occupation.

ordered a program of passive resistance. Cuno chose passive resistance for several reasons. First, Germany was incapable of successful armed resistance. Second, he believed that without the cooperation of the Ruhr populace the invaders would be unable to operate mines, railroads, and factories, and this would make the occupation so expensive that the French Treasury would face bankruptcy, thus demoralizing French taxpayers. Then the occupation would become a fiasco, and the French would withdraw with a tremendous debt and diminished diplomatic prestige. Finally, British press reaction since the Paris Conference and the activities of Lord D'Abernon in Berlin encouraged the Germans to resist and to hope for British intervention.[51]

Having chosen their course, the German government and Ruhr population pursued it relentlessly. On January 10 the Kohlensyndikat, nerve-center of the coal industry, moved from Essen to Hamburg, taking all its records. The government ordered the cessation of all reparations payments in cash and kind to France and Belgium, forbade the payment of duties and coal taxes that might be collected by them, prohibited the delivery of all commodities to the

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[51]Halperin, Germany, p. 248; Schmidt, Versailles and Ruhr, pp. 289-290; Benns, European History, p. 545; Favez, Le Reich, p. 116; Pierre-Etienne Flandin, Politique française, 1919-1940 (Paris: Les Éditions Nouvelles, 1947), pp. 35-36; Tirard, La France sur le Rhin, p. 344.

invaders, and decreed that any German who assisted them would be penalized. The population responded well. Miners and factory workers, along with telegraph, postal, and railroad personnel refused to perform services that might assist the French and Belgians, and those who became unemployed through strikes received financial aid from the government.[52] Economic paralysis gripped the former hub of European industry.

German resistance provoked more energetic measures from the occupying powers, who had planned an "invisible," non-military occupation. Because Germany stopped coal deliveries, France and Belgium on January 15 extended the occupation from Essen to Bochum and Dortmund. When Germany, on January 13, informed the Reparation Commission that it had stopped all reparations deliveries to France and Belgium, the Commission on January 26, Sir John Bradbury abstaining, declared Germany in general default in its reparations obligations. France acted upon this declaration and on February 1 prohibited the transport of coal from occupied to unoccupied Germany.[53] French and

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[52]Un An d'occupation: l'oeuvre franco-belge dans la Ruhr en 1923 (Dusseldorf: Imprimerie de l'armée du Rhin, 1924), pp. 14-15; Halperin, Germany, pp. 248-249; Toynbee, Survey, p. 273; Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 105.

[53]Toynbee, Survey, p. 274; P.-E. Nayral de Bourgon, Dix ans de souvenirs (1914-1924), Part 8: Les fruits de la victoire. La Ruhr (Nîmes: Imprimerie Chastanier frères et Almeras, 1933), p. 107; Sir John Bradbury to Treasury,

Belgian officials met on February 10, decided to intensify the occupation, and prohibited German ministers from entering occupied territory. The Rhineland High Commission on February 12 dismissed German customs officials in occupied territory (the British zone excepted) for refusing to work under the Allies, and it adopted Ordinance No. 143 prohibiting export of manufactured goods from occupied territory into the rest of Germany and erecting a tariff wall between the two sections. Two weeks later it took control of the strips of territory between the Mainz-Coblenz-Cologne bridgeheads, which French troops had occupied on February 25 in order to simplify customs control and prevent Nationalist demonstrations.[54] The Rhineland and Ruhr were, in effect, separated from the rest of the Reich.

A struggle between occupying forces and inhabitants engulfed the Ruhr valley. German bureaucrats who refused to collect taxes and work for French and Belgian authorities were dismissed, and mass arrests and frequent clashes between troops and the Ruhr populace occurred. At times the French forbade the local German police to wear uniforms and arm themselves, and they imposed large fines and jail

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January 27, 1923, FO 371/8628, C 1795/1/18; French Government to German Embassy, Paris, February 1, 1923, FO 371/8709, C 1693/313/18.

[54]Crewe to FO, No. 170, February 11, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2595/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 59, February 12, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2708/313/18; No. 60, February 12, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2723/313/18; No. 86, February 26, 1923, FO 371/8716, C 3587/313/18.

sentences, seized private property, and censored the German press. During 1923 the invaders killed 76 Germans, wounded 92, and expelled approximately 147,000 from the occupied area.[55]

Although in the crucial first weeks of Franco-German combat the British government could have urged France to abandon the struggle, it did almost the opposite. Besides allowing France to transport troops through its zone on the eve of the occupation, avowedly neutral Britain assisted in additional ways during the first month of the occupation. The first of these was customs collection. After the Reparation Commission on January 16 declared Germany in default on coal and livestock deliveries, Poincaré told Saint-Aulaire to notify the British government that France was seizing the customs in occupied territory and requesting permission to collect them in the British zone. He pointed out that in the 1921 occupation the Americans had allowed the Allies to do this in their zone. When Saint-Aulaire presented the request to Bonar Law on January 17, the Prime Minister said that the British government would grant the request if Lord Kilmarnock took no part in the High

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[55]Halperin, Germany, pp. 249-250; Benns, European History, p. 546. Simonds wrote that because Poincaré had failed to anticipate active German resistance, he had not sufficiently planned the military operation, and this caused French blundering. The killing took place because of the poorly-planned operation, not "according to plan," as the outside world believed; see Europe Made Peace, p. 248.

Commission decisions putting it into effect and if no British troops were used to enforce the measures or quell incidents arising from their enforcement. He urged France to avoid any disturbance which would involve British troops.[56]

The German government's order for the cessation of reparations deliveries to France and Belgium caused the emergence of new difficulties and brought about another British concession to France. Kilmarnock pointed out on January 19 that the Rhineland Agreement stated that no German law or regulation became effective in the occupied Rhineland until it had been approved by the High Commission. Since the recent German measures had not been approved by the Commission and could technically be considered illegal, he asked what he should do if the High Commission were asked to make a ruling.[57] The Foreign Office

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[56]Poincaré to Tirard, No. 322, January 17, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904; Saint-Aulaire to Curzon, January 17, 1923, FO 371/8704, C 988/313/18; Note by Lampson, January 17, 1923, FO 371/8704, C 988/313/18; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 43, January 19, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904. Saint-Aulaire, Confession, p. 652, pointed out that Bonar Law did this without consulting the Cabinet. The Foreign Office telegram notifying Kilmarnock of the decision stated: "Our object is to avoid friction with the French whilst at the same time keeping aloof from the application of and responsibility for a line of policy which His Majesty's Government disapprove"; see FO to Kilmarnock, No. 5, January 16, 1923, FO 371/8704, C 988/313/18.

[57]Kilmarnock to War Office, January 19, 1923, FO 371/8705, C 1167/313/18. In his Minute on Kilmarnock's dispatch, Lampson made a clear statement of the difficulty of the situation: "The Germans have behaved with their

instructed him to abstain from voting should the question arise. If the Commission were to penalize a German for obeying the new measures, he could not arrest him, but he should not prevent Allied authorities from enforcing the decision in the British zone so long as no British troops or officials were involved. Soon after this, German officials at Cologne refused to obey French orders to continue coal deliveries, and when the French on January 21 ordered the arrest of a German revenue official, von Haeling, the British allowed him to be arrested in their zone.[58] Once more the British had aided the French and Belgians in their endeavor.

In its relations with German officials during the first month of the occupation the British government also rendered indirect assistance to the French. As early as January 17, Counsellor Lampson strongly advised Ambassador Sthamer against continuing resistance, and a week later the Foreign Office told Lord D'Abernon to warn the German

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normal stupidity: but it does not appear desirable to tell them so, for we might then be faced with argumentation as to who was the prime offender--they or the French. The problem now before us arises out of a deliberate and avowed breach of the treaty by Germany who claims justification for her act on the ground that France by invading the Ruhr has broken the treaty."

[58] FO to Kilmarnock, No. 6, January 22, 1923, FO 371/8705, C 1167/313/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 70, January 22, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3918. General Officer Commanding Rhine Army to War Office, January 21, 1923, FO 371/8705, C 1213/313/18; Tirard, La France sur le Rhin, pp. 398-399.

government to avoid incidents in the British zone, especially interference with customs collection. After the visit of Chancellor Cuno to the Ruhr caused a furor in Paris, D'Abernon, in accordance with Kilmarnock's recommendations, suggested to the German government that no minister visit Cologne.[59]

After having assisted the French at the beginning of the occupation, however, the British government in late January and early February became less cooperative. Following the arrest of von Haeling, tension mounted, and on January 22 the Foreign Office told Crewe to impress upon Poincaré the necessity of avoiding any incidents in the British zone, to suggest that France either drop or postpone all sanctions except customs, and to warn that public opinion in England was rising against the policy of benevolent neutrality. Two days later Kilmarnock was instructed to allow the French to make arrests in the British zone only after previous consultation with the British government.[60] In response, Poincaré told Crewe on January 23 that although he realized the necessity of avoiding

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[59]Note by Lampson, January 17, 1923, FO 371/8704, C 989/313/18; FO to D'Abernon, No. 19, January 24, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1301/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 56, February 10, 1923, and FO to D'Abernon, No. 34, February 13, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2582/313/18.

[60]FO to Crewe, No. 34, January 22, 1923, and FO to Kilmarnock, No. 12, January 24, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1300/313/18; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 71, January 24, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904.

disturbances he must emphasize that France was determined to carry out its policy, whatever the cost, in order to prevent Germany from destroying the Treaty of Versailles. Nevertheless, after Saint-Aulaire had urged him to facilitate the task of the British in their zone in order to calm apprehensions of the friends of France in the British Cabinet, Poincaré instructed Tirard to avoid incidents. The President of the Rhineland High Commission immediately assured Kilmarnock that French action would be reduced to the lowest level necessary to maintain order and execute the ordinances of the High Commission, and he asked British officials in Cologne not to allow German authorities to make Cologne a center of resistance. Within a few days Kilmarnock reported that the French were indeed doing everything possible to avoid friction.[61]

In another attempt to make France prevent difficulties, the British government threatened to withdraw its troops from the Rhineland, a course advocated by some diplomats and part of the press. It instructed Crewe and Kilmarnock to warn the French government and local Rhineland authorities that incidents and arrests

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[61]Crewe to FO, No. 89, January 23, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1410/313/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 91 and No. 92, January 27, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3918; Tirard to Poincaré, No. 48, January 27, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3897; Poincaré to Crewe, January 31, 1923, FO 371/8709, C 2039/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 36, January 31, 1923, FO 371/8709, C 2126/313/18.

in the Cologne zone would cause public opinion to insist upon withdrawal.[62] Even after the Cabinet agreed on January 26 to maintain the troops in the Rhineland as long as possible, Foreign Office personnel continued to consider withdrawing them in order to extricate Britain from an embarrassing situation. A lengthy Foreign Office Minute of February 8 concluded that withdrawal would have adverse effects upon relations with France; therefore, because "the basis of British policy is friendship with France . . . anything tending to disturb that friendship is to be avoided." Furthermore, since the presence of British troops pleased France, Belgium, and Germany and guaranteed Britain a share of any payments to be made by Germany, withdrawal would occur only if absolutely necessary.[63]

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[62]FO to Crewe, No. 34, January 22, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1300/313/18; FO to Kilmarnock, No. 14, January 24, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1301/313/18. British diplomats had divergent opinions concerning the advisability of withdrawing British troops from the Rhineland. Lord D'Abernon advised withdrawal in order to increase the government's liberty of action and improve its prospects of serving as mediator between France and Germany; D'Abernon to FO, No. 52, January 24, 1923, FO 371/8705, C 1567/313/18. Kilmarnock recommended retention of the troops for several reasons. First, France would regard British withdrawal as pro-German. Withdrawal would also affect British prestige, destroy hope of getting reparations from Germany, and remove any check on French action; Foreign Office Minute, January 25, 1923, FO 371/8708, C 1745/313/18. Lord Crewe stated that the majority of the French government would oppose withdrawal and that if troops were removed the French press would mount a massive attack on England and blame it if the expedition failed; Crewe to FO, No. 106, January 27, 1923, FO 371/8708, C 1709/313/18.

[63]Great Britain, Cabinet, Cabinet Papers, Cab 23/45, 3(23)6(b); the last set of numbers denotes Conclusion 6(b)

Although the British government had left the French relatively free to do as they pleased during most of January, it grew concerned when its economic interests were affected by the occupation. A prolonged and voluminous correspondence concerning the impact of French and Belgian measures upon British trade and industry in the Rhineland began with a February 3 letter from the British Chamber of Commerce in Cologne. The Chamber reported that British merchants were experiencing great obstacles to normal commerce because both the Rhineland High Commission and the German government had passed ordinances establishing import and export regulations and taxes, and in some cases they were being taxed twice.[64] After receipt of the Chamber of Commerce letter, questions arose continuously, and the British government, often uncertain about how to proceed, turned frequently to Lord Kilmarnock for advice. He reported on February 19 that special Allied committees studying complaints about the effect of new measures upon British

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of the third Cabinet meeting of 1923. Cabinet Conclusions will hereafter be cited as follows: Cab 23/45 or 46, meeting number (year) Conclusion number. Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), February 8, 1923, FO 371/8710, C 2258/313/18. Three telegrams dispatched in late February reveal that France realized that the British government continued to discuss troop removal and acted cautiously to prevent it; see Poincaré to Tirard, No. 190-191 and No. 193-195, February 20, 1923, A.N., AJ^{9} 3904; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 203; February 22, 1923, A.N., AJ^{9} 3324.

[64]British Chamber of Commerce, Cologne, Germany, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, February 3, 1923, FO 371/8711, C 2411/313/18.

trade wanted to prevent injury to British businessmen and would make special arrangements wherever possible to aid them. Nevertheless, the situation grew worse, and on February 23 Lampson telegraphed Kilmarnock that because the Foreign Office had received so many protests from British firms he should send his best economic adviser to London for consultation. Beginning in late February, however, Kilmarnock was for a time able to settle some of the most difficult commercial problems,[65] and the British government continued to refrain from protesting the occupation.

The British government also displayed passivity and uncertainty in its failure to question officially the legality of the Ruhr occupation.[66] On several occasions during January and February, Foreign Office officials, faced with the issue of the legality of French action,

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[65]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 74, February 19, 1923, FO 371/8714, C 3155/313/18; Lampson to Kilmarnock, No. 46, February 23, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3384/313/18. In a Minute on D'Abernon to FO, No. 101, February 27, 1923, reporting that the situation of British traders in the Ruhr and Cologne was intolerable, J. C. Sterndale Bennett, Foreign Office Third Secretary, wrote: "Each case of hardship for British subjects which has arisen has been forwarded to Lord Kilmarnock and is being submitted to the French authorities who have so far shown every disposition to give such cases favourable consideration"; see FO 371/8717, C 3658/313/18.

[66]Several writers noted the British failure to raise the question of legality. See Favez, Le Reich, p. 115; Weill-Raynal, Réparations, II, 369-370. Maximilian Harden stated that even the threat of having the disputed paragraphs discussed officially in the Reparation Commission would have caused the French to hesitate; see Germany, p. 142.

hedged and refused to condemn France openly. Although on December 28, 1922, Solicitor-General T. W. H. Inskip had written an opinion on Paragraph 18 of Annex II to Part VIII of the Versailles Treaty which was unfavorable to the French, the British government refused to publicize the opinion. Even before French troops entered the Ruhr, Sir Eyre Crowe, discussing impending French action, made a statement that was to be repeated several times later: "There is no doubt that Germany has not carried out the treaty in several most important respects. There is no question I think of France violating the treaty. What she is doing is action taken outside the treaty (in our view)."[67] This position was stated quite clearly in a Central Department Memorandum:

> His Majesty's Government have never considered that the action taken by the French and Belgian Governments, either in the Ruhr or in the Rhineland, could properly be taken under paragraph 18. . . . On the other hand,

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[67]Opinion by the Solicitor-General in FO 371/8768, C 593/593/18; Minute by Crowe, January 10, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 540/313/18. Alexander Cadogan, Foreign Office First Secretary, reiterated this idea on January 25 when the German Ambassador protested Rhineland High Commission ordinances concerning coal distribution and seizure of customs. He stated: "The answer [to the German protest] no doubt would be that the French and Belgians are taking action 'outside' the Treaty. If one party to a Treaty breaks the Treaty (as the Germans have done) they cannot argue that measures of coercion may not be applied which are not exactly specified in the Treaty itself." See Minute by Cadogan, January 25, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1407/313/18. In mid-February, Lampson once more said that the French were "acting outside the treaty," which was "quite different to breaking it"; see Minute by Lampson, February 14, 1923, FO 371/8713, C 2932/313/18.

> His Majesty's Government have never considered that the French and Belgian action was, because it was not covered by the treaty, contrary to the treaty. Like the sanctions imposed on Germany in March 1921, the January 1923 sanctions can presumably be considered to have been imposed to enforce compliance by Germany with the treaty.[68]

Even in its encounters with diplomats and members of Parliament the British government frequently evaded the legality issue. As will be recalled, Crowe told Saint-Aulaire on the eve of the occupation that Bonar Law wanted to avoid reopening discussion of the interpretation of Paragraph 18. When Sthamer came to the Foreign Office on January 22 and began to question the legal basis for French action, Lampson refused to discuss the matter. When the German Ambassador returned a week later and asked if it were true that the Law Officers had labeled French action a breach of the Treaty, Lampson denied the truth of the allegation, refused to discuss the question of legality, and stated that French action was justified by international law, which allowed powers to use force in order to make other powers fulfill their treaty obligations.[69] The Foreign Office also warned Lord D'Abernon and Sir Charles Marling, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Hague, not to let

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[68]Memorandum on the German Protest against certain Ordinances of the Rhineland Commission, January 25, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1407/313/18.

[69]Note by Crowe, January 10, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 601/313/18; Note by Lampson, January 22, 1923, FO 371/8705, C 1257/313/18; Minute by Lampson, January 29, 1923, FO 371/8708, C 1818/313/18.

themselves become involved in any discussion concerning the legality of French action. Faced with a Parliamentary Question by Noel Buxton, who asked whether the Law Officers had ruled if French action were contrary to the Treaty, it cleverly dodged the issue.[70]

Since a British attack on the purported legal basis of the Franco-Belgian occupation might have caused France to withdraw, one wonders why the Foreign Office remained silent. Minutes written during the first week of the occupation by Lampson and Ralph F. Wigram, Foreign Office Second Secretary, shed some light on the reasons for British evasion of the question of legality. The day after Saint-Aulaire announced that France was moving into the Ruhr, Lampson wrote that he had always believed that Austen Chamberlain's October 28, 1920, House of Commons statement on the interpretation of Paragraph 18 had weakened the British case against independent French action in actual practice, if not in law. Fearing that the British viewpoint was "one of such nice legal distinction that it would not carry general conviction," he was extremely reluctant to argue about whether France's independent action fell

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[70]FO to D'Abernon, No. 113, FO 371/8705, C 1568/313/18; FO to Marling, March [no day of month given], 1923, FO 371/8717, C 3679/313/18; Parliamentary Question in FO 371/8713, C 2932/313/18. In a February 14 Minute on the Parliamentary Question, Lampson wrote: "The specific point 'Whether France has broken the Treaty,' has never been referred to the L.O. [Law Officers] and I trust it never may have to be."

within its rights under or outside the Treaty. Two days later Wigram, considering the January 11 German protest against the Ruhr occupation, mentioned another factor. He noted that if Sthamer said anything orally about the protest, he could be told that whether the French or German interpretation of Paragraph 18 was the correct one, there was no doubt that Germany had defaulted in timber and coal deliveries and had only itself to blame if these defaults and the "flagrant and steady bad faith" shown in executing the Treaty had led to reprisals.[71]

The tone of a portion of Parliamentary and press reaction also helps explain the failure of the British government to oppose Franco-Belgian moves and declare them illegal. At the opening of the new session of Parliament on February 13, the King expressed regret that the Allied governments had been unable to reach a general agreement at the London and Paris Conferences. He stated that Belgium and France had put their plans into operation and that the British government, "while feeling unable either to concur or participate in this operation, are acting in such a way as not to add to the difficulties of their Allies."[72] Both

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[71]Minute by Lampson, January 10, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 541/313/18; Minute by Wigram, January 12, 1923, FO 371/8702, C 655/313/18. Wickham Steed stated that early in the year Curzon, along with Bonar Law, did not believe that the French occupation was illegal; see The Real Stanley Baldwin (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 59.

[72]Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 160, cols. 5-6.

Samuel Roberts and Collingwood Hughes, Unionist members who moved and seconded the Address, indicated that even though they could not quite approve the occupation, they sympathized with France and desired that previously-strained relations between the two countries could be improved so that they could work closely together. Although Herbert Asquith of the Liberal Party approved British refusal to participate in the Ruhr venture, he stated that on the grounds of French security the occupation was justified and reminded the House of the unratified tripartite pact between France, America, and Britain.[73]

The Prime Minister's speech began with a discussion of the London and Paris Conferences and an attempt to justify the British proposals. He pointed out that when it became clear at the Paris Conference that France was going to try its plan, there was really nothing the British government could do, for it did not want to end the Entente: to the contrary, he had come to office hoping to work with France in reconstructing Europe. The occupation, as he predicted in January, had become economically disastrous, for France had cut the juglar vein of German industry and had done more harm to Germany than to itself. The future was gloomy, and he did not know what Britain was going to do beyond retaining its troops on the Rhine as long as

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[73] Ibid., cols. 8-34.

possible. An appeal to the League of Nations as suggested by Ramsay MacDonald would be useless since France would have nothing to do with it. He closed with a reaffirmation of the necessity of maintaining the Entente and an expression of hope that in the future something would occur to enable Britain to intervene usefully.[74]

In the debate which followed Bonar Law's speech, five members spoke in support of France, and only two Labourites condemned it bitterly. J. R. Remer, Unionist, stating that previous British policy had encouraged Germany to escape payment, called for Britain to assist France in the endeavor to make Germany pay and declared that France should have acted three years earlier. That France should be criticized in England for occupying the Ruhr was surprising to another Unionist member, Sir William Davison, who pointed out that in May, 1921, British officials had supported similar action and warned that Germany was trying to play the Allies against each other. Toward the end of the debate, Henry Maddocks, also Unionist, expressed sentiments still held by many British people: because of the war dead that France and Britain had lost in the common struggle, Britain should support France rather than the country that had caused all the devastation and bloodshed.

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[74] Ibid., cols. 39-45. Monsieur de Margerie, French Ambassador to Berlin, reported that Bonar Law's speech caused some German hope of English intervention; see Margerie to Poincaré, No. 405, February 14, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3916.

Earlier in the debate, however, Charles Buxton and Thomas Shaw severely criticized French action and current British policy. Buxton, who had just returned from the Ruhr, described the state of affairs there as miserable and warned that the occupation would cause the social and political disintegration of Germany and perhaps the industrial predominance of France. He condemned British policy for at times being weak and humble and at other times assisting France by allowing the passage of troops through the British zone and permitting the arrest of German officials, and he asked if this policy was truly one of neutrality. Shaw declared that France was militaristic and anxious to dismember and ruin Germany.[75] Nevertheless, even as late as mid-February the pro-French members of Parliament had been more vocal than the anti-French element, and this hardly encouraged the Foreign Office to adopt a policy of resistance to France.

Although some British newspapers consistently attacked both French and English policy during late January and February, not even in the British press did the government receive a clear-cut mandate for forceful measures against France. Throughout the six-week period, The Times criticized the extension of the occupation and expressed disapproval of French action and increasing concern about

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[75] Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 160, cols. 45-115.

its results. While calling on both February 12 and 20 for a statement of French aims, it continued, nevertheless, to endorse the British policy of non-intervention and to declare that all Britain could do was wait. The Daily Telegraph also failed to take a clear stand on the situation, and most of its leading articles merely reported major Ruhr events. After stating on January 26 that there was no need to discuss the legal merits of the French case, it on February 19 took the same position and affirmed that the basic point was that "France remains our Ally." Predictably, the Daily Mail maintained its pro-French stance as every issue continued to carry ten or twenty letters supporting the French position, and the leading articles approved the extension of the occupation. The constant theme of both letters and articles was that German industrialists were responsible for all the trouble and that British official policy was hindering the French efforts to make Germany fulfill its obligations.[76]

On the other hand, the Manchester Guardian denounced France bitterly. On February 17 it stated that France and Germany were almost at war and condemned the "madness" of France's trying to carry reparations "across the Rhine on a bayonet's point." In January this paper began to ask how

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[76]The Times (London), January 27, 1923, p. 11; February 12, 1923, p. 11; February 20, 1923, p. 13; February 16, 1923, p. 11; Daily Telegraph, January 26, 1923, p. 9; February 19, 1923, pp. 8-9; Daily Mail, February 12 and 21, 1923, p. 8.

long England could stay neutral when the balance of power was being threatened, and it began to urge withdrawal of British troops from the Rhineland. On February 17 the Guardian stated that French action was illegal, that non-intervention was an unsatisfactory policy, and that England should refer the matter to the International Court of Justice or to the Hague Tribunal. In its leading articles the Daily Herald preached a similar message, called for Britain and America to take a strong lead, and condemned British action in the Rhineland as a step away from neutrality.[77] The British press certainly failed to speak with one voice.

From late January through early March, the vital question of railroad transportation through the British zone caused a flurry of diplomatic activity.[78] This

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[77]Manchester Guardian, January 17, 22, and 24, 1923, p. 6; February 17, 1923, p. 10; Daily Herald, January 22, 1923, p. 1; February 19, 1923, p. 1. During the same period French press utterances were basically calm, having lost much of the sense of excitement that characterized them at the beginning of the occupation. As the Germans intensified passive resistance, the press prepared French citizens for a long struggle and called for confidence, patience, and unity. The French attitude toward Britain reflected little strong animosity, perhaps because the pro-French portion of the British press was most frequently quoted in French newspapers; see Le Journal des Débats, January 27 and 30, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, January 23 and 29, 1923, p. 1; L'Ère Nouvelle, January 22, 1923, pp. 1, 3; L'Oeuvre, February 12, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, February 13, 1923, p. 3; Le Temps, February 14, 1923, p. 1.

[78]Over one hundred dispatches in this period dealt with the railroad question.

extremely complex problem centered upon French requests to use the railroads in the British zone for transportation first of reparations coal and then of troop and supply trains. The question arose on January 22 when Bonar Law said that he was disturbed about press reports that German railroad workers in the British zone might refuse to forward coal to France. After Kilmarnock reported that deliveries to East France and Lorraine had to go through Cologne, the Foreign Office began to anticipate difficulties. These soon emerged. Saint-Aulaire had on January 22 mentioned to Poincaré the possibility of German workers' preventing coal deliveries to France. When labor unrest in the British zone increased, the President of the Council on February 5 instructed his Ambassador to explain French transportation problems to the British and request concessions.[79]

The following day, Saint-Aulaire delivered a note to the Foreign Office setting forth the French position. It pointed out that since the German government had forbidden all transport of coal to France, the French themselves had transported it, but this had led to strikes instigated by the German government. Recently, German

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[79]Memorandum by Lampson, January 22, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1301/313/18; FO to Kilmarnock, No. 8, January 22, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1293/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 17, January 23, 1923, FO 371/8706, C 1413/313/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, No. 70, January 22, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3918; Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, No. 421-425, February 5, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3324.

railwaymen of the Cologne Railway Direction had returned to work only on the condition that no reparations coal destined for France would be transported through the British zone, and this had put France in an impossible position in that it was being refused the right to receive reparations coal. The French, therefore, requested that they be permitted to run coal trains through the British zone and that the British government allow French authorities into its zone to insure this rail transportation.[80]

Crowe, Lampson, Bonar Law, and Curzon, as well as Alexander Cadogan, Foreign Office First Secretary, and R. C. Lindsay, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, discussed the French request in great detail. Three days later Curzon sent a reply which stated that the French request made it difficult for the British government to remain neutral. If French railroad personnel were allowed into the British zone, it would be necessary to employ military forces to protect them; should French troops be admitted to do this, strikes and disturbances would ensue. If, on the other hand, British troops were used, it would be a departure from the policy of non-participation. The British government, therefore, hoped that the French would withdraw their request and felt that they could do so, for information had reached the Foreign

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[80]Saint-Aulaire to Curzon, February 6, 1923, FO 371/8711, C 2329/313/18.

Office indicating that France could without difficulty transport almost as much coal as it had received before the occupation by using lines which did not involve the British zone. In addition, the note pointed out that little, if any, coal was then being moved from the Ruhr.[81]

While the Foreign Office was waiting for the French reply, two communications from Lord Kilmarnock complicated the situation. In the first of these, Kilmarnock reported that he had met with General Degoutte, who stressed that the Duren-Julich-Rheydt line, which skirted the British zone, was too difficult for the kind of traffic in question. Claiming that in order to secure his communications with the Ruhr and to transport coal he needed to use the Gravenbroich-Duren line, which ran through six miles of the extreme western edge of the British zone, Degoutte suggested that perhaps the boundaries could be arranged to make this line come within the French zone. The French had thus increased the scope of their requests, and Lampson and Cadogan felt that Britain should refuse to cede the Gravenbroich-Duren line: to do otherwise would be a distinct departure from the policy of passivity.[82] The second

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[81]Curzon to Crewe, No. 482, February 9, 1923, FO 371/8711, C 2329/313/18; Map and note regarding railway communication between France and the Ruhr, communicated by the War Office on February 6, 1923, FO 371/8711, C 2527/313/18.

[82]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 54, February 10, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2580/313/18. Neither Kilmarnock nor Godley

telegram from Kilmarnock on February 10 was to lead France to request even more, for it raised the question of the movement of French troop and supply trains. Kilmarnock reported that the German government had instructed the President of the Cologne Railway Direction that no trains carrying troops or supplies to the Ruhr could pass through the British zone. This, Kilmarnock emphasized, would seriously threaten Allied communications.[83]

On February 11, Lord Crewe talked to Poincaré about Curzon's February 9 response to the French request for coal transportation facilities. After saying that he believed that France would ask for nothing else for the transport of coal and coke if its trains could use the Gravenbroich-Duren route, he moved on to the matter mentioned by Kilmarnock in telegram No. 55. Degoutte had reported that because of the possibility of a general strike which would imperil his forces, he could not insure the safety of French and Belgian troops unless he was given "general control of all the

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objected to the proposed cession of that part of the British zone since it was of little intrinsic value and British troops had never been stationed in it. Tirard to Poincaré, No. 136, February 13, 1923, A.N., AJ^{9} 3324, shows that Tirard considered that both Kilmarnock and Godley, as well as Colonel J. D. McLachlan of the British Army of the Rhine, were francophile.

[83]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 55, February 10, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2581/313/18. Kilmarnock criticized this German move, stated that up until that time British policy had aided Germany more than France, and said that Britain should place no obstacles in the way of French transportation of coal due them under the Versailles Treaty.

railways in the occupied area." Poincaré called Crewe's attention to Article 10 of the Rhineland Agreement and declared that it gave the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (who was, he stated, General Degoutte) complete control of all means of land and water communication. In closing, he said that he would like to send General Payot, French Quarter Master General on the Rhine, to London to discuss transportation questions.[84] The British government was, therefore, faced with two questions: the movement of reparations coal south from the Ruhr and of troops and military supplies north toward the Ruhr. It was becoming difficult to keep the two questions separated.

A telegram from Lord D'Abernon on February 11 further complicated the situation. He reported that the German government had offered to permit French and Belgian military transportation on the Gravenbroich-Duren line; if, however, such transportation were accepted on other lines in the British zone, German railwaymen would strike after February 14.[85] On February 14, the Foreign Office

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[84]Crewe to FO, No. 173, February 11, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2596/313/18. In a Minute on this telegram Lampson stated that even though there was no written agreement appointing the French commander to be G.O.C. of the Allied Rhineland forces, it had been generally recognized that the French had the chief command of forces in the Rhineland. See also Poincaré to Tirard, No. 154-156, February 11, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3324, for a discussion of specific instances in which German action had disrupted French military communications.

[85]D'Abernon to FO, No. 80, February 11, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2626/313/18. Kilmarnock on the same day

instructed Crewe to tell Poincaré that the British government would welcome French acceptance of the German offer. The following day Poincaré told Crewe that although he could give a final reply only after talking to General Payot and the French Minister of Public Works, Yves le Trocquer, who were then in London, he was prepared to state that he considered as an absolute minimum permission to transport troops on all lines and coal on the Gravenbroich-Duren line. When Crewe warned that strikes in the British zone might cause Britain to withdraw its troops, Poincaré replied that British obstacles to the execution of the Treaty would produce a bad impression on French opinion.[86]

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transmitted a memorandum by Captain W. C. H. M. Georgi, technical adviser on railways, which showed that transportation of sufficient coal and troops on lines entirely outside the British zone was technically impossible. Both Kilmarnock and Georgi indicated that they believed the Germans were trying to stop traffic in order to wreck French plans. Georgi pointed out that a strike by German railwaymen in the British zone would cause little harm, for the British zone was already isolated because of a general railway strike in the French and Belgian zones, and traffic through Cologne was currently only 5 per cent of normal; see Kilmarnock to FO, No. 56, February 11, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2699/313/18.

Minutes on this dispatch indicate that it made Foreign Office personnel somewhat more sympathetic to France. Lampson stated that when he considered the problem it became difficult to harmonize British inactivity with the avowed intention of placing no obstacles in France's path. He said that if France would not accept the German proposal to restrict military transport to the Gravenbroich-Duren line, "We should then tell the Germans that we do not intend to allow any more nonsense and that we will ourselves see that French communications with the Ruhr through our zone are not interfered with. . . ."

[86]FO to Crewe, No. 66, February 14, 1923, FO 371/8712, C 2596/313/18; Crewe to FO, No. 194, February 15, 1923,

On the day that Crewe talked to Poincaré, Monsieur le Trocquer and General Payot were in London discussing transportation arrangements.[87] They and Saint-Aulaire met with a British delegation composed of Cabinet members Bonar Law, Salisbury, Curzon, and Derby; Crowe and Lampson of the Foreign Office; Sir Maurice Hankey, Cabinet Secretary; Colonel J. D. McLachlan of the British Army of the Rhine; and Captain W. C. Georgi, Kilmarnock's Technical Adviser. Although the French failed to obtain all of their requests in this lengthy conference and the one the following day, the British granted major concessions.

Monsieur le Trocquer opened the February 15 meeting by stating that because German railwaymen had since February 10 refused to handle French military traffic through the British zone, he was unable to insure the safety of his troops. He therefore requested that France should, as had been the case since the occupation of Dusseldorf, Duisburg,

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FO 371/8713, C 2873/313/18; Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, No. 571-572, February 15, 1923, A.N., AJ^{9} 3324.

[87]Le Trocquer's appearance upset the Foreign Office personnel, who were informed of his coming only a few hours before he arrived on the night of February 14. They had been under the impression that General Payot was coming alone and had arranged for him to talk to Lord Derby, Secretary of State for War. When they learned of the impending arrival of a French Minister, they felt that a responsible British Minister should meet with him. They quickly arranged for both Bonar Law and Curzon, as well as the Marquess of Salisbury, Lord President of the Council, to meet the next day with him and Payot. See Minutes by Lampson on the record of his conversation with Monsieur de Montille, Counsellor of the French Embassy, February 14, 1923, FO 371/8713, C 2859/313/18.

and Ruhrort in March, 1921, be allowed to use the lines in the British zone for military transport. In addition, he proposed that a French technical staff of five hundred members be sent into the British zone to prevent sabotage and asked permission for France to use the Gravenbroich-Duren line for both military and coal transport. Bonar Law replied that he was unable to admit French technicians into the zone, for if trouble arose, British forces would have to maintain order, and this would be contrary to the declared policy of non-intervention and neutrality. After warning that if France insisted on exercising a free hand at Cologne, Britain would have to withdraw its troops, he offered to cede the part of the British zone crossed by the Gravenbroich-Duren line. The French delegates argued that this line alone was insufficient for securing the safety of French troops and pointed out that it communicated with Belgium rather than France. The discussion ended with a French suggestion that some arrangement might be reached to enable France to send through Cologne a predetermined maximum daily number of military trains approximating the number sent before January 11, 1923, the figure to be fixed locally. The British made no reply to the suggestion, and the French delegation requested another meeting the following day.[88]

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[88]Rough Notes of a Conversation held at 10, Downing Street, on February 15, 1923, FO 371/8713, C 2922/313/18.

At 5:00 o'clock that afternoon the Cabinet met to consider the transportation problem. Captain Georgi, who met with them, explained that the Germans would probably accept the French proposal for limiting military traffic through the British zone to the pre-January 11 level and should not object to the proposed boundary readjustment. The Cabinet then instructed Curzon to telegraph D'Abernon that the British government found reasonable the French request for the same number of trains as had been allowed before January 11 and relied upon German cooperation in working this train service. D'Abernon should also tell the Germans that Britain had agreed to transfer to the French the northwest angle of the British zone containing the Gravenbroich-Duren line.[89]

When the French and British delegations met at noon on February 16, Bonar Law informed the French of the contents of the telegram sent to Berlin the previous evening. He formally offered the Gravenbroich-Duren line to be utilized for all kinds of traffic, said that Britain was willing to allow passage of the same number of trains for military transport as before January 11, and stipulated that these trains would be worked by German personnel. When he asked if these concessions were sufficient, Payot and le Trocquer objected strongly to the continued employment of

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[89]Cab 23/45, 10(23)1(a and b); FO to D'Abernon, No. 38, February 15, 1923, FO 371/8713, C 2901/313/18.

German railway personnel, saying that recent events had shown that they could not be trusted to work French trains through the Cologne area. After long discussion, explanations, and assertions of French treaty rights, they were unable to modify the British offer. As the meeting closed, the French said that they would have to refer the matter to Poincaré for decision. Bonar Law urged the French government to accept the offer and mentioned that since the whole question of the Ruhr occupation was coming up in the House of Commons on February 19, he hoped nothing might be done to strengthen the hands of the Opposition.[90]

Although Poincaré was dissatisfied with the part of the British offer concerning the movement of military trains through Cologne, Saint-Aulaire on both February 15 and 17 advised him to accept it. The French Ambassador reported that British Cabinet members and officials favorable to France--such as Chancellor of the Exchequer Stanley Baldwin, Lord Derby, and the Duke of Devonshire, Secretary of State for Colonies--had said that Bonar Law had made the greatest possible concessions. These men, he said, hoped that France would not bring up new discussions on the railroad question before the end of the Parliamentary debate coming up soon. Poincaré, Foch, Weygand, and Payot examined the British propositions, and on the evening of

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[90]Rough Notes of a Conversation held at 10, Downing Street, on February 16, 1923, FO 371/8713, C 2945/313/18.

February 17, Poincaré telegraphed Saint-Aulaire that he would accept the Gravenbroich-Duren line. In order not to create difficulties before the end of the debate in Parliament, he would agree to let British and French military authorities on the scene negotiate a settlement for the passage of military trains through Cologne. On February 20, the Counsellor of the French Embassy, Monsieur de Montille, delivered Poincaré's message verbally to Lindsay and said that it was the official answer: France accepted the territorial concessions with thanks and the yet-to-be-arranged military transport concession without thanks.[91]

While waiting for the French reply, British diplomats had been active. On February 17 D'Abernon sent three telegrams in response to the Foreign Office February 15 telegram to Berlin. He reported that the German government, though it did not mention the proposed territorial cession, would work the requested train service through Cologne if it were strictly limited to the terms proposed in the British telegram. The Germans asked, however, that the transport take place on the left bank of the Rhine because of the hostile attitude of railway workers on the right bank. Two days later, the German Ambassador assented verbally to

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[91]Poincaré to Tirard, No. 191-192 and No. 193-195, February 20, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904; Poincare to Saint-Aulaire, No. 605-608, February 17, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3324; Conversation between Lindsay and Monsieur de Montille, February 20, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3191/313/18.

the cession of the Gravenbroich-Duren line and surrounding territory.[92]

The Foreign Office on February 18 instructed General Alex J. Godley, General Officer in Command of the British Rhine Army, to arrange with General Payot the handing over of the northwest angle of the British zone and start making arrangements for conveying French troops and supplies. Before committing himself definitely on the latter issue, he must submit to London the exact agreement reached with Payot. Godley conferred with Generals Degoutte and Payot on the evening of February 19 to determine the daily number of trains to cross the British zone and after long discussion made a compromise proposal. He suggested that the "number of troop trains to be accepted daily in either direction on each of the two main lines across British zone on left bank only for maintenance relief etc. of their troops should be fixed at 5 and that this number should be cumulative."[93]

This conference marked the beginning of a lengthy correspondence and numerous sessions between British and French officials on one hand and British and German on the

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[92]D'Abernon to FO, No. 90, No. 91, and No. 92, February 17, 1923, FO 371/8714, C 3007/313/18, C 3008/313/18, and C 3009/313/18; Conversation between Sthamer and Lampson, February 19, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3183/313/18.

[93]FO to Kilmarnock, No. 41, February 18, 1923, FO 371/8714, C 3009/313/18; General Headquarters Rhine Army to War Office, No. 397, February 19, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3200/313/18.

other. During the negotiations France wanted greater transportation facilities than those proposed by Godley, and Germany wanted to grant fewer concessions and qualify them severely. The British themselves had difficulty determining whether the figures proposed by Godley were inferior to or in excess of the number of French trains traversing their zone before January 11. At first Foreign Office personnel thought that Godley's figures were too high, but by February 26, Godley and Kilmarnock had begun to show that the figures were moderate.[94]

On February 26, Captain Georgi and two members of Kilmarnock's staff met with the German Minister of Communications and the President of the Cologne Railway Direction in a four and one-half hour conference. The German officials accepted, with some limitations, the proposal of ten trains per day, non-cumulative, and suggested that it be sent officially to Berlin by London. When Kilmarnock reported, however, that the French did not want to include trains journaliers (civil passenger trains) in the ten trains, a new problem emerged. In a March 1 telegram to

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[94]Key documents in the February 20-26 correspondence are as follows: Kilmarnock to FO, No. 77, February 20, 1923, and FO to Kilmarnock, No. 46, February 22, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3243/313/18; G.O.C. Rhine Army to War Office, No. C.O. 401, February 22, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3338/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 96, February 23, 1923, FO 371/8715, C 3415/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 85, February 25, 1923, FO 371/8716, C 3474/313/18; Mr. Lyon (War Office) to Mr. Vansittart, transmitting letter from Godley, February 26., 1923, FO 371/8716, C 3601/313/18.

Kilmarnock, the Foreign Office suggested that before anything further was done at Berlin he and Godley should discuss the February 26 proposals with French local authorities and attempt to obtain their assent. Should they object to the inclusion of the trains journaliers in the ten trains, perhaps the British government could, since they had no military significance, ignore the German request for their inclusion.[95]

As February ended, the question of French military transport, though pending, was nearing solution, and all that remained to be determined was the scope of the concessions to France. That German railwaymen would be forced to transport French troops and supplies across the British zone was practically certain. In addition, both Germany and England had agreed to the cession of the part of the British zone containing the vital Gravenbroich-Duren line.

During the period from January 11 through the end of February, the British government had, therefore, made significant concessions to France and Belgium. Although it could have stopped the passage of French troop trains to the Ruhr at the beginning of the occupation it failed to do so and then refused in February to prevent the movement

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[95]G.H.Q. Rhine Army to War Office, No. 405, February 27, 1923, FO 371/8717, C 3724/313/18; G.H.Q. Rhine Army to War Office, No. 406, February 27, 1923, FO 371/8717, C 3723/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 87, February 27, 1923, and FO to Kilmarnock, No. 54, March 1, 1923, FO 371/8717, C 3678/313/18.

of additional troop and supply trains toward the Ruhr. Without these concessions, France might have been forced to curtail the occupation. In addition, as has been indicated, the British permitted customs collection and the arrest of some German officials in their zone. Although proclaiming a policy of neutrality and non-participation in the face of French aggressiveness, Britain actually assisted the French in their endeavor.

While France was energetically pursuing the occupation, Britain had no policy and was merely waiting on events. Although it cannot be fully explained, British passivity in the early, crucial stage of the occupation stemmed from several factors. During much of the time, Lord Curzon was either in Lausanne or primarily involved in Near Eastern diplomacy, and Bonar Law's illness was increasingly limiting his activities. At the same time, the pro-French leanings of Lord Kilmarnock, General Godley, and other British officials in the Rhineland also made it difficult for the government to resist French moves in the occupied territories. Furthermore, several intangible factors were extremely influential in determining British policy, foremost among them being the conviction that the Entente must be preserved. Because war memories were still vivid, few Englishmen wanted to impair relations with France. Moreover, neither Parliament nor the press spoke clearly enough to compel the government to pursue a new course.

Also significant was the belief held by some Foreign Office personnel that certain British threats and Parliamentary statements in 1920 and 1921 prevented them from challenging the legality of the occupation. Because they thus felt that their hands were tied, and also because the occupation had not yet resulted in major losses to British trade, British leaders offered no effective opposition to the occupation of the Ruhr.

CHAPTER III

FRENCH DETERMINATION AND BRITISH DRIFT: THE RUHR OCCUPATION, MARCH 1-APRIL 19, 1923

During March and the first half of April, both France and Britain tended to follow patterns established during the first seven weeks of the occupation. In spite of the paucity of immediate financial returns, the French were determined to stay in Germany's industrial heartland. Although the British government assisted them less than it had earlier, it exerted no real effort to bring an end to the Ruhr impasse and lapsed almost completely into a policy of drift.

Throughout March and April, France intensified pressure upon Germany and introduced more severe methods. On March 1, Crewe learned that Degoutte had been given authority to collect a 40 per cent tax on coal and imprison mine owners refusing to pay it, and on March 3 France extended the occupation to the harbors of Mannheim and Karlsruhe and the Darmstadt railway workshops in retaliation for German obstruction of navigation of the Rhine-Herne canal.[1] Two

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[1]Crewe to FO, No. 429, March 1, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3812/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 95, March 3, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3947/313/18.

telegrams from Consul-General Edward W. P. Thurstan in Cologne typify numerous reports about other French actions. He told on March 1 of the arrest of the entire police forces of Bochum, Recklinghausen, and Herne and declared that almost daily he received accounts of looting and highway robbery committed by French soldiers. Soon afterwards he stated that the number of robberies was increasing even more, that traffic on the Dortmund-Ems canal had ceased, that the police in several smaller towns had been deported, and that more railway stations had been seized.[2] Later in the month, friction increased between Germany and France. On March 18 in Cologne an assassination attempt was made against Joseph Smeets, a Rhineland Separatist leader. Accusing a German nationalist of making the attack, the Rhineland High Commission, in retaliation, ordered on March 21 that all circulation between occupied and unoccupied territory, except by rail, would be prohibited between 8:00 P.M. and 5:00 A.M. Ten days later French soldiers and German factory workers clashed at the Krupp works in Essen as the French tried to occupy a portion of the factory.

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[2]Thurstan to FO, No. 151, March 1, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3926/313/18; No. 157, March 5, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 4327/313/18. Several times during this period Kilmarnock criticized press coverage of events in occupied territory. In a March 7 telegram, he gave details about an incident in Cologne arising out of a French request for accommodation and said that the matter was settled locally without trouble. He reported this himself because such occurrences often were exaggerated in the press, and press reports led to questions in Parliament; see Kilmarnock to Lampson, March 7, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4699/313/18.

After the skirmish, the thirteen Germans who lost their lives and thirty who were wounded became heroes to the Ruhr populace.[3]

In the struggle between France and Germany, the railroad problem continued to plague the invaders, for in order to maintain the occupation forces and transport seized raw materials they were dependent upon the railways. From almost the beginning of the occupation, as has been indicated, German railroad personnel in the Rhineland had refused to execute the orders of the invaders, forcing Franco-Belgian authorities on the scene to utilize their own technical troops in trying to work the intricate Ruhr and Rhineland railway systems. Whereas before the occupation a German staff of 170,000 had moved an average daily traffic of 375,000 tons of goods and 400,000 passengers, France and Belgium had been able to muster a crew of only 12,500 technical workers, assisted by 1,380 German auxiliaries.[4]

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[3]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 152, March 21, 1923, FO 371/8731, C 9076/313/18; S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918-1933 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 250; Royal J. Schmidt, Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 127; The Times (London), April 2, 1923, p. 8. Accounts of this "Bloody Sunday" disagree about what occurred: German writers say that French soldiers lost their heads, and French writers say that the workers attacked the soldiers.

[4]Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), pp. 284-285.

Because an almost total paralysis gripped the railway system, Franco-Belgian authorities in mid-February began drafting an ordinance for the establishment of a special railway administration in all occupied territory. Tirard reported on February 25 that the Belgians would approve the proposed ordinance only if a clause were added to Article 2 stating that certain lines [they referred to those in the British zone] or portions of lines could be exempted from the competence of the new administration. On March 1, the French government accepted the Belgian proposition and the Rhineland High Commission, Lord Kilmarnock abstaining, adopted Ordinance No. 149 creating the Railway Administration of the Occupied Territories (usually referred to as the Régie), which replaced the former German administration. The ordinance placed all the railways in the old occupied territories under the administration of the Régie, which was to be headed by a French director and a Belgian and French assistant director, to whom all personnel were responsible. Article 2 made special provisions which allowed the exemption of the railways in the British zone from the authority of the Régie.[5]

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[5]Tirard to Poincaré, No. 161-163, February 25, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3324; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 243, March 1, 1923, and copy of Ordinance No. 149, A.N., AJ9 3324; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 90, March 1, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3815/313/18. The Franco-Belgian High Command extended the authority of the Régie to the Ruhr; see Toynbee, Survey, p. 286. The British government made no protest whatsoever against the establishment of the Régie.

During March, the question of French military transportation through the British zone itself continued to cause difficulties. On March 3, Kilmarnock and General Godley, General Officer in Command of the British Army of the Rhine, met in Dusseldorf with Generals Degoutte and Payot to discuss the proposals worked out between Captain Georgi and the Germans in Frankfurt on February 26. The French insisted that trains journaliers should not be included in the ten military trains a day and suggested other modifications. The two sides, unable to reach a conclusion, met again on March 5 and after lengthy discussion drew up an agreement which Godley brought to London the following day. The draft agreement gave France permission to run ten military trains and two trains journaliers (limited strictly to food-stuffs) per day, the figure to be non-cumulative. In addition, cars could be removed from French trains outside the British zone and attached to no fewer than five German trains passing through it, and detached French soldiers could use all German trains crossing the British zone.[6]

Having made concessions to France about the terms of the proposal, the British government during the next three weeks pressured the Germans to accept it. On March 9 D'Abernon was told to inform the German government of the agreement and ask that German railway authorities be

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[6]G.H.Q. Rhine Army to War Office, No. 408, March 3, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 3954/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 97, March 6, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 4283/313/18.

instructed to put it into operation. When the Germans failed to respond promptly, the Foreign Office on March 14 told him to expedite the German reply, and two days later the German Foreign Minister reported that his government was studying the agreement. Saying that it exceeded the limits of the proposals agreed upon in Frankfurt, he suggested modifications that might help to overcome the German objections.[7]

The situation, nevertheless, dragged on. When Kilmarnock reported that Payot called on him on March 22 to inquire about the state of the railroad question and to ask that the agreement be put into effect, Lampson declared that the Germans were delaying in order to split the British from the French. Others agreed, and on March 24 the Foreign Office instructed Sir Somerville Head, Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, to tell the German government that since the draft agreement was "reasonable and in spirit of original proposals which the German government accepted [on February 17]" the British would not ask France to reduce its request. If the Germans wanted an understanding on the railway question, they should instruct the President of the Cologne Railway Direction to make arrangements to put the agreement into force; should they fail to do so, Britain

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[7]FO to D'Abernon, No. 55, March 9, 1923, FO 371/8720, C 4447/313/18; No. 58, March 14, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4526/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 129, March 16, 1923, FO 371/8723, C 4998/313/18.

might have to withdraw from Cologne.[8] Faced with the British threat, the German government on March 27 accepted the railroad agreement. The following day Curzon informed Saint-Aulaire that instructions had been made for putting the agreement into force, and on March 29 Poincaré told Tirard of the agreement and Kilmarnock reported that it was in force and that trains would begin running after technical details were worked out. According to Tirard, operations began on April 3.[9] Although the Godley-Payot agreement did not always work smoothly,[10] France was able to use the vital railways through the British zone for military transport.

In its other relations with Germany during March and April, the British government, as it had done in the railroad negotiations, seemed to take a pro-French stand. The

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[8]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 156, March 22, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5406/313/18; FO to Head, No. 71 and No. 74, March 24, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5457/313/18.

[9]Head to FO, No. 149, March 27, 1923, and Curzon to Saint-Aulaire, March 28, 1923, FO 371/8725, C 5750/313/18; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 359, March 29, 1923, A.N., AJ^9 3324; Paul Tirard, La France sur le Rhin. Douze années d'occupation rhenane (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1930), p. 366. A telegram from Poincaré to Tirard indicates how important the railroad agreement was to France. Poincaré told him that since the railroad agreement had been made, he no longer saw any reason for him and his Belgian colleague to delay bringing before the High Commission the question of the expulsion of the German Commissioner; see Poincaré to Tirard, No. 367, April 1, 1923, A.N., AJ^9 3904.

[10]B. T. Reynolds stated that because of "a complete absence of goodwill on the German side" and little on the French, the agreement caused a volume of recriminatory correspondence between Britain and France; see Prelude to Hitler (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p. 82.

available Foreign Office correspondence fails to substantiate the allegations of several writers, both French and English, that the British government encouraged Germany to continue passive resistance. Although it seems that Lord D'Abernon did sustain German determination and that the German government, despite evidence to the contrary, continued to hope for British intervention, the British government in many ways indicated that it had no intention of intervening on Germany's behalf.[11] As it had done previously, the government failed to accept publicly Germany's contention that the occupation was illegal. When Sthamer delivered an eight-page memorandum demonstrating the illegality of the Ruhr occupation and measures taken within the Ruhr, the Foreign Office decided on March 3 to send no answer or acknowledgment. On March 6 he protested Rhineland ordinances prescribing death sentences for railway sabotage and allowing army commanders to send the condemned to foreign prisons and to regulate capital punishment; again there was no response.[12] Other protests were similarly ignored.

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[11]René Pinon, L'avenir de l'Entente franco-anglaise (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1924), p. 139; W. M. Knight-Patterson, Germany from Defeat to Conquest, 1919-1933 (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1945), p. 345; Jean-Claude Favez, Le Reich devant l'occupation franco-belge de la Ruhr en 1923 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1969), pp. 116, 251; Alfred Emile Cornebise, "Some Aspects of the German Response to the Ruhr Occupation, January-September, 1923" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1965), p. 196.

[12]Sthamer to FO, No. A. 539, February 23, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3938/313/18; No. A 690/23, March 24, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 4196/313/18.

Instead of encouraging Germany, the British in some cases forced it to comply with Franco-Belgian demands. As has been shown, Britain exerted pressure to make Germany accept the Godley-Payot agreement, and early in March it intervened in another situation. Kilmarnock reported on March 1 that the Prussian Prime Minister planned to visit Cologne on March 4 to speak about the Germans' struggle against the invader. Because he feared that the visit would cause trouble and necessitate intervention by British military authorities, the Foreign Office on March 3 instructed D'Abernon to inform the German Foreign Minister that the British zone could not become the "sounding board of anti-French harangues by German ministers" and that the Germans should, therefore, forbid their ministers to visit the British zone. After talking to D'Abernon, the Foreign Minister stated that the Prussian Prime Minister had abandoned his planned visit.[13]

In addition, the British government in mid-March began hinting that Germany take positive action to end the occupation. When, on March 14, Sthamer was discussing the critical situation in Germany, Curzon suggested that if the German government had proposals for ending the situation, it should communicate them directly to all the powers

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[13]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 89, March 1, 1923, and FO to D'Abernon, No. 51, March 3, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3814/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 107, March 3, 1923, FO 371/8718, C 3842/313/18.

concerned, including the American government if it so desired. Four days later, Curzon wrote Crewe about another conversation with Sthamer: "Bonar and I saw the German on Friday [March 16] and told him that his government must get a move on, and that it was no good dishing up bread and milk to the French, who would require some rather stronger substance." After the Germans made no move, Lampson reminded Sthamer on April 11 that Germany should seriously consider making reasonable proposals to France.[14]

Although the British government had persuaded the Germans to make concessions and had failed to intervene on their behalf, it was not on good terms with the French government, and during March and April, as will be shown, there were many points of disagreement between the two former Allies. When at times the British, in effect, told the French that they should go no further, the French often appeared conciliatory. For example, when Sir Eyre Crowe talked to Monsieur de Montille on March 2 and warned him that if the French and Belgian governments continued to extend the authority and competence of the Rhineland High Commission to matters outside its scope of authority, the British government might have to withdraw from the Commission, Monsieur de Montille promised to call this to the

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[14]Conversation between Curzon and Sthamer, March 14, 1923, FO 371/8632, C 4876/1/18; Curzon to Crewe, March 18, 1923, in Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Curzon (3 vols.; London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1928), III, 347; Conversation between Lampson and Sthamer, April 11, 1923, FO 371/8727, C 6749/313/18.

attention of his government. A week later Kilmarnock reported that France was doing the utmost to make things easy in the British zone, and on March 14 Poincaré told Tirard to satisfy British requests as often as possible.[15]

In spite of French efforts to avoid annoying the British, however, several factors caused friction, and chief among them were commercial problems. Trade difficulties arising out of Franco-Belgian independent action in the Rhineland and Ruhr continued to plague the British, who, feeling their vital, immediate interests threatened, finally displayed some initiative. Much of the trouble stemmed from German reaction to French moves, for the Germans refused, after the beginning of the occupation, to recognize the inter-Allied licencing organization at Bad-Ems, which had since 1921 granted licences for export of goods from the Rhineland to England. Moreover, the French and Belgian authorities were levying a 10 per cent duty on British goods crossing the external frontier of occupied territory, but the Germans in Cologne--refusing to recognize the Franco-Belgian customs certificates--were also levying duties on goods arriving in the British zone. In order to try to improve the situation, the Foreign Office on March 3 instructed D'Abernon to approach the German

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[15]Note by Crowe, March 6, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 4153/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 115, March 9, 1923, FO 371/8720, C 4426/313/18; Poincaré to Tirard, No. 480, March 14, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3296.

government about Bad-Ems licences, point out that they were not a new requirement based on Franco-Belgian action in the Ruhr, and request suspension of the previous instructions for ignoring the Bad-Ems office. On March 14 he was told to announce that because the British could not continue to allow their traders in Cologne to pay a double duty, the Germans were not to levy a duty upon British goods which had already paid or would later have to pay duties to Allied customs agencies.[16]

The French and Belgians themselves were also responsible for direct interference with British trade. Although on March 3 and 8 the High Commission made decisions intended to facilitate the position of British traders, the exceptions thus granted were poorly observed. After receiving several complaints, the British government informed France that delays and losses in British trade caused by Franco-Belgian measures were creating a very unfortunate impression and exposing it to attacks from both Parliament and interested professional groups. In order to prevent this, the French should insure that the concessions approved earlier in the month were rigidly and immediately observed in both the Rhineland and Ruhr.

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[16]Mr. Fountain (Board of Trade) to Lampson, March 1, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 3975/313/18; Minute by Lampson, March 13, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4704/313/18; FO to D'Abernon, No. 52, March 3, 1923, FO 371/8719, C 3975/313/18; No. 57, March 14, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4704/313/18.

On another occasion in March the French also antagonized British traders. Although the High Commission had decided on March 1 that foreign coal destined for unoccupied Germany could pass freely and without tax through occupied territory, Kilmarnock reported on March 13 that the French and Belgians were holding up cargoes of British coal at Duisburg, Ruhrort, and Dusseldorf and demanding a 10 per cent import tax in some cases and a 40 per cent coal tax in others. Should this situation continue, imports of coal from Britain would cease, causing great financial losses to that nation. Soon after learning of the situation, the Foreign Office told Eric Phipps, British Chargé d'Affaires in Paris, to stress that the British government was quickly losing patience at the "vexatious restrictions on legitimate British trade" and to demand that the French instruct their local authorities to stop requiring payment of duty and tax.[17] On March 17, Phipps relayed the rather vague and indefinite French reply to both the March 13 communication from the British Embassy and the Foreign Office telegram of March 16: it merely stated that the French government hoped to overcome all the difficulties speedily. Two days later, however, he reported that trade cases endorsed by Kilmarnock would receive special

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[17]British Embassy, Paris, to French government, March 13, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3296; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 128, March 13, 1923, and FO to Phipps, No. 126, March 16, 1923, FO 371/8722, C 4766/313/18.

treatment and be granted facilities.[18] Although the French had thus promised to grant special consideration to the British traders, frequent complaints made to the Foreign Office about trade difficulties indicate that they often failed to do so. It seems that the French throughout the occupation usually made barely enough concessions to mollify the British government.

Another factor causing animosity between Britain and France was the rising tide of British public opinion and the absence of clearly-defined Franco-Belgian aims. Curzon brought up the subject on March 21 when he read and presented to Saint-Aulaire a secret memorandum which surveyed British policy since the beginning of the occupation and labeled it one of benevolent neutrality. According to the memorandum, the British government had tried to create as few difficulties as possible for its Allies and had held aloof and avoided taking sides in the Ruhr controversy. It had, nevertheless, advised the Germans to accept the situation in which they were involved. This policy had placed British occupying authorities in embarrassing positions and was coming under increasing attack from both press and Parliament. Debates in the House of Commons were showing "a rising tide of restlessness and even irritation" with the government's passive policy, and demands were being made

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[18]Phipps to FO, No. 308, March 17, 1923, and No. 317, March 19, 1923, FO 371/8731, C 9076/313/18.

that the question be brought before the Council of the League of Nations on April 10, a move which the government hoped to avoid. Because of these circumstances, the memorandum asked the French government to help strengthen the position of the British government in forthcoming debates by making a "clear and authoritative statement of the aims to which Franco-Belgian policy is directed, and of the manner in which the measures so far taken or yet to be taken, are expected to bring about its realisation" in order to permit the British government to discuss these questions with critics of its policy.[19]

The French response displeased the Foreign Office. In a memorandum addressed to Saint-Aulaire and communicated to the British government on March 23, Poincaré declared that the French government had at the London Conference in December and the Paris Conference in January, as well as in later declarations by the French and Belgian governments, made known the objects of the Ruhr occupation: it was able to add nothing to these declarations. The occupation, the memorandum reiterated, had been necessitated by German recalcitrance and failure to pay reparations. The French government would have preferred British assistance in the

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[19]Curzon to Phipps, No. 1011, March 21, 1923, and Memorandum from Curzon to Saint-Aulaire, March 20, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5302/313/18. Saint-Aulaire asked that the communication of the memorandum be kept secret, for if it were known it might be considered as an attempt at intervention. Curzon agreed to do so.

occupation but had decided to act without it. Because the pledge currently held could not be released in exchange for simple promises, France and Belgium would evacuate the Ruhr and newly-occupied territories on the right bank of the Rhine only in proportion to Germany's execution of its reparations obligation. As soon as the German government made direct written proposals, the British government would be informed. "France and Belgium have gone into the Ruhr to obtain a definitive settlement of the reparations problem. . . ."[20]

The memorandum, it should be noted, failed to answer the second part of Curzon's question. Although it said, in effect, that France's object was securing reparations, it said nothing about how "the measures so far taken, or about to be taken" were supposed to attain that object. Lampson wanted Curzon to tell Saint-Aulaire that he was disappointed with the reply, but after meeting with Bonar Law on March 25, Curzon said that there was no use in pursuing the subject at that time.[21] Once more the British government failed to take decisive action.

The British press and Parliament, who were writing and reading accounts of French atrocities in the Ruhr, trade restrictions, and the powerlessness of British Rhineland

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[20]Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, March 23, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5302/313/18.

[21]Minutes by Lampson and Curzon on the March 23 French Memorandum, FO 371/8725, C 5783/313/18.

officials, and who were impatient with the government's inactivity, gave up less easily. They wanted to know whether the goal of the French was security or reparations. If it were the latter, how much money did the French insist upon? An article in The Times on February 23 depicted British confusion about French objects:

> Ostensibly the ground for French action in the Ruhr was the German default in respect of reparations, but it has been an open secret that, in addition, France sought security. . . . So mixed are French motives that it would be difficult to state which was the predominant purpose.[22]

As will be seen, the French press and official statements gave no clear-cut answer to these questions and further increased British apprehension. First, the French gave varying figures about the exact reparations total they would require. Le Matin on April 9 declared that 26,000,000,000 gold marks was the irreducible minimum France could accept. That evening, Louis Loucheur, a former French minister and prominent businessman, told Eric Phipps that France would require somewhat more than the 26,000,000,000 gold mark figure recently discussed in the French press, and the next day Poincaré told him that France absolutely could not accept such a small amount as that mentioned. Uncertainty increased on April 17 when a semi-official statement in L'Écho de Paris declared that the French government adhered to the reparations figure

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[22] The Times (London), February 23, 1923, p. 12.

of May 5, 1921, and would evacuate the Ruhr only when Germany had completely paid its debt. The occupation would last thirty-six years if it took Germany thirty-six years to pay; if payment were completed in ten years, the occupation would last only that long.[23]

Furthermore, almost contradictory statements about the goals of the occupation came from various French sources. In an article in L'Écho de Paris early in March, Pertinax[24] stated that if America and Britain wanted to encourage France to leave the Ruhr, they must guarantee both payments from Germany and Franco-Belgian security. On March 9, Poincaré told the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Chamber of Deputies that France would accept no mediation or indirect conversations and would not, for simple promises, abandon security and the pledges it had been forced to take. When Phipps talked to the President of the Comité des Forges on March 28, the latter stressed that France's vital need was security. Although in the cases mentioned above both security and reparations were labelled goals of the occupation, Poincaré took another position on March 29 in the Chamber of Deputies. After saying that France had no ulterior motives of annexation, he declared: "We have always

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[23] Le Matin, April 9, 1923, p. 1; Phipps to FO, No. 377, April 10, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 6480/1/18; No. 382, April 10, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 6482/1/18; L'Écho de Paris, April 17, 1923, p. 3.

[24] André Géraud, the paper's foreign affairs expert.

said that we went into the Ruhr to seek economic ends." Nowhere in the statement did he mention security. Within a few days, however, Le Journal des Débats reverted to the former theme: "But, finally, it [the Ruhr occupation] is only a means and the main point is not to occupy the Ruhr; it is to regulate the problem of reparations and of our security. . . ."[25] It seems that the public and governments in both Britain and France were trying to make an artificial distinction between the two goals of the occupation; but the two questions of reparations and security could not be separated. Although France definitely sought to attain both of them throughout the occupation, its emphasis changed from time to time. For example, when the unprofitableness of the Ruhr operation became apparent in March, the security aspect received more prominence than it had previously.

Beginning in mid-March, the question of the disposal of the proceeds of customs duties collected by France and Belgium increased ill will between the British and French governments. After Kilmarnock heard that the proceeds were being deposited in Allied banks in occupied territory in the name of a special Allied committee, on which no British member sat, and that the committee was supposedly holding

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[25] L'Écho de Paris, March 2, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, March 11, 1923, p. 1; Phipps to FO, No. 345, March 28, 1923, FO 371/8725, C 5825/313/18; J.O., Chambre, March 30, 1923, p. 1705; Le Journal des Débats, April 7, 1923, p. 1.

the funds at the disposal of the Reparation Commission, the Foreign Office on March 14 telegraphed Phipps to ask into what fund the proceeds would be paid. Upon learning that the Reparation Commission had received no notification that the funds were being held at its disposition, the Foreign Office told Kilmarnock to ask his French and Belgian colleagues about the matter. On March 18 he reported that although he had been unable to see either Tirard or the Belgian Commissioner, he had learned from their deputies that the French and Belgian governments intended to hand over only the amount of sanctions receipts left after the deduction of expenses incurred in collecting them. The Reparation Commission had not been notified because there would be no surplus for February; however, a surplus was anticipated for March.[26]

Kilmarnock's telegram and the March 23 Memorandum from Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire were the first official indications that France considered the costs of the occupation as a first charge on the sanctions receipts, and Foreign Office personnel objected strongly. Lampson felt that according to Article 248 of the Versailles Treaty, France had no right to make any such deduction. Since that article stated that "a first charge upon all the assets and revenues

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[26]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 113, March 8, 1923, FO 371/8720, C 4414/313/18; FO to Phipps, No. 121, March 14, 1923, FO 371/8722, C 4813/313/18; FO to Kilmarnock, No. 88, March 16, 1923, FO 371/8722, C 4813/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 140, March 18, 1923, FO 371/8723, C 5046/313/18.

of the German Empire and its constituent states" was imposed for reparation, he did "not see that France can possibly claim that anything she may extract from the Ruhr does not fall under the article."[27]

In response to Lampson's March 24 request for observations, the Treasury on April 4 asked that representations be made immediately to the French and Belgian governments. Lampson then sent a telegram to Phipps, but told him to take no action upon it until he was authorized to do so. The draft telegram instructed him to tell the French government that because the Franco-Belgian sanction had not been "decided upon by the Allied Powers" but had been carried out by the French and Belgian governments "acting independently and against the wishes" of the British government, and because the British position was governed by Article 248 of the Treaty, the entire amount collected from Germany should be given to the Reparation Commission. Four days later, however, Lampson told Phipps to continue to hold the draft telegram in abeyance for the moment, and that night he wrote Robert Vansittart, Curzon's Private Secretary, who was with Curzon in Tours, France, to suspend all action because Bonar Law did not want to bring the matter to the attention of the French government.[28] Once

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[27]Memorandum from Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, March 23, 1923, cited above; Minute by Lampson, March 24, 1923, FO 371/8725, C 5783/313/18.

[28]Lampson to the Secretary to the Treasury, March 24, 1923, FO 371/8723, C 5046/313/18; Phipps (Treasury) to

more Bonar Law had intervened and the British government had failed to challenge openly the legality of a French move.

Nevertheless, when two ordinances of the Rhineland High Commission caused difficulty, the British government did question their validity. On March 15, the High Commission, Lord Kilmarnock abstaining, passed Ordinance No. 153 and No. 154. According to the first of these, the Commission seized "all machines and other articles, including animals, belonging to the German Government in the occupied territories intended to be applied in conformity with the Treaty of Versailles for purposes of restitution," as well as "all material, goods, and property of every kind belonging to the Allied Governments or their nationals and being in the occupied territories in whatsoever custody they may be, other than that of the said Governments or nationals." Under the second ordinance, the Commission

> sequestrated and seized all chattels in the occupied territories which are the subject of orders on the part of the Allied Governments or their nationals from the German Government or its nationals, in pursuance of Part VIII of the Treaty of Peace, or any subsequent agreement.[29]

Lampson, No. F.5715, April 4, 1923, and FO to Phipps, No. ___, April 5, 1923, FO 371/8726, C 6183/313/18; Lampson to Phipps, April 9, 1923, FO 371/8726, C 6183/313/18; Lampson to Vansittart, April 9, 1923, FO 371/8726, C 6379/313/18. Lampson, unfortunately, failed to reveal the reasons for Bonar Law's decision.

[29]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 121 and No. 123, March 15, 1923, FO 371/8731, C 9076/313/18.

On March 23, the Foreign Office instructed Phipps to point out that the ordinances went far beyond the powers given the High Commission under the Rhineland Agreement and infringed upon the rights of the Reparation Commission in that they purported "to confer power on other and unauthorised bodies to dispose of assets on which the Reparation Commission have a charge." He was to tell Poincaré that since the ordinances appeared to be "altogether ultra vires" and would cause hostile criticism in the forthcoming debate in Parliament, the British government urged their annulment.[30]

Poincaré responded on March 28. He said that Ordinance No. 153 was designed only to insure the delivery of material and livestock due for delivery to the French government under the 1922 Restitution Agreement, which had been initialled by the Reparation Commission. The seizure ordered by the High Commission was, therefore, only "a safeguard, the purpose of which was to prevent the German Government from disposing of these articles elsewhere; it resulted only in assuring the execution of decisions approved by the Reparation Commission." Concerning Ordinance No. 154, he stated that it

> envisaged the seizure of objects and products of all kinds situated in the occupied territories, and being

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[30]FO to Phipps, No. 141, March 23, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5498/313/18; British Embassy, Paris, to Poincaré, March 24, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

> the object of orders by the Allied Governments or their nationals under Part VIII of the Treaty of Peace and subsequent agreements. There can be no injury to the rights of the Reparation Commission, the products and objects in question having to be delivered by the German Government to the Allied Governments under the programme of deliveries in kind drawn up by the Commission itself or approved by it.

He closed by saying that in adopting these ordinances the High Commission, which was the supreme representative of the Allied Powers in occupied territory, had merely followed the procedure used in the case of customs and coal tax, and this procedure had not been protested by the British government.[31]

The French reply caused much consternation in the Foreign Office, and on March 30 Lampson asked the Treasury Secretary for observations on the ordinances. He wrote that since it was difficult to see how these ordinances were designed "to secure the maintenance, safety and requirements of the Allied forces in the Rhineland," they probably were not valid under the Rhineland Agreement. The Treasury replied on April 18 that the French government's note should not be left unanswered, and Lampson began preparing a reply to the French.[32] For a time the matter remained in abeyance.

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[31]Poincaré to Phipps, March 28, 1923, A.N., F30 582.

[32]Lampson to Secretary, Treasury, March 30, 1923, FO 371/8725, C 5837/313/18; Secretary, Treasury, to Crowe, No. F.6115, April 18, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 6979/313/18.

Although the British government had challenged France about the validity of the two Rhineland High Commission ordinances, it remained reluctant to question openly the legality of the occupation itself. This hesitation was significant, for the legality issue and British drift were closely related in that any British effort to challenge France would be much more effective if founded upon a declaration of the illegality of French measures. The question arose again when Lord Crewe on March 10 communicated the French government's reply to the German note of February 15. The German note, which had been delivered by Sthamer to the Foreign Office on February 23, stated that the French and Belgians had violated the Treaty of Versailles, the Rhineland Agreement, the Hague Conventions, and international law. In their reply, the French refuted each charge. To the German statement that Paragraph 18 of Annex II to Part VIII of the Treaty did not justify taking military measures, France countered that when on two previous occasions--the Protocol of Spa and the May 5, 1921, ultimatum--the Allies had considered that Paragraph 18 contemplated the occupation of territory, the German government had not protested. In answer to the German protest against the French interpretation of the word "respective" in Paragraph 18, France pointed to the October 28, 1920, statement by Austen Chamberlain in the House of Commons.[33]

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[33]Crewe to Curzon, No. 600, March 10, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4535/313/18.

The Foreign Office had to decide what move to make next. Even though he did not want to take part in the Franco-German legality discussion, Lampson wrote that since Sir John Simon had on March 12 asked in the House of Commons whether the Foreign Office had solicited the opinion of the Law Officers on the legality under Paragraph 18 of France's Ruhr action, perhaps they should be consulted. He asked advice from C. J. B. Hurst, Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office, whose response was most revealing. Hurst declared that although the French reply to Germany was not a convincing document, he had made no detailed commentary upon it. He explained his reasons for failing to do so and made a shrewd observation about British policy:

> Whether or not it is worth while at the present stage to consult the Law Officers seems to me to depend upon the question how far H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government] intend to allow the French to go on. If the attitude of benevolent neutrality is to continue, it does not matter very much whether we consider the French action legal or illegal because I am not clear what steps H.M.G. would take if the Law Officers reported that the French action is illegal. It might render it more difficult for H.M.G. not to adopt an attitude of definite opposition.

Sir Eyre Crowe noted that he, too, hesitated to consult the Law Officers, but Curzon said that they should be consulted.[34]

Lampson wrote to the Law Officers on April 4, sending to them and commenting upon fifteen documents, including

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[34]Minutes by Lampson on March 13, 1923, Hurst on March 17, 1923, Crowe and Curzon on March 19, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4535/313/18.

the March 10 response to the German note. After a lengthy explanation of Foreign Office opinion on the issues under consideration, he asked for their opinion on eight points, three of which were of particular importance:

> 1. Whether, in view of the terms of the Reparation Commission's note of the 21st March, 1922, Germany is entitled to claim that her default in making the deliveries stipulated therein only justified the exaction of further cash payments.
> 2. Whether Germany's default in fulfilling her reparation obligations justifies the occupation, under the treaty, of German territory, in addition to that provided for in article 428 of the Treaty of Versailles and in the Rhineland Agreement.
> 6. Whether paragraphs 17 and 18 of Annex II to Part VIII of the Treaty of Versailles justify action by individual Allied Governments when the Reparation Commission notify a default.[35]

The Law Officers replied on April 11, and their answer to the first question was negative:

> . . . it seems to us impossible seriously to contend that she is entitled to make voluntary default in the deliveries in kind and then to claim that she is discharged from all responsibility if she adds to the cash liabilities which she has already stated she cannot pay, a sum equivalent to these deliveries.

In their opinion, German default gave the Allied powers the right to act under Paragraph 18. They then reported that they had experienced great difficulty in considering the second question but had concluded that the answer was also negative:

> In our opinion the words "economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals" indicate the kind of measures that the paragraph has in view, and the general words

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[35]Foreign Office to Law Officers of the Crown, April 4, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4535/313/18.

> following must be interpreted in the light of those words and must be limited to measures of the kind so indicated.

To the surprise of the Foreign Office, the answer to the sixth question, also labelled difficult, was in the affirmative:

> It seems to us that the scheme of the annex is for the Reparation Commission to give notice to the interested Powers in the event of default, and for the respective Governments of those Powers to take such measures within paragraph 18 as they may determine to be necessary. We do not think that they must all agree or act in concert.

In the two final paragraphs of their reply, the Law Officers cautioned the Foreign Office. Pointing out that it was difficult to reconcile the opinion they had just made with the action threatened by Great Britain and the other Allies in March and May of 1921, they advised against attempts to base any British protest upon their view of the meaning of Paragraph 18. "It would therefore be better, so far as possible, to avoid laying stress upon the legal standpoint, although for the reasons stated we believe it to be sound."[36] The Law Officers' report was to make the Foreign

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[36]Law Officers of the Crown to Curzon, April 11, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4535/313/18. The Law Officers' report, it seems, contradicts statements made in two works surveyed in this study. In Versailles, Twenty Years After (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1941), p. 299, Paul Birdsall wrote: "Law Officers of the British Crown vainly pronounced the action illegal under the terms of the treaty. . . ." G. E. R. Gedye stated: "In spite of French abuse, Britain loyally kept silent concerning the damning fact . . . that the British Law Officers of the Crown . . . gave their considered judgement that the occupation of the Ruhr was absolutely illegal." See The Revolver Republic. France's Bid for the Rhine (London: Arrowsmith, 1930), p. 81.

Office increasingly hesitant to deal with the question of the legality of French action.

After studying the report, Second Secretary Ralph F. Wigram on April 12 wrote a detailed commentary. In it he tried to show that action threatened by the Allied nations in March and May, 1921, would have been based upon "the right which is open to every nation to compel the observance of a treaty to which it is a party" rather than upon Paragraphs 17 and 18. He felt that the British government could easily base a protest upon its interpretation of the meaning of Paragraph 18. Lampson noted, however, that whatever were the explanations concerning British action in 1921, nine out of ten people would say what the Law Officers had said in their concluding paragraphs: Lloyd George's 1921 threats would weaken the British case if the government chose to argue that France was acting illegally. Sir William Tyrrell concurred: "I entirely agree . . . that paragraph 9 of the Law Officers' opinion represents the overwhelming sense amongst the public. Mr. Lloyd George's consent given in 1921 places the French in a very strong position." After reading these minutes, Curzon commented that Britain could do no good by raising the legal question and that he had no intention of doing so.[37]

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[37]Minutes by Wigram on April 12, 1923, Lampson on April 13, 1923, Tyrrell on April 14, 1923, and Curzon on April 15, 1923, FO 371/8727, C 6636/313/18.

By mid-April, as will be shown, many Englishmen were harshly condemning British passivity and wondering why the Bonar Law government took no action against France. Had they known that Bonar Law had suppressed two dispatches designed to protest French action, they would certainly have wanted an explanation. Fortunately for the historian, an April 18 telegram (marked "Secret. Private and Personal") from Bonar Law to Jan Smuts, Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, gives some answers to these questions and helps explain British policy.

Bonar Law said that although both he and the British government, like Smuts, agreed that conditions in the Ruhr were very serious and that "an economic loss is taking place with no compensations," he was unable "to see any course open to us other than that which we have adopted." This was true partly because two years ago Britain, together with France, had threatened Germany with occupation of the Ruhr. Then he made further explanations about British policy: "In January I was certain that whatever we might do the French would occupy the Ruhr and no action then or since seemed possible which would not have made us seem pro-German and anti-French." Furthermore, he did not believe that "direct pressure" was practicable at the present time. Commenting on Smuts' March 29 message, Bonar Law said that he felt that the Governor-General was wrong in believing that French policy was "based on the desire to

take Germany's pre-war position on the Continent"; instead, France had acted impulsively because of disappointment, the need for reparations, and a sense of insecurity. His closing statements reiterated the belief that British hands were tied: "In fact no new policy seems to me possible which would not be to take directly the side of the Germans against the French. I am sure that this would be unpopular in this country. . . ." Finally, he mentioned another factor which may have influenced the formulation of British policy: the British government had heard that public opinion in both the Dominions and the United States was very pro-French.[38] This telegram reveals that Bonar Law doubted that either British[39] or American opinion would support pressure against France.

Although some historians have written that American opinion was sympathetic to the German cause,[40] several

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[38]Bonar Law to Smuts, April 18, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 7186/313/18.

[39]In late March, Sir Charles Mendel, Paris representative, Foreign Office News Department, had talked to Lord Hardinge, recently-retired British Ambassador to France, who told him that "public opinion at home in its great majority, outside the City, viewed with admiration the stand that the French are taking against the Germans!!" See Mendel to Tyrrell, March 29, 1923, FO 395/382, P 520/2/117.

[40]René Albrecht-Carrié wrote: "popular reaction in Britain and America rankled," and Koppel S. Pinson stated that "public opinion . . . in the United States condemned the French action as an expression of aggressive militarism and imperialism." See Albrecht-Carrié, France, Europe and the Two World Wars (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), p. 133; Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 430.

dispatches from Sir Auckland Geddes, British Ambassador to the United States, did indeed cause the Foreign Office to believe that American opinion in early 1923 was pro-French. As early as February 8 he reported that Secretary of State Hughes informed him that public opinion was leaning more and more toward France in her effort to make Germany pay, and on March 28 he relayed the result of a poll conducted by the Spokesman-Review. Of 239 papers surveyed, 146 were emphatically in favor of Franco-Belgian action, 65 against, and 24 conditionally favorable. Commenting on an April 20 dispatch which said that sympathy for France was still increasing, Lampson wrote that from the beginning American feeling had definitely been pro-French.[41] This awareness of the American position probably added to British caution in dealing with France, for Britain, seeking to bring America back into the European diplomatic scene, wanted to do nothing to alienate it.

Meanwhile, the British Parliament became increasingly restive and critical of the government's foreign policy. On March 13, Sir John Simon moved a reduction in the Foreign Office Vote because of the government's inaction in the Ruhr

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[41]Geddes to FO, No. 62, February 8, 1923, FO 371/8711, C 2461/313/18; No. 385, March 28, 1923, FO 371/8727, C 6789/313/18; No. 491, April 20, 1923, FO 371/8730, C 7583/313/18. On March 5, Consul General Basil S. Cave reported that several delegates of the American Chamber of Commerce had told him that American commercial groups believed that Germany was able to pay and that France was justified in demanding payment; see Cave to FO, No. 16, March 5, 1923, FO 371/9397, W 1856/1856/17.

imbroglio and called attention to the virtual encirclement of the British zone by French outposts, the damage to British trade, and the danger of violence in the Ruhr. Simon questioned the legality of French policy, and speakers from all parties urged the government to take action of some sort.[42] Another major Ruhr debate occurred on March 28, and again several speakers tried unsuccessfully to urge the government to adopt a more active policy. Asquith asked if the government intended to continue following its policy of "benevolent impotence," and J. Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the Labour party, attacking the government harshly, said that people from all parties were asking why the British government did not say where it stood. Since Bonar Law was unable to speak, Baldwin delivered the government's reply and stated that the British government was being careful not to interfere prematurely. It had, he believed, been able to preserve the friendship of France and Belgium since the beginning of the occupation and perhaps would later be accepted as a negotiator by them and Germany. The Easter recess began on March 29, and after Parliament reconvened in April there was for a time no major Ruhr debate. The government, nevertheless,

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[42]In spite of opinions expressed in the House of Commons during this debate, the Cabinet, in its March 14 meeting, concluded: ". . . at the moment there was no new factor which would justify any departure from the general policy of the Government in regard to this question." See Cab 23/45, 15(23)6(a).

continued to be faced with frequent questions in Parliament about the Ruhr occupation.[43]

While the House of Commons was the scene of frequent criticism of British policy, the Chamber of Deputies virtually abdicated after the Ruhr occupation began. The French Senate and Chamber of Deputies had, it will be recalled, voted on January 11 to postpone questions on foreign policy until the first Friday in February. Although dissatisfaction grew in French parliamentary circles when it soon became evident that the Ruhr venture would produce no immediately favorable results, Poincaré on February 1 requested another adjournment of all interpellations on foreign policy. After acrimonious debate, the Chamber voted postponement *sine die* by a 488 to 68 margin, only Socialists and Communists opposing. The question was to come up again only on May 8, when Poincaré would once more request postponement *sine die*, make the issue a question of confidence, and win by a 487-71 vote. Not until May 22 would a full-scale Ruhr debate take place in the French Chamber. As the occupation continued, opposition to the government came to be considered disloyalty to the state, and the ministry escaped the influence of effective parliamentary criticism.[44]

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[43] *Annual Register*, 1923, pp. 31-35, 46. On March 1, 1923, p. 1, *Le Temps* declared: "The House of Commons discusses Ruhr affairs more often than the French Chamber."

[44] Frederick Lewis Schuman, *War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. An Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book

During March and the first half of April, the government also suffered only moderate criticism from the French press, most of which continued to come from the pen of Robert de Jouvenel, proprietor of the leading opposition organ, L'Oeuvre and André Tardieu, follower of Clemenceau and advocate of a harsh peace at Versailles, in L'Écho National. Several tendencies characterized the French press during the March 1-April 19 period. First, glowing statements of improvement of the situation in the Ruhr virtually disappeared. Even though this was true, a note of determination was prevalent, and Pertinax wrote on April 12 that France would stay in the Ruhr until complete payment of reparations was made. Another theme was the insistence that France would accept no mediation, would listen to no indirect approaches from Germany, and would refuse to participate in any conference designed to settle the Ruhr question. Closely related to this were suggestions that the French government itself should draw up a reparations plan in order to be prepared when the German surrender came. Both L'Écho de Paris and Le Matin published reparations schemes.[45]

Company, Inc., 1931), pp. 293-294; John E. Howard, Parliament and Foreign Policy in France (London: The Cresset Press, 1948), pp. 64, 76.

[45] L'Oeuvre, April 6, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, April 12, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, March 11, 16, and 18, 1923, p. 1. See reparations schemes published in L'Écho de Paris, March 3, 1923, p. 3; April 17, 1923, p. 3; and Le Matin, April 9, 1923, p. 1.

Several characteristics also marked the British press during the same period. First, beginning around the middle of March, the amount of space devoted to Ruhr events decreased significantly in all papers. The most prevalent theme of those articles still written about the Ruhr was a sense of frustration at the inactivity of the British government in face of the ever-tightening French grip on the Ruhr. Articles in several papers condemned Britain's lack of a well-defined policy, with particularly bitter attacks coming from the Manchester Guardian and the New Statesman.[46] No newspaper editor seemed pleased with the current trend of events. On the other hand, although the press generally bemoaned British inactivity, there were only a few concrete suggestions of alternatives for the government to pursue.[47] Neither the French nor the British press and Parliament were able to speak firmly enough to modify the policy of their respective governments.

Even though no source was given for the numerous British newspaper reports that France and Germany were negotiating and Germany was seeking a way out of the

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[46] Manchester Guardian, March 7 and 14, 1923, p. 8; New Statesman, March 3, 1923, pp. 619-620; March 24, 1923, p. 709; March 31, 1923, pp. 740-741. See also Spectator, March 10, 1923, p. 393; March 31, 1923, p. 537; Observer, March 11, 1923, p. 12, April 1, 1923, p. 10; The Times (London), March 14 and 29, 1923, p. 13.

[47] See The Times (London), March 23, 1923, p. 12; New Statesman, March 31, 1923, p. 737.

impasse,[48] these rumors were not completely without foundation. During March, the Germans spoke frequently of intervention and approached the English and the French through both official and unofficial channels. On March 10, Sthamer told Crowe that the German government, hoping to find a way out of the Ruhr deadlock, wanted to suggest that it would accept in advance the decision of an international body which would determine what Germany ought to pay, how much it had paid already, how much it could pay, and how payment might be made. Because Germany was reluctant to address the French directly, he wondered if the British government would communicate the proposals to them. Crowe replied that since Poincaré had often stated that he would accept no intervention by third parties, Germany would be well advised to approach France directly or at least to submit its suggestions to all the Allies simultaneously. Curzon repeated Crowe's advice to Sthamer four days later.[49]

Evidence of German desire for mediation came from several other sources. On March 12, Kilmarnock reported that local indications confirmed the impression that many Germans were ready to negotiate. He related that Dr. Konrad

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[48]See, for example, Daily Mail, March 7, 1923, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, March 26, 1923, p. 9.

[49]Conversation between Sthamer and Crowe, March 10, 1923, FO 371/8721, C 4585/313/18; Conversation between Sthamer and Curzon, March 14, 1923, FO 371/8632, C 4876/1/18.

Adenauer, Chief Burgermeister of Cologne, had declared that negotiations were urgently necessary and had suggested an armistice in order that they might begin. Although Ambassador D'Abernon telegraphed on March 18 that the German Chancellor and Foreign Minister had said that they saw no immediate solution and insisted that evacuation of the Ruhr must precede any negotiations, the British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin wrote a few days later that among the Germans there was a growing weariness and desire for intervention.[50]

The Germans, during the last two weeks in March, made two more efforts to find a way out of the impasse, one indirect and the other direct. When Hugo Stinnes, the powerful German industrialist, requested French Deputy Paul Reynaud to visit him to discuss conditions of an entente, Reynaud on March 16 informed the Quai d'Orsay that he was leaving for Wiesbaden. Thinking that he could not see Reynaud before he left Paris, Poincaré telegraphed Tirard to meet the Deputy upon his arrival and tell him that if he talked with Stinnes he would have him expelled from the Chamber because the government considered his action contrary to national interest. Later that day Poincaré informed Tirard that Reynaud had renounced the trip.[51]

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[50]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 114, March 12, 1923, FO 371/8723, C 4987/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 136, March 18, 1923, FO 371/8723, C 5710/313/18; Head to FO, No. 207, March 21, 1923, FO 371/8724, C 5520/313/18.

[51]Poincaré to Tirard, No. 322 and No. 326, March 16, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904. Reynaud tells a little bit about the

After Baldwin's March 28 speech in the House of Commons, Sthamer called again on Curzon and said that he believed that one passage in the speech indicated British willingness to intervene when the right moment came. Sthamer interpreted it to mean that Britain was prepared to undertake independent intervention in the near future, and Curzon replied that the Ambassador had exaggerated the meaning of the statement. The British position was unchanged: the British government would intervene only when it could do so by general desire. In closing, Curzon reminded the Ambassador of his previous advice to Germany to take the first step.[52]

It appeared in early April, however, that France itself was taking the first serious step toward negotiations. Louis Loucheur, "the most eminent and richest of businessmen-politicians in France" and a powerful political figure, went to England for a conversation with Bonar Law at Torquay on April 4 and a visit with Lloyd George, whom he had known for years. Although the Loucheur visit received intensive press coverage, both his purpose in coming to England and the nature of his mission have remained uncertain because French and British press accounts, as well

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incident in Paul Reynaud, Memoires, Vol. I: Venu de ma montagne (Paris: Flammarion, 1960), p. 170.

[52]Conversation between Curzon and Sthamer, March 29, 1923, FO 371/8725, C 5906/313/18.

as diplomatic dispatches and minutes, gave conflicting accounts. Some facts, however, do exist.[53]

It is certain that in his conversations with Bonar Law the Frenchman made specific proposals for settling the reparations question and guaranteeing French security. The financial section of his program called for fixing the German debt at 40,000,000,000 gold marks, plus the British debt to America and the service of the French and Italian debts to America, making a total much larger than that proposed in the Bonar Law plan. The section relating to French security contained the following proposals: the Rhineland should be separated from Prussia (although it would remain an integral part of Germany) and completely demilitarized; an international gendarmerie should be organized and controlled by the League of Nations; the Rhine railways should be operated by an international board under League supervision; and a special Saar State should be created and controlled by the League, but the coal mines should continue to be French property.[54]

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[53]D. W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939, Vol. II: The Shadow of War, World War, Between the Two Wars (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 593. It is regrettable that Royal J. Schmidt, who utilized Loucheur's papers in writing Versailles and the Ruhr: Seedbed of World War II, does not even mention the Loucheur visit.

[54]Suggestions Put Forward by M. Loucheur for a Settlement of the Whole Reparations Question and for a Guarantee of the Security of France, Communicated by Bonar Law, April 7, 1923, FO 371/8632, C 6300/1/18.

Interpretations vary about the nature of and reasons for the Loucheur visit. In communicating the Loucheur proposals to the Foreign Office, Bonar Law reported that Loucheur had given him the following account. Poincaré, he said, had asked him to come to England on an official mission, but he had declined to do so, saying that he preferred to explore the situation on his own account. Should the results of his exploration be favorable, he would report to Poincaré and Millerand and then return to England the following week in an official capacity. He said that Millerand was in virtually complete agreement with him and that if his plan were received favorably in England and Poincaré chose not to accept it, he, as leader of the majority in the Chamber, would bring the matter before the Chamber and make his position clear.[55] It is likely that several events interacted at this juncture to confuse the situation. First, Loucheur talked too much: he should not have revealed to the press his visits with Bonar Law and especially with Lloyd George, whom most Frenchmen detested. Second, on May 5 the Daily Telegraph published an article discussing, in a mysterious fashion, a proposed settlement which came to be attributed to Loucheur and

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[55] Ibid. Phipps wrote that Loucheur, feeling the Ruhr venture was failing, probably saw a chance to gain personal success and to extricate France from an impasse. When he announced his intention to go to England, Poincaré was more willing than he let people know; see Phipps to FO, No. 971, April 18, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 6988/313/18.

caused a furor in the French press. At this point, it seems that the publicity frightened Poincaré. As Saint-Aulaire revealed in an April 12 conversation with Bonar Law and Tyrrell, the President of the Council feared that Loucheur's visit would be interpreted by Germany as a sign of French weakness and desire for mediation, and this would encourage German resistance. When it also became clear that his Belgian allies, who had not been informed of the visit, were disturbed, Poincaré denied that he had sent Loucheur to England.[56]

When Loucheur returned to Paris, the mysteries concerning his visit increased rather than diminished. Phipps talked to him on April 9 and reported that the Frenchman was extremely optimistic and had said that he believed that both British and French public opinion had changed so much that the gap between them had been narrowed and could be easily bridged. He assured Phipps that both Millerand and Poincaré had changed recently, had come to hold moderate views, and were anxious to negotiate with England on a highly reasonable basis. Phipps, of course, was skeptical of the validity of these statements, and a discussion

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[56]Phipps to Crowe, April 6, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 7018/313/18; Daily Telegraph, May 5, 1923, p. 11; Phipps to FO, No. 364, April 6, 1923, FO 371/8632, C 6246/1/18; Memorandum by Tyrrell, April 12, 1923, FO 371/8727, C 6697/313/18; Tyrrell to Curzon, April 13, 1923, FO 371/8730, C 8384/313/18; L'Écho de Paris, April 9, 1923, pp. 1, 3; Edouard Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la IIIe Republique, Vol. III: L'apres-guerre, 1919-1924 (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1959), p. 351.

with Poincaré on the following day confirmed his doubts. Poincaré stated that he feared that Loucheur was mistaken in his belief that the British government had recently come around to the French point of view and would make proposals more favorable than the Bonar Law plan. He reaffirmed that France was in no hurry and would stay in the Ruhr until Germany paid.[57]

French press reaction to Loucheur's visit was at first mixed. Pertinax voiced a common opinion when he wrote in L'Écho de Paris that the visit was inopportune in that it would cause other nations to believe that French determination was waning and would encourage German propaganda and determination. Predictably, L'Oeuvre expressed satisfaction with the visit, saying that England and France had both wanted to talk but had not known how to begin a conversation.[58] Unfavorable comment, nevertheless, soon became predominant. Le Temps criticized Loucheur for painting such an optimistic picture of the about-face of British opinion and, in order to guard against this danger, reaffirmed the guiding principles of the French government: France would claim the payment of reparations as defined by Poincaré at the Paris and London Conferences, and French

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[57]Phipps to FO, No. 377, April 10, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 6480/1/18; No. 382, April 10, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 6482/1/18.

[58]L'Écho de Paris, April 6, 1923, p. 3; L'Oeuvre, April 8, 1923, p. 1; see also Le Temps, April 7, 1923, p. 1.

troops would stay in the Ruhr until payment was made. Several days later, Pertinax wrote that the Loucheur visit was entirely unofficial and that the time had not yet come for a rapprochement between France, England, and Belgium.[59]

British press response to the Loucheur episode was much less critical than that across the Channel. Although most British newspapers felt that he had misjudged British opinion and were uncertain about the purpose of his coming, they expressed hope that the visit would lead to improved Anglo-French relations. The Manchester Guardian guessed that France had been considering a change in policy and had sent Loucheur to ascertain whether it would be acceptable in England. Both this paper and the Spectator declared that he was mistaken in believing that British opinion was more favorable to France than previously. The Observer praised the visit, however, saying that it had led to a better understanding between the two countries and that private and public discussion of Europe's most important problem had been beneficial.[60]

The Loucheur visit, it seems, was a serious French attempt to break the Ruhr deadlock. It should be noted that

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[59] Le Temps, April 9, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, April 14, 1923, p. 3.

[60] Manchester Guardian, April 7, 1923, p. 10; April 10, 1923, p. 8; Spectator, April 14, 1923, p. 618; Observer, April 8, 1923, p. 12; see also Daily Telegraph, April 7, 1923, p. 7; April 10, 1923, p. 10; New Statesman, April 14, 1923, p. 1.

Poincaré did not, as he had done earlier with Paul Reynaud, prohibit Loucheur's leaving France. Evidence indicates that Poincaré privately authorized the mission, but when the politician's ineptness and the publicity given the journey rendered it ineffective and the French press criticized, Poincaré repudiated him publicly. Although Loucheur had planned to return to London within a week, he failed to do so, and his proposals were never discussed officially. While the affair spawned hope in England for an end to the stalemate, it stiffened the French attitude and made that nation more determined than ever to pursue the occupation and find both security and reparations in the Ruhr. Loucheur had failed; deadlock prevailed.

By mid-April, the British government had, as has been shown, refused to be budged by increasing Parliamentary and press criticism, which was merely used at times as a weapon to threaten the French government. Among Foreign Office officials there were rumblings and some hints of action, but no firm suggestion that the policy of drift should soon be abandoned. Although this inactivity cannot be fully explained, two factors seem to have been primarily responsible. First, the British government still felt its legal position compromised by the 1921 threats to occupy additional German territory. The second factor was the influence of Prime Minister Bonar Law. Believing strongly in the necessity of maintaining the Entente and feeling that American, Dominion,

and even a large segment of British opinion would condone no anti-French moves, he continued to thwart Foreign Office efforts to challenge French action.

CHAPTER IV

A DEPARTURE FROM DEADLOCK? CURZON'S APRIL 20, 1923, ADDRESS AND THE GERMAN REPARATIONS PROPOSALS OF MAY 2 AND JUNE 7, 1923

Within the Ruhr, the situation remained basically unchanged from late April through early June: the Rhineland High Commission passed eighteen additional ordinances tightening the French and Belgian grip, and the German government and Ruhr population continued the policy of passive resistance, which occasionally flared into sabotage and open resistance. During this period, the spotlight moved from the Ruhr itself to the diplomatic scene, the exchange between the major powers became somewhat more public, and Britain, France, and Germany made clear declarations of their position. Because the British government finally took the initiative, many people believed in late April that the deadlock might soon be broken. Although these hopes seemed to be dashed in early May, they revived at the beginning of June.

The stimulus for hope for an end to the diplomatic impasse came from London, where Curzon, in response to

public demands for a clear statement of the government's Ruhr policy, addressed the House of Lords on April 20. First, he traced the background of the current crisis, going back to the July, 1922, German request for a moratorium and continuing through the London Conferences of August and December, 1922, and the Paris Conference of January, 1923. Then he began a discussion and defense of Britain's Ruhr policy by referring to Bonar Law's declaration, at the close of the Paris Conference, that although the British government was unable to take part in French measures, the feeling of friendship remained unchanged. This declaration, widely approved at the time, had been the basis of British policy since the beginning of the occupation, and Britain had followed a policy of neutrality by refusing to participate in Rhineland High Commission decisions growing out of French action, refusing to take sides in Franco-German controversies, and trying to maintain order and prevent clashes between French and Germans in the British zone. Efforts in these directions had been basically successful, and the presence of British troops had been acceptable to both sides. Although trade difficulties had arisen, recent Board of Trade figures indicated that British trade with Germany was greater than during the corresponding period of the previous year.[1]

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[1] Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 53, cols. 781-786.

The Foreign Secretary next explained why the government had failed to follow suggestions that it intervene in the struggle. It had done so because it believed that outside interference would be useless and harmful until Germany and France could get together. Since speeches by French Cabinet members indicated that France would resent interference, and since Germany seemed unwilling to profit from advice, intervention would have failed. Curzon also explained British policy by discussing two possible alternatives: had Britain assisted France, it would have participated in an act whose wisdom it doubted, and had it supported Germany, it would have been disloyal to the Allies. The British government could not do the latter, for the Entente must be maintained:

> Our guiding consideration throughout has been that the Entente between France and Britain and their Allies should not be broken. We are profoundly convinced that the Entente is the basis of European recovery and of the European peace. . . . If that Entente be broken down, I see no limit to the chaos that would result and to the perils to European peace and to recovered prosperity that might ensue.[2]

He then declared that the British policy of neutrality was not, as had been charged, one of impotence. He was unable to agree that the British government had done nothing; instead, it was avoiding mistakes and waiting for the opportune time to intervene. This policy had been acceptable to both Germany and France and had left Britain in a

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[2]Ibid., col. 788.

position to intervene effectively at any moment. Those who attacked the government's policy should realize that no concrete, workable alternatives had been proposed and that French determination and German resistance had closed most diplomatic doors. The suggestion that the League of Nations intervene was no solution for two reasons. In the first place, the reparations problem had been entrusted to other international bodies; second, the League of Nations would probably be unable to bear such a burden, and there was always the possibility that the French would withdraw from Geneva.[3]

How, then, could the deadlock be broken? Curzon suggested that Germany, the debtor, should take the first step:

> . . . I cannot help thinking, for my part, that if Germany were to make an offer of her willingness and intention to pay and to have the payment fixed by authorities properly charged with the duty, and if she were at the same time to offer specific guarantees for the continued payments, an advance might be made. . . .[4]

After he reaffirmed that British policy was based upon the Entente, the Foreign Secretary tried again to pave the way for negotiations by saying that although the British government still advocated the proposals of the Bonar Law plan, they were not immutable and could be discussed. Furthermore, it was willing to discuss the security problem and

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[3] *Ibid.*, cols. 788-794. [4] *Ibid.*, cols. 795-796.

to help both parties if an offer were made for breaking the stalemate.[5]

Neither the French nor British press unanimously applauded the British effort to break the deadlock. In fact, French press reaction to the address disappointed Curzon severely, for even though a few Paris papers acknowledged his warm expressions about the Entente, most of them criticized, saying that the speech showed that the British had made little advance from their January position and intended to remain independent. While Pertinax declared that it would encourage Germany to resist, René Pinon, in his "Chronique de la quinzaine" in La Revue des deux mondes, protested the British effort to return to the center of the diplomatic stage. He assailed Curzon for placing Germany on the same foot with France and Belgium and for saying that any guarantees of security would have to be reciprocal. Imagine the victims of Germany's aggression in 1914 giving guarantees to it![6]

Curzon's statement, which was labelled the most definite explanation of the government's position and policy since the beginning of the occupation, met a warmer response in the British press than in the French. Although the Daily

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[5]Ibid., cols. 796-797.

[6]Conversation between Saint-Aulaire and Crowe, April 25, 1923, FO 371/8729, C 7516/313/18; L'Écho de Paris, April 22, 1923, p. 3; La Revue des deux mondes, 93rd Year, 7th Period, Vol. 15 (May 1, 1923), 238-239.

Mail disagreed with Curzon's assertion that the British people had supported the policy of neutrality, most papers felt that he had been correct. They emphasized that the speech was not an offer of mediation but merely an invitation to make proposals directly to the Allies rather than through Britain. There was, however, some mild criticism. The Manchester Guardian said that the speech indicated that the government was standing "fast in an attitude . . . of impotence," and the Spectator expressed disappointment that Curzon had failed to elaborate a definite plan "which would act as a rallying point for sane opinion in Germany, in France, in Britain, and elsewhere."[7]

Curzon's address gave a glimmer of hope to the German government by leading it to believe that if it were to make an offer which England considered reasonable it could count on British support. Very quickly the German government acted upon the British hint.[8] When it began to draft the offer, however, the government experienced difficulties in trying to make proposals that would satisfy both Allied

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[7]Daily Mail, April 21, 1923, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, April 21, 1923, p. 10; Spectator, April 28, 1923, p. 697.

[8]Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of the Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 244; Eric Sutton, trans. and ed., Gustav Stresemann, His Diaries, Letters, and Papers (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), I, 62; Minute by Crowe, April 23, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 7177/313/18.

demands and the aroused German populace, which would condemn any appearance of capitulation. In desperation, the Germans appealed to the British for assistance. On April 22 the German Foreign Minister asked D'Abernon what kind of offer he felt that Germany should make and explained that since it would be difficult for the parties in Germany to agree on precise reparations figures he wondered if a more general proposal would be acceptable. After considering D'Abernon's dispatch, the Foreign Office told him under no circumstances to participate in the formulation of an offer to be made to France.[9] The Germans, nevertheless, persisted. When Dufour-Feronce, Counsellor of the German Embassy, called on Lampson on April 25 and asked whether the impending German proposals should name a definite sum, Lampson replied that he could express no opinion. Undaunted, Dufour-Feronce met him again two days later and said that Sthamer had received semi-official suggestions about the terms Germany should propose. Lampson stated that any such suggestions were entirely unofficial and that Curzon had made it very clear to Sthamer that he would give no hints about the contents of the offer. Meanwhile, the Germans were also meeting British refusal for assistance in Berlin, for D'Abernon reported on May 1 that he had given

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[9]Carl Bergmann, The History of Reparations (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), p. 192; Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 245; D'Abernon to FO, No. 176, April 22, 1923, and FO to D'Abernon, No. 86, April 25, 1923, FO 371/8728, C 7177/313/18.

the German government no advice.[10] The Germans had to formulate their own proposals, and they did so rapidly.

After submitting the offer to party leaders and representatives of the federal states on May 1, the German government the following day communicated it to the Allied governments. The tone and content of the note were scarcely designed to elicit French favor. In the opening paragraphs the Germans condemned the Ruhr occupation and stated that they would neither abandon "the principles underlying their juridical point of view" nor renounce passive resistance, which would continue until the evacuation of all territory "occupied beyond the Treaty of Versailles." The note then turned to specific financial proposals but prefaced discussion of these by saying that in order to fulfill them Germany must re-establish its credit and raise foreign loans. It proposed that Germany's total reparations obligations be fixed at 30,000,000,000 gold marks, which would be raised by floating loans on international money markets in three installments: 20,000,000,000 by July 1, 1927, another 5,000,000,000 by July 1, 1929, and the remaining 5,000,000,000 by July 1, 1931. Should it be impossible to raise the last two installments under normal conditions, an "impartial international commission" would "decide whether,

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[10]Conversation between Lampson and Dufour-Feronce, April 25 and 27, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7744/1/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 190, May 1, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 11094/313/18.

when and how the rest is to be raised." Germany would also continue making deliveries in kind as set forth in earlier agreements. These proposals represented the "utmost limit of what Germany is able to pay," and perhaps exceeded its capacity; should others fail to agree, it would "submit the whole reparations problem to an international commission uninfluenced by political considerations," such as the one mentioned by Secretary of State Hughes in December, 1922. It would also "provide special guarantees for the proposed payment," and these would be determined by negotiating with the syndicate making the loan and with the Reparation Commission.

All of these proposals, the note declared, were dependent upon the stabilization of German currency, the future cessation of the "high-handed seizure of pledges and sanctions," and the rapid restoration of the administrative unity of Germany. In closing, it referred to the problem of security and said that Germany would be willing to make agreements insuring peace if these were reciprocal. Before, however, negotiations could begin on any of the points set forth in the communication, the status quo ante would have to be restored: territory occupied beyond the stipulations of the Versailles Treaty must be evacuated, imprisoned Germans released, and those expelled allowed to return to their homes and work.[11]

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[11]Sthamer to Curzon, May 2, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7832/1/18.

The Germans, by virtually refusing to budge, turned a large segment of British and French opinion more strongly against themselves and made France even more intransigent. Most British newspapers criticized the German note, the most bitter condemnation coming from the Daily Telegraph and the Daily Mail. The Telegraph asked what purpose the Germans possibly imagined could be served by such a document, which marked no advance toward the desired goal, was stiff-necked about passive resistance, and offered an inadequate reparations figure. Although The Times said that it was "stupidly worded," gave "only the vaguest guarantees," and irritated French susceptibilities, both it and the Observer stated that the note should serve as the basis of negotiations and should not be rejected summarily.[12] Nevertheless, the French press violently attacked the German offer and almost unanimously proclaimed the rejection against which The Times had warned. The non-partisan Le Petit Parisien called it derisory, said that it could not be used as the starting point for conversations, and condemned the suggestion of allowing an international commission to fix Germany's capacity to pay. In the moderately conservative, nationalistic L'Écho de Paris, Pertinax declared that Germany was trying to draw England further toward mediation. While the moderately chauvinistic Le

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[12]Daily Telegraph, May 3, 1923, p. 10; Daily Mail, May 3, 1923, p. 8; The Times (London), May 3, 1923, p. 13; Observer, May 6, 1923, p. 12.

Journal des Débats remarked that the note offered nothing but appearances in return for evacuation of the Ruhr, Le Temps said that it, in effect, would make a clean sweep of the Allied victory and entail the negotiation of a new treaty.[13]

French governmental reaction to the German communication was hostile and hasty. On the day the note was delivered, Lord Crewe reported that feeling at the Quai d'Orsay was highly incensed and that Paris was looking toward London to see what attitude Curzon would take toward the insult to France. When the French Council of Ministers met the morning of May 3 to discuss the German note with Poincaré, it unanimously rejected the proposals. Later that day, Poincaré informed Saint-Aulaire, as well as the French Ambassadors in Washington, Rome, and Tokyo, that since the German proposals were unacceptable and could not even serve as a basis for discussion, the French government was unanimous in rejecting them and would, after collaborating with the Belgian government, reply directly to Germany.[14]

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[13] Le Petit Parisien, May 2, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, May 2, 1923, p. 1; Le Journal des Débats, May 3, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, May 3, 1923, p. 1.

[14] Crewe to FO, No. 449, May 2, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7833/1/18; Le Temps, May 4, 1923, p. 6; France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangeres, Documents diplomatiques: Documents relatifs aux notes allemandes des 2 mai et 5 juin sur les reparations (2 mai-3 aout 1923) (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1923), pp. 10-11. Documents diplomatiques entries will hereafter be cited as follows: Doc. dip.: notes sur reparations, page.

The British government's reaction to the May 2 note was also basically unfavorable. Although Curzon in a May 3 telegram to D'Abernon expressed no official opinion, he observed that Germany should be prepared for French refusal to accept the proposals, for France would probably regard the financial provisions inadequate and be incensed at both Germany's refusal to abandon passive resistance and its insistence that the Ruhr be quickly evacuated. Meanwhile, Foreign Office and Treasury personnel considered the note and its implications. Lampson wrote on May 3 that France would almost surely consider the financial offer unsatisfactory since it was considerably less than the amount suggested in the Bonar Law plan. He went on to say, nevertheless, that the figure was inconsequential: more important was Germany's capacity to pay. The German suggestion for having an impartial body of experts determine its capacity was worthwhile, but getting France to consent would be difficult.[15]

The following day, O. C. Niemeyer relayed Treasury observations on the German reparations offer. These pointed out that the proposal embodied no workable provision for control over German finance and that it was highly unlikely that Germany would be able to borrow the proposed 20,000,000,000 gold marks by 1927. Furthermore, even though

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[15]FO to D'Abernon, No. 674, May 2, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7896/1/18; Minute by Lampson, May 3, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7832/1/18.

the Ruhr occupation was lengthening the moratorium period, there was no justification for reducing total payment to 30,000,000,000 gold marks--an amount which would barely cover the costs of restoring France's devastated regions, leaving nothing for England or other countries. In closing, Niemeyer said that what was truly significant was Germany's offer to refer the whole problem to an impartial tribunal. England should express its willingness to accept this solution because it needed to bring the occupation to an end for economic reasons. While the occupation had at first stimulated some British industries, that effect was wearing off, and both the rising price of coal and difficulties in textile trades were causing serious trouble. Predicting a depression in British industry and saying that a change in the Ruhr would help remove it, he asked that the Foreign Office not hastily endorse any French rejection of the proposals.[16]

Although Niemeyer's comment, it should be noted, either contradicted or superseded Curzon's April 20 statement that the occupation had stimulated British trade, it did affect the thinking of Foreign Office personnel and cause them to treat the German offer cautiously. After

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[16]Niemeyer to Crowe, May 4, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 7894/1/18. In the Minutes on Niemeyer's letter, Lampson wrote: "Of course the essence of the whole problem is whether a settlement is genuinely desired or not? And if so, are we prepared to see a widening rift in our relations with France in order to achieve it?"

consultation, Curzon told Lord Crewe and Sir George Grahame, British Ambassador to Belgium, to inform the French and Belgian governments that the British government would like to hear their views before deciding what action to take on the German note and to remind them that even though France and Belgium were most directly concerned with the matter, the other powers were also involved and would have to reply. "I need hardly point out how desirable it is that there should be no divergence of opinion or action in a matter of such grave international importance."[17] The next day the Foreign Secretary publicly proclaimed his desire for a collective reply when he discussed the German note in a speech before a Primrose League demonstration at the Albert Hall. After admitting that many people considered the offer inadequate, he said that whether it was good or bad, it concerned all the nations, who could "only emerge from this difficult . . . situation by concerted action, and if the Germans are confronted with the advice, decision and action of all the principal Powers concerned the chances of success will be greatly increased."[18]

After his speech, Curzon continued to exert official pressure to compel France to consult with the Allies before replying, but even before his Albert Hall appearance France

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[17]FO to Crewe, No. 191, and FO to Grahame, No. 66, May 3, 1923, FO 371/8633, C 7832/1/18.

[18]<u>The Times</u> (London), May 5, 1923, p. 14.

was drafting a reply to Germany. When Lord Crewe on May 3 relayed Curzon's request for French views on the German offer, Poincaré told him that the Council of Ministers had decided upon the response that morning. After Belgium assented to the precise wording, he would give Crewe a copy, and the reply would probably be given to Germany on May 5. It would be a reasonable document which would set forth the inadequacies of the German proposals but would reflect no desire to close any door to acceptable proposals in the future. The subject of a common response came up in London the next day when Saint-Aulaire informed Crowe that France and Belgium were working together on the reply to the note. Crowe reminded the French Ambassador that Poincaré had previously asserted that in spite of its independent action in the Ruhr the French government regarded the reparations question as an inter-Allied issue. Because of these declarations, he should exchange views with the Allies before replying to Germany. Saint-Aulaire pointed out that if unanimity could not be obtained in such discussions, great disadvantages might ensue, for Germany would see clearly the divergence between the Allies. Crowe, while recognizing the risk, felt that the effort was worth making.[19]

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[19]Crewe to FO, No. 454, May 3, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 7903/1/18; Conversation between Crowe and Saint-Aulaire, May 4, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 7988/1/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, May 4, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, p. 13.

Still the Foreign Office refused to give up. On May 4 it instructed Crewe to see Poincaré again and tell him that the British government was surprised that the answer to Germany had already been settled, remind him of his assurances that the reparations issue was an inter-Allied one, and urge him to delay sending a reply to Germany until he had exchanged views with the Allies. When Crewe talked to Poincaré later that day, however, he refused to delay beyond May 5. The President of the Council justified his decision by saying that there was no need to collaborate on the terms of a reply when the reply itself was merely a refusal to consider propositions which involved a breach of the Treaty. Were methods of payment or French proposals to Germany under consideration, he would certainly consult the Allies, but this was not the case. The French government would never prepare a reparations program without its Allies, but it could not delay sending a refusal to the German propositions, for French public opinion would not condone it.[20]

The numerous British pleas for consultation failed,[21] and on May 5 Saint-Aulaire read to Curzon the Franco-Belgian

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[20]FO to Crewe, No. 192, May 4, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 7903/1/18; Crewe to FO, No. 457, May 4, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 7966/1/18; Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, May 4, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, p. 14.

[21]Two dispatches written in early May suggest one possible reason for Poincaré's haste in replying to the German note. On May 5, Sir George Grahame reported that

reply, which he said was being given to German Embassies in Brussels and Paris at that time. Curzon was furious. He declared that Poincaré had broken his promise to consult the British government before answering and had informed it of the terms of the reply just as it was being given to the Germans.[22] When Saint-Aulaire said that France and Belgium could themselves reply to a matter so directly affecting them, Curzon answered that only because of his speech in the House of Lords had Germany made proposals. Without even consulting him, the French had slammed the door he had attempted to open and had revealed divergence between the two nations. He warned that he would have to tell the whole story to Parliament the following week. When Saint-Aulaire called the German proposals derisory, Curzon replied that though they were in some respects unsatisfactory, they should not be refused with contempt. It was absurd, he declared, for Poincaré to go on talking about a 132,000,000,000 gold mark reparations total: new figures

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several important Belgian officials had told him that Poincaré wanted to avoid being drawn into a conference as a result of the German offer. A few days later Crewe said that the Belgian Ambassador had told him that he knew that the statement was true. Poincaré's fear that the attempt to write a joint reply would lead to a new conference had been the main reason for his refusal to work with the other Allies. See Grahame to FO, No. 99, May 5, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 8048/1/18; Crewe to FO, No. 484, May 10, 1923, FO 371/8635, C 8379/1/18.

[22]Curzon seems to have been mistaken, for the records surveyed in this study reveal no promise by Poincaré to consult the British before sending a reply to Germany.

must be fixed, and the Allies would have to do this together.[23]

On May 6 the French government communicated its reply to von Hoesch, German Chargé d'Affaires in Paris. The document, which was longer than the German note to which it was replying, opened with a refutation of Germany's allegation that Franco-Belgian independent action was contrary to the Versailles Treaty. It declared that France and Belgium had not violated the Treaty, but the proposals formulated by Germany opposed it in several ways. Contrary to what the German note declared, France had at first carried out this seizure of pledges without violence, but orders from Berlin prevented the cooperation it had envisioned. Until the so-called passive resistance ceased, France and Belgium would consider no German proposals. Furthermore, because this resistance included opposition to the normal functions of the Military Control Commission it was a breach of the Treaty.

Then the French note set forth a long declaration of the unacceptability of the German reparations proposals. It first noted that the figures offered were inadequate in amount, for 30,000,000,000 gold marks represented less than one-fourth of the total fixed by the Reparation Commission and accepted by Germany in 1921. France and Belgium had

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[23]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, May 5, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 8071/1/18.

several times declared and now repeated that they could accept no reduction of their own credits, and "that if they are prepared to set off a part of them against inter-Allied debts they are absolutely obliged to obtain payment of the remainder in order to recover from the terrible disasters which the German invasion inflicted upon them."[24] They were also unacceptable by virtue of being in several ways indefinite in form. The value of the offer would in practice amount to less than 30,000,000,000 gold marks because the interest up to July 1, 1927, to the issuers of the 20,000,000,000 mark portion of the loan was to be deducted from the proceeds of the loan itself. Since the first payment was to come due only on that date, Germany was, in effect, asking for a complete moratorium for four and one-half years. There were even fewer guarantees for the two supplementary portions of the loan, and Germany would probably try later to have part of the 30,000,000,000 mark figure cancelled. In addition, the reparations proposals were unacceptable in that they, like the Bonar Law plan, suggested depriving the Reparation Commission of the authority given it by the Versailles Treaty to be the judge of the partial reduction of debts and postponement of payments.

Then the note criticized the German security proposals, saying that they were vague and illusory and,

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[24]Poincaré to von Hoesch, May 6, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 15-16.

amazingly, completely omitted Belgium. This was astounding when one remembered how Germany, one of the guarantors of Belgium's neutrality in 1914, had acted toward it. France and Belgium were unable to accept mere reciprocal guarantees: they required certainties. Finally, the note attacked the conditions upon which the German offer had been based. France and Belgium could not, as Germany demanded, restore the status quo ante by evacuating newly-occupied territories and repealing measures taken by the Rhineland High Commission. If they did so, it would mean that for four and one-half years--the period in which they most needed cash payments and deliveries in kind--they would have to sit patiently, without pledges or guarantees, until Germany got ready to pay something. This they refused to do. As previously declared, they would leave the newly-occupied areas only in proportion as payments were made.[25]

The French reply, as press reaction revealed, increased bitterness between Britain and France. Predictably, it met a warm response in the Paris press. Even before it was published, most papers defended Poincaré's willingness to disregard the British request for consultation among the Allies, saying that it was inconceivable that Britain would have consented to France's two essential points: cessation of passive resistance and no evacuation until Germany was actually making payments. Jean Herbette,

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[25] Ibid., pp. 16-19.

foreign affairs expert of Le Temps, who was in close contact with the Quai d'Orsay, wrote that it was neither France nor Belgium who preferred isolation to solidarity; instead, England had several times since the armistice broken the Allied front in order to save a Germany who was paying nothing. The following day he praised the French reply and said that the response it would evoke in Berlin would depend to a great extent upon English action since Germany was counting on British support against France and Belgium. Again the next day he pursued the same theme in an article entitled "Berlin Awaits 'His Master's Voice,'" in which he became more bitter toward England, pointing out that it was the latter who had set the example of independent action. After referring to Chamberlain's October, 1920, statement in the House of Commons, he charged that Curzon had made the speech which resulted in the May 2 German note without consulting the Allies.[26] British press comment focused more upon France's refusal to send a collective reply than upon the note itself. Most papers condemned France and Belgium for refusing to heed Curzon's advice made in the Albert Hall speech and had difficulty in trying to understand Poincaré's reasons for independent action, which they felt was a grave diplomatic blunder meaning renewal of the deadlock. Only The Times referred specifically to the French reply. While this paper said

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[26] Le Temps, May 7, 8, and 9, 1923, p. 1.

that the French response, though skillfully worded, was unbusinesslike, unconvincing, and as controversial as the German note had been, both it and the New Statesman thought that there might be one good result of Poincaré's precipitate reply: it would give Britain more freedom in making its own reply to Germany.[27]

The German government having made an offer as suggested by Curzon, and the French having categorically rejected it, the initiative passed once more to the British government, which began to deal with the dismal situation. Once again it seemed to be groping for the step to be taken next. The day after Saint-Aulaire read the French response to Curzon, the Foreign Office prepared a Minute criticizing it, but the Minute was mild in tone, focused upon several minor details, basically side-stepped the issue of legality, and, in short, offered no substantive criticism. When the Cabinet met on May 7 to consider the reparations question, Curzon presented over twenty-five dispatches relevant to the current problem, including the German May 2 note and a British draft reply to it. After he gave an extensive account of the recent diplomatic exchanges, the Cabinet agreed to approve the draft reply subject to a few amendments and any changes the Treasury might consider necessary. It asked that the amended dispatch be communicated to

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[27]The Times (London), May 8, 1923, p. 15; New Statesman, May 12, 1923, p. 129.

Mussolini through the British Ambassador at Rome. When Italy concurred, it should be given to the German Ambassador in London and, on the same day, to the Belgian and French governments. Finally, the Cabinet decided that since so many questions had arisen in the House of Commons identic statements would be made the following day in both Houses.[28]

The statement made by Curzon in the House of Lords on May 8 was very brief, said almost nothing new, and revealed again the indecisiveness of the British government. He pointed out that since the German note had been addressed to all of the Allied powers and the reparations problem deeply concerned each of them, the British government felt that France, Britain, Italy, and Belgium should send a collective reply. It would have been possible, he believed, to write a collective answer, "reserving for separate treatment by the French and Belgian Governments, if they so desired, the questions arising directly out of the recent occupation of German territory by their military forces." The British government regretted both the "unnecessary precipitancy" of the Franco-Belgian hasty answer and the "loss of the opportunity which . . . had been presented of once more testifying, by a joint communication, to the solidarity of the Allied Entente." This chance having been lost,

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[28]Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), May 6, 1923, FO 371/8634, C 8068/1/18; Cab. 23/45, 24(23)1(a,b,c, d).

the British government itself would soon reply to the German note, the Italian government would probably do the same, and the British reply would be published as soon as it was communicated to Germany.[29]

On May 13 Sthamer received the British reply which, though framed in less emotional terms than the French answer to Germany, was nevertheless a rejection of the May 2 note. Curzon said that the German proposals disappointed him greatly. They corresponded neither "in form or in substance" to what the British government expected, and the German government should have guarded against the unfavorable impression it knew they would make upon the Allies. The Foreign Secretary's criticism dealt with two specific points. First, the sum offered was inadequate, being less than the figure suggested in the Bonar Law plan, and the payment of even this small sum was contingent upon German procurement of international loans, which he doubted Germany could secure. Second, instead of giving "concrete and substantial" guarantees for the payment of the figure, the Germans had given only "vague assurances and references to future negotiations." If Germany truly wanted to lead the way to a solution of the severe problems troubling Europe economically and politically, it should make serious and precise proposals which would form a stable basis of

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[29] Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords, Vol. 54, cols. 2-4.

discussion and should discard "all irrelevant or controversial issues."[30] Curzon's reply, it should be noted, failed to mention Germany's offer to abide by the decisions of an international committee of experts.

Because the British reply totally rejected the German proposals, the French press, which was supposedly inspired, responded to the May 13 note more favorably than did the British. Curzon's reply seemed to create a good impression in France, and newspapers there discussed it in a calm, rather detached fashion, even though they pointed out that it mentioned neither the Ruhr nor productive pledges. While Le Petit Parisien expressed satisfaction with the British note, it reiterated French demands for cessation of passive resistance and evacuation by installments and expressed some fear that England and Italy might be collaborating too closely.[31] British press reaction was moderately critical, indicating that the government's policy fully satisfied no one. Although some of the papers barely mentioned the British note and others discussed it fully, all agreed that it held the door open for further negotiations. Both the Manchester Guardian and The Times regretted Curzon's ignoring Germany's offer to let an international commission determine its reparations obligation, The Times

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[30]Curzon to Sthamer, May 13, 1923, FO 371/8635, C 8311/1/18.

[31]Le Petit Parisien, May 14, 1923, p. 1; see also L'Ère Nouvelle, May 14, 1923, p. 1.

wished that Curzon had stated the British case in a more comprehensive and explicit manner, and the Spectator said that he should have explained what he thought the German note ought to have been.[32]

When the German government began formulating the new offer which Curzon had called for, it turned once more to the British for advice. D'Abernon reported on May 19 that the Germans would try to get hints from London about what kind of proposal would be considered acceptable or appropriate. Remembering instructions given him to refrain from participating in the formation of the first German note, he said on May 25 that he had not given the Germans advice about the terms of their forthcoming offer.[33] Still the Germans sought British assistance. When Sthamer told Curzon on May 29 that he had been instructed to ask his views on the subject of reparations so that the German government could make acceptable proposals in its impending note to the Allied powers, the Foreign Secretary replied that he could not at all discuss the matter. The Ambassador

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[32]Manchester Guardian, May 14, 1923, p. 6; The Times (London), May 14, 1923, p. 13; Spectator, May 19, 1923, pp. 836-837. The Annual Register, 1923, p. 49, noted that the British reply satisfied neither the government's critics nor its friends. It explained British policy by pointing to the existence of "a section of the Conservative Party and of the Cabinet itself which was not disposed to follow the Premier's lead, and to which he was repeatedly forced to make concessions."

[33]D'Abernon to FO, No. 208, May 19, 1923, FO 371/8636, C 8918/1/18; No. 212, May 25, 1923, FO 371/8637, C 9253/1/18.

then complained of the difficult position of his government, which, he said, was having to proceed upon guesswork since it had no ideas what proposals would be satisfactory. This failed to move Curzon, who closed by saying that if the German government would look at press criticism both on the Continent and in England it would find ample information about the omissions or blemishes of the May 2 note.[34]

While Germany was preparing a new reparations offer, attention in both Britain and France centered for a time on the domestic political scene. Suffering from throat cancer, Bonar Law resigned on May 21, and the following day Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister. Although Curzon, who had believed that he would receive the appointment, was bitterly disappointed, he continued to serve as Foreign Secretary.[35] The French government welcomed Baldwin's appointment partly because Saint-Aulaire had heard that he was, along with Derby, very favorable to the French cause. The French Ambassador wrote that Baldwin's sympathies for France were

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[34]Conversation between Curzon and Sthamer, May 29, 1923, FO 371/8637, C 9451/1/18. The information contained in the above-mentioned telegrams from D'Abernon and in the record of the Curzon-Sthamer conversation seems to contradict the statement made by Keith Middlemas and John Barnes. They wrote that the new German note "took shape under British influence." See Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 181.

[35]Leonard Mosley told of Curzon's intense resentment of Baldwin's appointment. He declared that the Foreign Secretary "had little more than contempt" for Baldwin. After the May crisis, Curzon's health failed rapidly; see Mosley, Curzon. The End of an Epoch (London: Longmans, 1960), pp. 275-276, 279.

well known and that he had fewer illusions than Bonar Law about Germany, and Baldwin's most recent biographers have also said that he was francophile and believed in the necessity of maintaining the Entente.[36]

Baldwin's actions during his first days in office encouraged the French to hope that relations with Britain might improve. In his first week as Prime Minister he talked with Philippe Millet, a leading French journalist, and soon afterwards Le Petit Parisien published a brief and conciliatory open message from Baldwin to the French people. He stated that although he could not at that point say in what particular fashion basic Anglo-French problems could be solved, he hoped to be able soon to discuss them with French leaders. Until he could do so, he wanted to emphasize a few things. First, he was confident that there was no problem, regardless how difficult, on which France and England would be unable to find common ground and adjust their policies. Second, England realized the importance of France's need for security and wanted to insure European peace. Finally, he would work to settle the difficulties; even though at first there might be temporary set-backs, success would come.[37]

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[36] Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), pp. 655-656, 658; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 181.

[37] Annual Register, 1923, p. 66; Le Petit Parisien, June 4, 1923, p. 1.

As Baldwin was taking over the reins of government in England, the French government asked for credits to meet Ruhr expenses, and on May 22 a week-long debate began in the Chamber of Deputies. During the course of the debate, which was destined to be the only major foreign affairs discussion in the Chamber for several months, the government's Ruhr policy was attacked from both right and left, contradictory figures were given about the results of the occupation, but Poincaré successfully defended the invasion of the Ruhr.

On May 24, Vincent Auriol, Socialist leader, launched a vigorous attack against the government's Ruhr policy, criticizing it on both economic and political grounds. He first asked what were the government's intentions in going into the Ruhr. After asking if it had gone there merely to extract the small deficit in Germany's coal deliveries, he answered that that was merely a pretext. If France did not enter the Ruhr to find coal and coke, had it done so to obtain productive guarantees? Was it a means of coercion or force, or did France seek to gain both political and economic profits through a permanent occupation? If France went there to seize guarantees, how could the occupation of the Ruhr by itself solve the tedious reparations problem, the transfer problem, and the question of inter-Allied debts? After asking numerous questions, he charged that the occupation was being poorly conducted and that France

was, through its harsh military occupation, wrecking the delicate industrial machinery of Germany.

Then he turned to the economic results of the venture and said that the figures told the story. Whereas France had received 332,000,000 francs worth of coal during the first four months of 1922 that figure had dropped to 36,000,000 francs during the corresponding months of 1923. When Poincaré replied that Auriol was juggling the figures, the Deputy reported that it was the President of the Council who had done so, for he had said that civil and military expenses for the occupation totalled 63,648,000 francs and receipts 62,500,000. This balance sheet was incorrect because it failed to include expenses for administration of the railroads and also because it included all the receipts from the sale of seized coal, part of which belonged to the Allies according to the Versailles Treaty. Furthermore, the balance sheet was incorrect in that it failed to mention that since December the price of coal had risen from 95 to 198 francs per ton and the franc was selling at 69 per pound rather than 62. Whatever were France's objects, it had failed to attain them. Poincaré had thought that he could drive a wedge between the German workers and industrialists, but, forgetting the force of nationalism, he had brought about militaristic reaction and hindered a final and practical solution of the war-debts and reparations problems.[38]

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[38] J.O., Chambre, May 25, 1923, pp. 2091-2096.

Before long, Poincaré intervened in the debate. He first defended himself by attacking Germany, listing once more its failure since 1921 to meet the reparations obligations, and declaring that while undertaking massive public works programs it had failed to reform its finances, levy sufficient taxes, and make the industrialists pay. He then mentioned England, and every reference to it in his speech was basically friendly. Although France regretted that England had abstained from supporting the other Allies in the Rhineland High Commission decisions, it acknowledged that this abstention had been very courteous, thanks principally to Bonar Law and also to Curzon, Derby, and the new Prime Minister, Baldwin. This British isolation had, nevertheless, led Germany to believe that there was a rupture in the Allied front and had thus stimulated resistance. Contrary to what Auriol had said, French thoughts were not unclear and confused: France had forseen and prepared well the different phases of the occupation, which had been carried out no more harshly because France wanted to show its moderation to the whole world.

Next the President of the Council turned to financial matters. After saying that inflation would have occurred even had France not gone into the Ruhr, he declared that France and Belgium would turn over to the Reparation Commission the net proceeds it collected. He reported that receipts from the Ruhr had grown in the past weeks and were

increasing daily. Since March 25 the daily total of coke loaded had grown from 1,000 to 11,000 tons, and the current figure of 11,000 tons of coal per day should soon reach 15,000. Since French exploitation of Ruhr coal was producing favorable results, France could wait patiently for Germany to regain its senses. In addition, the Régie was producing increasingly favorable results: on April 15 it was carrying only 17,000 passengers daily, but this figure had grown to 30,000.

Referring to Curzon's April 20 speech and the German May 2 note, he expressed regret that Curzon had invited Germany to make an offer and said that France had taken no such initiative because it was convinced that the best way to compel Germany to make serious proposals was to hold pledges.[39] Although the French government hoped to be able to concert in a collective response before long, it had for several reasons been unable to try to form a common reply to the German note: first, it could consent to no reduction of the French share of German reparations; second, the German note contested the legality of the Ruhr operation; third, Germany had made false accusations of violence against France and Belgium; finally, the German propositions were subordinated to the continuation of resistance. Because of all of these factors France had to reply to Germany immediately: "No! no! we will not talk, we will not listen at all until

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[39] Ibid., pp. 2101-2105.

you have ceased your resistance!"[40] In closing, Poincaré refuted charges that France was seeking territorial aggrandizement. He said that it was absolutely untrue that France harbored any ulterior motive of annexation, and those who said so lied.

> We do not claim today, we will not claim tomorrow, we will never claim any territorial advantage for France against the wishes of the populations. . . . If we have entered the Ruhr, it is not to establish ourselves permanently and finally. . . . We have entered it . . . as the Germans occupied a major portion of France from 1870 to the end of 1873, in order to be paid.[41]

At the close of his address, the President of the Council received a standing ovation.

The debate continued into the following week and ended on May 29, when Poincaré and the occupation came under sharp attack from the right, represented by Pierre-Étienne Flandin and André Tardieu. The nature of their criticism

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[40] Ibid., p. 2105.

[41] Ibid., p. 2106. A letter written by the French Finance Minister on May 31 seems to corroborate Poincaré's assertion that France wanted to annex no German territory. He said that since the Ruhr occupation was "the pivot of all French policy," perhaps France ought to tell Belgium what payments it wanted to receive before it would evacuate the Ruhr. In discussing a tentative financial plan, part of which involved Germany's securing loans in France, he stated: "In order to show, however, that France is not trying, through these loans, to remain indefinitely in the Ruhr, it would be stipulated that Germany at the end of a certain time would have the right to repay these loans in advance and consequently to demand the evacuation of a correlative part of Ruhr territory." See Le Ministre des Finances à Mon. le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères (Sous-Direction des Relations Commerciales), No. 5.204.S.A., May 31, 1923, A.N., F30 1276.

differed from that of Auriol, for they called for an intensification of the occupation. Flandin urged the employment of more forceful methods to make Germany pay and the use of direct exploitation in the form of sequestering and auctioning German property.[42] Tardieu began by saying that he and his friends would vote for the Ruhr credits, as they had voted for the occupation on January 11, because they felt that the occupation was necessary in order to make France the master of German will and of the production of the Ruhr. Unlike Auriol, who was opposed to the occupation, he wanted to discuss ways of assuring maximum success for the endeavor.

Tardieu then criticized the manner in which the occupation had been carried out. He said that planning an invisible occupation had been a bad psychological mistake and that it was unbelievable that Poincaré had thought that Germany would cooperate: did he not read the newspapers? Furthermore, France had failed to utilize enough force in carrying out its plans and, amazingly, had prepared no economic, political, fiscal, or monetary régime for the Ruhr. After using several illustrations to point out the ineffectiveness of planning and execution, the Deputy turned to economic aspects. He asked why a blockade was declared only after February 1 and why France had not started getting coal much more quickly. Then he charged that the Mission of Control (MICUM) was ineffective and really controlled nothing, that

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[42] J.O., Chambre, May 30, 1923, pp. 2181-2184.

Degoutte had not been granted the necessary powers, that German will had not been broken, and that the financial results of the operation were only mediocre. While deliveries from the Ruhr had decreased, coal purchases from England had increased, and there was certainly no exploitation of the Ruhr! France had two pledges--Rhineland and Ruhr--but neither was productive.

Then Tardieu asked questions about the future. When Poincaré resumed discussion with the Allies would France fall under a system of payments based on a productive pledge or under the old 1921 Schedule of Payments? To any schedule of payments he would prefer a modest annuity resulting from the control of Ruhr production, for this would permit France to get outstanding international loans. In closing, he called for new methods and said that France should send more divisions to the Ruhr and replace the January 11 notification of the occupation with one establishing a new régime for the Ruhr--a régime of a state of siege and military law.[43]

Poincaré's response to Tardieu's attacks was much less informative than that to Auriol five days before. Although he refuted most of the Deputy's charges about the inefficiency of the Ruhr operation, he devoted much more time to a personal duel, declaring that Tardieu had said nothing that had not already been written in his newspaper

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[43] Ibid., pp. 2185-2195.

articles, which were, unfortunately, widely reproduced in Germany where they caused the Germans to maintain that France was obtaining no results from the Ruhr. He denied that the occupation had been poorly organized and reported that for months before January the plans had been carefully made.[44] Although Poincaré failed to refute Tardieu's allegation that the occupation had been financially unprofitable, he survived all criticism, and when the Chamber voted on the Ruhr credits, the government won by a 481-73 vote. The following month the Senate approved the credits unanimously.[45] Once again the French parliament had failed to alter the Ruhr policy, and because of the contradictory statements and figures given in both the Chamber and the press no one knew the actual financial results of the occupation to that point.

Even though the focal point of European interest during late April and May was the open exchange of reparations notes, correspondence continued between Britain and France on matters arising directly from the occupation, several trends initiated during the first weeks of the occupation persisted, and some unfinished business remained to be discussed. First, England continued both the attempt

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[44] Ibid., pp. 2195-2199.

[45] Frederick Lewis Schuman, War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. An Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), p. 294.

to avoid irritating France and the refusal to acknowledge most German protests. On April 21, Home Secretary Bridgeman wrote Curzon that Joseph King requested permission to bring to England three German ladies who were social workers in Essen and Dusseldorf and wanted to give first-hand reports about conditions in the Ruhr and Rhineland. Curzon wrote Bridgeman immediately that he could not permit the introduction of German anti-Ruhr propaganda into England.[46] The Foreign Office also maintained its policy of either failing to acknowledge German protests or acknowledging them in a brief and formal fashion. When Sthamer on April 23 protested Rhineland High Commission Ordinance No. 156, protecting all persons who assisted or worked for occupying forces, the Foreign Office waited ten days before acknowledging receipt of the protest and even then expressed no opinion. On May 10, Sthamer protested the sentences passed by a French court-martial against Krupp directors, whom the French had accused of instigating the March 31 disturbances in Essen. Although Lampson called French action "a monstrous proceeding" and Curzon labelled the sentences "absolutely barbarous," the Foreign Office failed to acknowledge the protest in any fashion.[47]

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[46]Home Secretary to Curzon, April 21, 1923, and Curzon to Home Secretary, April 22, 1923, FO 371/8729, C 7300/313/18. King was a bitter critic of the French Ruhr activities.

[47]Sthamer to FO, No. A.1201, April 23, 1923; Cadogan to Sthamer, May 3, 1923, FO 371/8729, C 7534/313/18; Sthamer

The controversy over Rhineland High Commission Ordinances No. 153 and No. 154 was renewed in May. As will be recalled,[48] France had on March 28 replied to the March 23 British protest against the ordinances. The French reply having displeased the Foreign Office, Curzon on May 11 instructed Crewe to mention the matter again and make the following observations. The fact that the British government had not protested the High Commission ordinances dealing with Franco-Belgian collection of coal tax and customs in occupied territory did not mean that it admitted their validity. Instead, it had avoided questioning their validity so as not to "cause unnecessary embarrassment to the French Government, to act in complete accordance with the spirit of the undertaking given by the Prime Minister at the close of the Paris Conference." Since, however, France had brought up the subject, the British government had "to reserve in the most formal manner all expression of opinion" about the validity of the customs and coal tax ordinances. Britain also failed to accept the French contention that Ordinances No. 153 and No. 154 had "only the effect of securing the execution of the restitution and reparation clauses of the treaty. . . ." A study of the ordinances revealed other motives and possible results:

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to FO, No. A.1411, May 10, 1923, and Minutes by Lampson and Curzon, May 15, 1923, FO 371/8730, C 8436/313/18.

[48] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 141-143.

their enforcement would divest the Reparation Commission of its authority to receive, sell, hold, and distribute German reparations payments and would infringe the rights and property of the British government and British nationals. Crewe, therefore, should call these items to Poincaré's attention and protest the ordinances as ultra vires.[49]

Part of Poincaré's May 25 reply shocked British diplomats. The French leader said that France had never contested the right of the Reparation Commission to act as the sole agent for receiving, selling, holding and distributing reparations payments to be made by Germany. When, however, that body declared Germany's intentional default, it abandoned its rights in favor of the Allied governments who, under Paragraph 18, could decide upon and execute measures to compel Germany to pay. Since the Rhineland High Commission was the representative of those governments in occupied territory, it had the duty to apply the measures taken under Paragraph 18.[50]

Although most Foreign Office personnel considered dangerous this direct reference to France's view of its rights under Paragraph 18 and agreed that it should not be allowed to pass without comment, they were uncertain of the

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[49]Curzon to Crewe, No. 1627, May 11, 1923, FO 371/8730, C 8035/313/18.

[50]Poincaré to Crewe, May 25, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 9404/313/18.

results of contesting it. A Minute by Wigram reveals something of the dilemma:

> As regards paragraph 18, we have so far considered that a dispute with the French over this question would be most dangerous, as, besides raising highly controversial disputes, it would be difficult to explain its intricacies to public opinion here. But all the same, if we let this French claim pass now, it will be tantamount to admitting their interpretation of paragraph 18. This would, I think, be as undesirable as having a row with them.

Hurst wrote that if the French statement were taken literally, it would mean "the end of the functions of the Reparation Commission so far as German reparations are concerned." After consultation, Lampson on June 6 sent to the Treasury for concurrence a draft reply to the French note.[51]

While Britain and France were awaiting the new reparations proposals, affairs within Germany attracted the attention of both governments. In mid-May the British began receiving reports about the projected duration of German resistance. Julian Piggott, Cologne Commissioner, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission, wrote on May 10

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[51]Minutes by Wigram on May 31, 1923, and Hurst on June 1, 1923; Lampson to Secretary to the Treasury, June 6, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 9404/313/18. Throughout the period covered by this chapter, the British continued to evade challenging the legality of the occupation. Evidence indicates that they did so because they believed that participation in the 1921 sanctions compromised their position and because they wanted to avoid making relations more difficult with Franco-Belgian officials in the occupied territories. See Minutes by Cadogan on May 19, 1923, and Lampson on May 12 and 28, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 9456/313/18; FO to D'Abernon, No. 711, May 11, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 11094/313/18.

that he believed the struggle had entered its most critical phase and feared internal dissensions might result in the disintegration of Germany. German eyes were turned toward England in the hope that Curzon would bring the combatants to the conference table, and some Germans had told him that the limit of endurance was two months. On May 16, Kilmarnock stated that although he was unable to share the alarm of Piggott, he did believe that Germany was beginning to feel that it could not financially support passive resistance much longer. He also reported that the general feeling seemed to be that resistance could last two months at the longest.[52] About two weeks later, Germany tried again to approach France indirectly. Tirard reported that Monseigneur Kaas, a Reichstag Deputy from Treves and a leading figure in the Center party, had asked that some members of his party be permitted to talk to a representative of the French government in order to avoid the next German note's encountering a new French refusal. Peretti de la Rocca sent the reply: "I can only repeat to you that the French government is absolutely opposed to an intermediary, no matter how qualified he might be. . . . The French government will examine only propositions delivered officially."[53]

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[52]Piggott to Lampson, May 10, 1923, FO 371/8730, C 8542/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 292, May 16, 1923, FO 371/8731, C 8890/313/18.

[53]Tirard to Poincaré, No. 341, June 2, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3898; Peretti de la Rocca to Tirard, No. 439, June 5, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3904.

Toward the end of the month, the Foreign Office, cognizant of the grave conditions in Germany, grew restive. In a conversation with the Italian Ambassador on May 31, Curzon said that British public opinion, as well as economic and commercial conditions in the Ruhr, would make it impossible for the British government to continue much longer its policy of doing nothing. Although he was not sure what action Britain would take, he definitely wanted to avoid another conference like that of January because "another failure like that would mean the rupture of the Entente." Only one thing was clear: whatever action was taken would be "united action."[54] One member of the Foreign Office staff was, nevertheless, already contemplating independent action. In his Minute on D'Abernon's May 23 report that the German Foreign Minister was seriously worried about the growth of Communism in Germany, Miles W. Lampson had hinted about a possible new British policy:

> The thought suggests itself that the moment may be fast approaching when, in the interests of the social order of the world . . . we may have to take a firmer line with France. My personal belief is that if we told her point blank that, in order to have done with this insufferable Reparation question, we were prepared to go ahead if necessary alone with an impartial assessment of Germany's capacity to pay and to accept the 22% (i.e. Spa percentage) of that assessment as the share due to the British Empire even if France did not come with us, we should then find that France came along behind pretty quickly. We should then be done with the Reparation Commission and all its

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[54]Conversation between Curzon and the Italian Ambassador, May 31, 1923, FO 371/8638, C 9592/1/18.

> attendant evils. The French would no doubt scream: but sooner than be isolated and see us get our money they would follow our lead. The idea is at least worth consideration. . . . But the time is not yet. When the next German offer materialises perhaps it might be at least weighed in the balance.[55]

During the first week in June all eyes turned expectantly to Germany. On June 7 the German government delivered a second reparations note, which differed remarkably in tone from the more lengthy document of May 2. The note declared that Germany had previously stated its sincere belief as to its capacity to pay: to promise more than this in order to alleviate current political difficulties would be unwise. Since other countries perhaps held different opinions about that capacity, Germany would "accept the decision of an impartial international tribunal as to the amount and method of payment" and, in order to help this body make a decision, would allow inspection of all of its financial records and provide information about German industrial resources. Since the loan proposals of the previous note had been unsatisfactory, it would substitute a scheme of annuities and make specific guarantees for payment. Included among these would be the detachment of the German railway system from other national property: the railways would have their own administration and upon them would be issued a mortgage of 10,000,000,000 gold marks at 5 per cent interest from July 1, 1927, thus producing an annual payment of 500,000,000 marks.

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[55] D'Abernon to FO, No. 210, May 23, 1923, and Minute by Lampson, May 25, 1923, FO 371/8637, C 9217/1/18.

In addition, Germany would from the same date offer an annuity of 50,000,000 marks to be paid by taxation and based upon a mortgage of 10,000,000,000 marks on landed property, "whether industrial, municipal, agricultural or forest." Finally, Germany offered as additional pledges the proceeds of duties on luxuries, the excise duties on alcoholic beverages and sugar, and the receipts from the spirits monopoly. In conclusion, the note declared that no real progress in settling the reparations tangle could be made by exchanging written documents. The problem must be solved orally at a conference table, where Germany could have "direct consultation with those who are to receive payment." In the last paragraph the German government inserted a statement acknowledging its liability to make reparations payments.[56] The June 7 note had voiced none of the antagonism of its predecessor. Although Germany failed to agree to abandon passive resistance, it neither made the new proposals contingent upon French and Belgian evacuation of the Ruhr nor called Franco-Belgian action illegal.

Since the document in several ways appeared to be more wisely framed, observers wondered how both France and Britain would react. The prospects for a solution were only slightly encouraging, for Britain, after having taken the initiative in April, had lapsed again into passivity,

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[56]Sthamer to Curzon, June 7, 1923, FO 371/8638, C 9926/1/18.

and France had shown no willingness to budge. On the other hand, Germany had in the second reparations document made some concessions, and a few members of the Foreign Office had, after three months of inactivity, begun to consider seriously the possibility of acting to end the stalemate. Would there be a departure from deadlock?

CHAPTER V

NO REPLY: THE DIPLOMATIC AFTERMATH OF THE JUNE 7, 1923, REPARATIONS PROPOSAL

Even though France and Belgium did not send an independent reply to the new German reparations proposal, the hope that the offer would lead to an end of the Ruhr deadlock was to be dashed during the months of June and July. Whereas the two communications from Germany had been the focal point in the previous period, correspondence between France and Britain now occupied the center of the diplomatic stage as Britain took the lead in trying to devise a common reply to Germany. Because of a French request, none of the major documents was published in the press. Leaks nevertheless occurred, and as July passed the ill will of Britain and France toward each other reached a new height, the occupying powers used increasingly harsh methods in the Ruhr, passive resistance weakened somewhat, and Germany continued to wait for a reply.

The Foreign Office began on June 7 to analyze the German proposals and think about future British action. A Central Department Minute written just before receipt of the

note discussed the situation in the Allied countries and Germany. It declared that France, who had all the security it needed presently, intended to stay in the Ruhr until all reparations were paid. German resistance, however, had made the Ruhr venture unproductive, and Germany, although "at the end of her tether," was "encouraged in her resistance by the belief that by maintaining it she may conceivably bring about a break in the allied ranks. . . ." Unpredictable Italy--which after sending only a few engineers into the Ruhr had ceased to participate in the occupation--wanted to end the present state of tension in Europe and get all the money it could, and Belgium was terrified of French encirclement and did not want to see France in the Ruhr permanently. Since Britain wanted all the reparations Germany could pay, it wanted to get France out of the Ruhr, for the occupation meant that Germany could pay no one. After listing these circumstances, the Minute concluded that the Allies would have to agree enough to "compel the Germans to recognize that they have lost the game, and that they must abandon 'passive resistance' and accept a settlement," for unless it were abandoned, it "seems clear that German reparation proposals are so much waste paper. . . ."[1]

In a June 9 memorandum on the German offer itself, Sir Eyre Crowe said that four main points arose from the

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[1]Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), June 7, 1923, FO 371/8640, C 10375/1/18.

document: an international inquiry into Germany's capacity to pay and the method of payment, guarantees of payment, the cessation of passive resistance, and the evacuation of the Ruhr. He discussed each point at length. Since it was unlikely that France and Germany alone could reach an agreement, a broader discussion was necessary, and an international inquiry would have great merits, for settlement by an independent body would be preferable to the Allies' thrashing out the matter themselves through either direct governmental consultation or the Reparation Commission. There was, furthermore, little substance in the French contention that referring the issue to an impartial commission would violate the Versailles Treaty. This body, like the Reparation Commission, could merely recommend that the Allied governments should cancel a certain part of Germany's obligation. Although Crowe said little about the question of guarantees, pointing out that financial experts would have to consider these, he did note that the new proposal at least offered specific guarantees.[2]

He then considered the topics of passive resistance and Ruhr evacuation. Evidence indicated that Britain would soon receive a Franco-Belgian request to associate itself with the demand that Germany cease passive resistance as a

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[2]A note from the Treasury on June 9 stated that the new guarantees were a step forward. Their value, however, depended on balancing the budget and stabilizing the mark; see Niemeyer (Treasury) to FO, June 9, 1923, FO 371/8638, C 10065/1/18.

prerequisite for further discussion of the reparations problem. Such a request would present a dilemma, for France had contended that because it was applying a sanction set forth in Part VIII of the Treaty, Germany was bound not to regard the occupation as an act of war. Having dissociated itself from this French view of legality, how could Britain demand that Germany cease resistance? If, on the other hand, the end of passive resistance was indeed a prerequisite for any solution acceptable to Belgium and France, the British government should seek a practical way out of the difficulty. Crowe mentioned a possible solution:

> It might be suggested that, without making a formal demand, His Majesty's Government might take advantage of the undoubted fact that Germany places confidence in the fairness of the British attitude to give them informal advice to the effect that, as they must themselves see, they have no hope of coming to an arrangement with France, and therefore of getting rid of the French occupation of the Ruhr, so long at least as passive resistance continues, and that . . . they would only act in accordance with the dictates of common prudence if they withdrew the measures or enactments by which they officially enjoined passive resistance on the German population under heavy penalties.

In closing, he suggested a procedure to be followed: after receipt of the French and Belgian responses Britain should exchange views with Italy; then all the Allies should acknowledge receipt of the June 7 note, tell Germany that they were considering it, and exchange views in a conference of some sort rather than through a flood of telegrams.[3]

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[3]Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), June 9, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10092/1/18.

Poincaré wasted no time in reacting to the German note. On June 7 he instructed Saint-Aulaire and the French Ambassadors in Rome and Brussels to inform the Allied governments that the German offer was totally unacceptable for four reasons: it said nothing about ceasing passive resistance, failed to propose a reparations total, called for dispossessing the Reparation Commission by an international body, and spoke only of theoretical guarantees.[4] In dealing with the note, Poincaré as will be shown, focused more upon the cessation of passive resistance than upon the June 7 offer itself. The next day he sent a telegram to Saint-Aulaire discussing, in ten points, the steps Germany would be expected to take to end resistance. These, of course, called for withdrawing all German ordinances ordering passive resistance, but they also entailed virtually complete cooperation of the German population with the occupying powers. He said that for the moment, however, Saint-Aulaire should refrain from discussing details and state only the principle of cessation.[5]

Saint-Aulaire called on Crowe and, after reading Poincaré's June 7 telegram which declared the German offer unacceptable, said that he hoped the Allies could consult

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[4]Poincaré to French Ambassadors at London, Rome, and Brussels, June 7, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 32-33.

[5]Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, No. 755-759, June 8, 1923, A.N., AJ5 342.

and give a joint reply. In order for them to do so, however, Poincaré expected the reply to support the French point of view. The Ambassador then asked the question Crowe had been anticipating: had England considered joining France and Belgium to demand the cessation of resistance as a preliminary to consideration of the German note? When Crowe asked what was meant by cessation, Saint-Aulaire gave no clear answer, and the Under-Secretary said that it would be difficult for the British government to take a step which would imply that France was justified in occupying the Ruhr. He emphasized that if the German offer were not a basis for discussion it could at least serve as a point of departure for finding such a basis and added that he, too, hoped a common response could be made.[6] Upon hearing of this conversation, Poincaré replied that he sincerely hoped that the Allies could send a common reply, but he reaffirmed that France and Belgium had recently decided in Brussels to examine no German proposition so long as passive resistance continued.[7]

The June 8 conversation between Crowe and Saint-Aulaire and the June 7 and 9 telegrams from Poincaré to his Ambassador marked the beginning of a lengthy, vital,

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[6]Conversation between Crowe and Saint-Aulaire, June 8, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10067/1/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, June 8, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 33-34.

[7]Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, June 9, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, p. 34.

and frustrating diplomatic exchange on the response to be made to Germany. Poincaré made the first move on June 10 when he sent to Saint-Aulaire a telegram instructing him to contact the Foreign Office in order to present the information contained therein and to repeat that since the only object of the occupation was to create in Germany the will to pay, France and Belgium would evacuate the Ruhr as payments were made. When Saint-Aulaire saw Curzon the following day, he presented a memorandum based upon the telegram.[8] The memorandum stated again that France would consent to an inter-Allied examination of the German proposals only after the cessation of passive resistance. This having occurred, the following principles would need to be considered in examining the German note. First, the occupation of the Ruhr would continue, "but under different conditions and with the collaboration of the German organizations." Second, France refused to give up its share of the A and B bonds, but would exchange part of the C bonds for the settlement of inter-Allied debts.[9] Although Germany

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[8]Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, No. 01215-01221, June 10, 1923, A.N., AJ5 342.

[9]On April 21, 1921, when the Reparation Commission announced that Germany's reparations obligation was 132,000,000,000 gold marks, it divided the total into three series of bonds. Series A bonds (12,000,000,000 marks) were to be issued by July 1, 1921, and Series B (38,000,000,000 marks) by November 1, 1921. The 80,000,000,000 mark balance was to be covered by Series C bonds, to be issued at the discretion of the Reparation Commission when it felt Germany was able to make larger

might require a moratorium to set its finances in order, it must immediately give the Allies certain resources, including the left bank railways, some Ruhr coal mines, deliveries in kind, and some customs duties.[10] When, in the following bitter conversation, Curzon asked Saint-Aulaire what he meant by the cessation of passive resistance, the Ambassador mentioned most of the points in Poincaré's June 8 telegram. These, it should be noted, would have amounted to virtually active German cooperation in the Franco-Belgian exploitation of the Ruhr, for Germany, in addition to having to withdraw all decrees forbidding its people to assist the invaders, would have had to tell them to obey all High Commission decrees, resume all deliveries, and recognize the validity of the Allied action, and would also have had to order the railway staff to return to work and grant amnesty to those persons punished for obeying Belgian and French decrees.

After Saint-Aulaire asked the British government to assist France in urging Germany to cease resistance, Curzon made a surprising statement. He informed the French

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payments than those required for servicing the A and B bonds. The British in 1923 considered the C bonds worthless. See David Lloyd George, The Truth about Reparations and War Debts (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), pp. 61-62; Harold G. Moulton and Constantine E. McGuire, Germany's Capacity to Pay: A Study of the Reparation Problem (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1923), p. 374.

[10]Saint-Aulaire to Curzon, June 11, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10224/1/18.

Ambassador that Britain had "from the start questioned not merely the expediency but the legitimacy of the French and Belgian occupation" and that the Law Officers had advised that France was incorrect in saying that its action was based upon the Treaty of Versailles. How, therefore, could Britain advise Germany to stop resisting proceedings which were illegal?[11] Saint-Aulaire answered that although he was aware of this British contention, he believed that a discussion of legal considerations was useless, for France had acted upon the basis of decisions made by a majority of the Reparation Commission, which was the only body qualified to make an opinion about the legality issue. After saying that the legal question should not be so lightly dismissed, Curzon moved on to another topic.

He pointed out that passive resistance was the only weapon the Germans had and asked what they would get in exchange for giving it up. Because France had laid down no conditions about future evacuation of the Ruhr, he requested more precise information about the new form of the occupation and said that France should state precisely the fixed times and methods of evacuation. Finally, the Foreign Secretary asked through what avenue France intended the German proposals to be examined: did it envisage Allied conversations from which Germany would be excluded?

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[11]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, June 11, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10185/1/18.

After Saint-Aulaire replied that he imagined that Poincaré would want the Allies to reach an agreement, which they would hand to Germany, Curzon objected that this would be merely a second ultimatum. Instead, Germany should be permitted to participate in some fashion in the formulation of a new settlement. He also warned that France should not take lightly the new German proposals, for the British public felt that they were appreciably better than the first ones and would not allow them to be turned down as useless.[12] In closing, he promised to discuss the situation with the Cabinet that afternoon and report to the French Ambassador as soon as possible.[13]

Once again the British had to grapple with the problem. The Foreign Office Central Department analysis of the June 11 memorandum termed it in every respect unsatisfactory, primarily because the statement about the modified form of occupation to follow the cessation of resistance was so vague as to be obscure and because the British government could not accept France's plans for paying its debt to England by giving up a share of C bonds. This would

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[12]See Daily Herald, June 8, 1923, p. 1; Manchester Guardian, June 8, 1923, pp. 8-9; Daily Telegraph, June 9, 1923, p. 8; The Times (London), June 8, 1923, p. 13; New Statesman, June 9, 1923, p. 253.

[13]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, June 11, 1923, cited above; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, June 11, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 37-38. Curzon's account of the conversation is much more detailed than that of Saint-Aulaire. The latter failed to relate to Poincaré the intensity of Curzon's dissatisfaction with the French memorandum.

mean that "France cancels her debts to us for worthless German paper . . . and maintains intact her effective reparation debt [A and B bonds] from Germany." In addition, France, while saying that a German moratorium was necessary, had set forth conditions that would render it nugatory. Such proposals were unlikely to elicit from Germany the abandonment of resistance.[14] That afternoon Curzon informed the Cabinet members of both the French memorandum and his conversation with Saint-Aulaire, and the Cabinet, unable to accept the conditions stipulated in the memorandum, agreed unanimously to his suggestion that France be asked for more precise explanation of several points.[15]

Curzon presented the so-called "questionnaire" to Saint-Aulaire on June 13. Although the document focused upon two questions, it was in reality a detailed criticism of and commentary upon the June 11 memorandum and the points made verbally by the French Ambassador on that day. The questionnaire asked for both a precise definition of the cessation of passive resistance and a detailed account of the nature of the Franco-Belgian occupation after resistance

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[14]Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), June 11, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10225/1/18.

[15]Cab 23/46, 30(23)1; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), pp. 183-184. Baldwin's biographers wrote: "Baldwin's closest advisers in the Treasury and several of his Cabinet, however, disliked the adroit way in which Curzon was avoiding a rupture" to the detriment of long-term German recovery; see p. 184.

ended. First, Curzon asked what France meant when it asked Germany to cease resistance: did this mean merely that the German government should withdraw decrees ordering its citizens to refuse to assist Allied authorities and pay taxes to them, or did it mean that so long as individual German citizens failed to cooperate France would refuse to discuss the reparations problem?[16] If France meant merely the withdrawal of official decrees, would it return evicted and imprisoned Germans? Next he moved to an item that did indeed call for clarification, for France had made only vague statements about Franco-Belgian policy in the Ruhr after the end of resistance and had offered no inducements to Germany. How long, he asked, would the occupation continue and in what form? The Foreign Secretary added that since France had always said that it occupied the Ruhr to bring about the payment of reparations, it should help devise "a definite plan for settling the whole reparation question in a manner that can be accepted as practical and equitable by all parties. . . ." Having a precise plan ready would also give a strong inducement to Germany to end resistance. He remarked that France had in the June 11 memorandum mentioned only a few aspects of such a plan, and part of what it had discussed was unacceptable. The British government could no more in July than in January agree that France could, no

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[16]Since most of these questions had been answered verbally by Saint-Aulaire on June 11, Curzon must have been pressing for a written reply.

matter what happened, insist upon its present share [52 per cent] of the A and B bonds and pay its inter-Allied debts by giving up a portion of the C bonds because this would mean that any lowering of the German debt would be at the expense of the other Allies.[17]

On June 15, Saint-Aulaire called on Curzon again, basing his remarks on a June 12 telegram from Poincaré. A response to Saint-Aulaire's June 11 conversation with Curzon, the telegram said that Poincaré, like Curzon, thought it useless to discuss the legal aspects of French Ruhr action, for the French contentions were absolutely correct. It then discussed conditions that would follow the end of German resistance and said, in effect, that after resistance ended France would install the kind of régime envisaged on January 11: there would be only enough troops to prevent hostile acts, the MICUM would work directly with the Germans, and trade would resume between occupied and unoccupied Germany. There would, nevertheless, be no changes "in the exploitation of pledges, customs, licences, forests . . . the railway system, etc.," and evacuation would come in three or four gradual stages to be determined according to the payments made by Germany.

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[17]Curzon to Saint-Aulaire, June 13, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10272/1/18. Edouard Bonnefous stated that the French considered Curzon's questionnaire a curt ultimatum; see Histoire politique de la IIIè République, Vol. III: L'après-guerre, 1919-1924 (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1959), p. 356.

At the moment it was impossible to state the fixed times, for this could be done only after Germany's obligations were firmly established. Poincaré then told Saint-Aulaire to reaffirm that France "had no intention whatever of remaining in the Ruhr longer than necessary . . . and had neither political nor annexationist aims." Although Germany could not presently participate in an examination of the reparations problem, France was ready for inter-Allied discussions on the topic. France could not, however, discuss the question of Germany's capacity to pay, for the Germans had hidden visible signs of their capacity while conserving their real riches.[18]

Curzon's account of the conversation, which, it should be noted, barely resembled that of Saint-Aulaire, offers a glimpse into the difficulty the two diplomats experienced in dealing with each other during this crucial period. The Foreign Secretary said that the Ambassador, as he did frequently, failed to make clear whether or not his remarks were intended as an official communication:

> His Excellency is in the habit of reading extracts from personal telegrams from M. Poincaré to himself, and

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[18]Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, No. 01229-01237, June 12, 1923, A.N., AJ5 342. After talking to Curzon, Saint-Aulaire reported that since the Foreign Secretary failed to accept the French thesis about the legality of the occupation he felt that it would be preferable not to bring up the subject again. Curzon's remarks had led him to expect a lengthy and detailed discussion of what France meant by the cessation of passive resistance; see Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, June 15, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, p. 48.

> then, when I ask him to give me more precisely the points of what he has said, he remarks either that he has not the authority to do so, or that the communication is one intended for himself alone. . . . I am therefore constantly left in a position of embarrassment as to the amount of importance to be attached to his intimations.[19]

When Saint-Aulaire complained of Curzon's failure to accept his previous definition of the cessation of passive resistance, the latter answered that he could not remember everything he had been told on June 11 and that the Cabinet had asked several questions which he had been unable to answer because of "the obscurity of the Ambassador's language. . . ." At this point, Saint-Aulaire, reading rapidly from Poincaré's June 12 telegram, amplified what he had said previously. After Curzon asked whether this was an official reply or a forecast of such a reply and Saint-Aulaire answered that it was intended for himself, the Foreign Secretary said that he would wait for the official response.[20]

For over a week there was a lull in Anglo-French correspondence. As Britain awaited a response to the June 13 questionnaire, Lord Crewe reported on June 15 that comment in Paris was basically more optimistic than it had been recently and said he heard that Poincaré's answer had

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[19]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, June 15, 1923, FO 371/8640, C 10512/1/18. Perhaps this partially explains why Curzon constantly requested precise statements on topics. It seems that Poincaré usually gave detailed instructions to Saint-Aulaire, but the latter sometimes failed to transmit the information.

[20]*Ibid*.

been drafted the day before and sent to Belgium for approval. Although the Belgian response might be delayed because of a Cabinet crisis, this could be beneficial in that it would give the French and British public time to think.[21] While England waited for the French reply, France stalled and waited for the end of the Belgian Cabinet crisis.

Before resuming the narrative, it would be helpful to assess the diplomatic situation in mid-June. Even though the Foreign Office had come to believe that the cessation of German resistance must precede any French concessions, it had not called upon Germany to take that step and thus far had merely asked France for fuller explanations of its future policy. France, who had already answered many of these questions, refused to change its position. Deadlock still prevailed, and it seemed that no one could break it. These conditions were especially frustrating to some of the British leaders. Although they believed that the occupation was illegal, they realized that Britain had perhaps waited too long to announce that fact and they wondered what Britain could do to end the impasse. For several reasons the British could not use

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[21]Crewe to FO, No. 591, June 15, 1923, FO 371/8640, C 10463/1/18. The Belgian Cabinet resigned on June 14 over a Senate vote concerning the University of Ghent. On June 28 it was reconstituted with no alteration in its composition. See Grahame to FO, No. 143, June 14, 1923, and No. 155, June 28, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12747/313/18.

force against France: first, they were militarily unprepared; second, a rupture with France would delay even further the restoration of Europe to normal conditions; third, neither the British government nor public opinion unanimously condemned French action. On the other hand, the British could not coerce Germany, for many people believed that the payment of reparations was impossible and that the whole Versailles settlement should be revised. It seemed that all the nation could do was attempt to coax Poincaré into making enough concessions to induce Germany to end resistance so that the reparations problem could be solved.[22]

Negotiations resumed on June 24 when Crewe talked to Poincaré about the German note. After objecting strongly to British allegations that the Ruhr occupation was a failure and saying that it was a complete success, the President of the Council complained that British statements to the contrary merely encouraged Germany to continue passive resistance. When Crewe asked what changes France would make in the occupation if resistance ended, Poincaré replied that he could make no promises beforehand and could say only that the occupation would certainly become less military in nature. Crewe then questioned him about the possibility of conferring with the Germans about a new reparations settlement. Poincaré was unyielding, and the most he

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[22]See Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 185; Carl Bergmann, The History of Reparations (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), p. 197.

would concede was that after Allied agreement had been reached Germany might be invited to come to a meeting as had been done at Spa. After the conversation ended the Ambassador reported that he was not hopefully impressed with Poincaré's general attitude concerning a common reply, for the Premier had said that he hoped conversations would continue in London and Paris without the exchange of written documents and that there was no need to send a quick reply to Germany. Furthermore, he had said that if Britain and France were unable to agree on an answer, perhaps none would be sent.[23]

This message displeased the Foreign Office, which told Crewe to see Poincaré again and tell him that the British government failed to share his opinion that an answer to Germany could be indefinitely delayed or perhaps not sent at all. He should stress that British public opinion, already impatient with the failure to solve the Ruhr and reparations crisis, "will not much longer admit continuance of the disastrous interference and inconvenience to which British trade and employment are thereby subjected."[24] Since matters must not be allowed to drift

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[23]Crewe to FO, No. 610, June 24, 1923, FO 371/8640, C 10983/1/18. In the Minutes on this dispatch, Curzon wrote: "Lord Crewe did not half hold up our end. He ought to have dissented sharply from M. Poincaré's contentions. He only pulled out some rather stale remarks of my own in previous conversations."

[24]It should be noted that although Curzon frequently used both public and Parliamentary opinion to threaten the

indefinitely, the British government expected a full statement of French views and an answer to its questions, and if joint Allied action could not be taken soon, "His Majesty's Government . . . may soon be driven by the force of public opinion to take steps of their own. . . ."[25] Crewe, unable to see Poincaré, contacted Peretti de la Rocca on June 27 and relayed the warning that if agreement were not soon reached, Britain might have to take independent action. When he asked when a reply might be expected, Peretti de la Rocca answered perhaps early the next week.[26]

Crewe's warning that Britain might take independent action if France continued to procrastinate was not mere sham, for the Foreign Office was contemplating such a course. On June 9, Miles W. Lampson, who, it will be recalled, had earlier suggested that France might have to be told that Britain would proceed with an impartial investigation of Germany's capacity to pay,[27] brought up the subject again and asked Sir C. J. B. Hurst, Foreign Office Legal Adviser, for advice. Although Hurst pointed out

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French, he seldom let this influence modify British policy. Another point to notice is that as the occupation continued, concern centered more upon damage to British trade than upon political aspects and conditions in Germany.

[25]FO to Crewe, No. 276, June 27, 1923, FO 371/8640, C 10983/1/18.

[26]Crewe to FO, No. 616, June 27, 1923, FO 371/8641, C 11286/1/18.

[27]<u>Supra</u>, pp. 207-208.

legal difficulties in British action of this sort, he thought it might be useful to use the threat.[28] When France displayed unwillingness to cooperate in sending a common reply to the June 7 German note, Lampson called again for consideration of his proposal. He wrote on June 22:

> I admit that the idea suggested in my minute entails all the legal difficulties pointed out by Sir C. Hurst. But it occurs to me as possible that the moment may be fast approaching when we may be forced to seek a practical solution regardless of legal difficulties. For instance I think we might contend with some justification that when we entered into the joint obligations regarding Reparations embodied in the Treaty we did not anticipate the blind obstructiveness of France. Must we be bound indefinitely when it is evident that France is determined to smash Germany rather than to enable her to pay the Reparation of which 22% is due to us? I believe that we could make out a perfectly good case. . . .
>
> Further I have a conviction that the bulk of public opinion not only in this country but in the world at large would be with us if we took some such bold step to force a real solution to this question. . . .

Crowe suggested that Lampson and Hurst discuss the matter with a Treasury representative, and Curzon agreed, saying ". . . clearly a time may arrive when independent action will be forced upon us."[29]

In accordance with Curzon's instructions, Lampson, Hurst, Wigram, and O. Niemeyer of the Treasury met on June 26. After encountering several technical difficulties

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[28]Lampson to Hurst, June 9, 1923, and Hurst to Lampson, June 12, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10291/1/18.

[29]Minutes by Lampson and Crowe on June 22, 1923, and by Curzon on June 23, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10291/1/18.

they decided to get the advice of J. Fischer Williams, Legal Adviser to the British Representative on the Reparation Commission.[30] When he arrived from Paris they met on June 28 to discuss two basic questions: what were the possibilities under the Treaty of Britain's accepting Germany's request for an independent inquiry? If such an inquiry were possible, how could it be made effective? They agreed that Britain's accepting the German plea for such an assessment would not necessarily be contrary to the Treaty. Although their answer to the second question was more difficult, they expressed the belief ". . . that if we got Italy and possibly Belgium with us, France fearing isolation might fall into line and . . . then the assessment at which the impartial enquiry had arrived would eventually be accepted by the Reparation Commission."[31] The following day, as the German mark continued to depreciate rapidly, the Foreign Office composed a seven-page memorandum on possible independent British action. Although it was decided to circulate it to neither the Cabinet nor the Prime Minister at that time, the memorandum served as the basis of a program of action proposed by Crowe. He said that if England were unable to agree with France about the answer to be sent to the last German note, it should ask

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[30]Lampson to Crowe, June 26, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10291/1/18.

[31]Lampson to Crowe, June 28, 1923, FO 371/8639, C 10291/1/18.

Italy, Japan, and America to participate in a separate inquiry into Germany's capacity to pay. If they consented, England should tell Belgium and France it intended to accept Germany's offer of an inquiry and then ask them if they still refused to participate. If they refused, England should make its proposal to Germany, and Sir John Bradbury should in the Reparation Commission raise the question of legality of French proceedings since January 11. If the Commission reached a deadlock, he might refer the matter to the International Court at the Hague or let it come before the League of Nations. To this first proposal for concrete British action to break the deadlock, Curzon wrote: "Let us first await the French and Belgian replies."[32]

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[32]Foreign Office Minute (Central Department), June 29, 1923, and Minutes by Lampson, Crowe, and Curzon on June 30, 1923, FO 371/8641, C 11456/1/18. The British press also hinted about independent action. Articles in the Observer and the Daily Mail in early July stated that England demanded a written reply to its June 13 questionnaire and would accept no verbal answer. The Observer stated that Britain intended to answer the June 7 German note. "If France refuses to participate in this, then no alternative will be left to the British Government but to take independent action. . . . The British Government is determined to force an issue with France within a week." The Daily Mail's political correspondent wrote: "If Mr. Baldwin should find it difficult to act in concert with the French Government, it is hinted that he will take steps to make separate arrangements with Germany to secure for Great Britain a payment of sufficient moneys per annum to secure the interest on the British debt to the United States." See Observer, July 1, 1923, p. 13; Daily Mail, July 2, 1923, p. 9. Both articles caused a furor in France, with even L'Oeuvre attacking them; see Le Temps, July 2 and 3, 1923, p. 1; L'Oeuvre, July 2, 1923, p. 3; L'Écho de Paris,

In early July, a French reply to the June 13 questionnaire still seemed far away, for the French government continued to delay, and its pretext for doing so centered around the form the reply should take. When Crowe told Saint-Aulaire on July 2 that he preferred a written answer, the Ambassador replied that Poincaré said that it should be oral. Whereas a precise, written answer would merely accentuate the marked differences between the two governments, perhaps he could say something verbally to explain the French position and cause Britain to modify its own. Crowe informed him that this was an absurd contention: France needed to make a clear statement so that both nations would know where they stood. The following day Poincaré himself told Crewe that he objected to a regular system of exchanged notes on the Ruhr.[33] The British government, nevertheless,

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July 2, 1923, p. 3; Le Matin, July 2, 1923, p. 1.

On July 2, Sir Arthur Willert of the Press Bureau reported that Baldwin's Private Secretary told him that neither the Prime Minister nor his staff had inspired the articles. He thought, however, that they should do more good than harm, particularly since no one could suspect collusion between the two papers; furthermore, the warning given by the usually pro-French Daily Mail might be very effective; see Willert to Crowe, July 2, 1923, FO 371/8642, C 11725/1/18.

[33]Conversation between Crowe and Saint-Aulaire, June 2, 1923, FO 371/8641, C 11506/1/18; Conversation between Crewe and Poincare, July 3, 1923, FO 371/8641, C 11578/1/18. When Crewe talked to Millerand on July 4, the French President agreed with Poincaré that it was dangerous to utilize a formal system of notes when the two countries held such notoriously different viewpoints. He did state that perhaps a combination of oral and written communications would be useful. See Crewe to FO, July 5, 1923, FO 371/8642, C 11717/1/18.

continued to insist upon a written reply when Curzon talked to Saint-Aulaire on July 3 and said that he could not understand why France was unable to reply to the questionnaire he had sent three weeks earlier. The Ambassador stated that although he would telegraph Poincaré for permission to give a summary of the French views, this would be rather useless, for Curzon already knew what they were because he had told him three weeks earlier. France still would not discuss modification of the occupation, and Germany, who could be brought to reason only "by menace and fear," must simply be told to stop resistance. Curzon objected violently to this statement, saying that the method of argument and persuasion was preferable, and warned that since the trend of British public opinion, particularly in the House of Commons, was anti-French, Britain might have to act to protect its own interests if France persisted in the attitude just sketched.[34]

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[34]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, July 3, 1923, FO 371/8642, C 11639/1/18. Saint-Aulaire's remarks in both this conversation and the previous one with Crowe were based upon a June 29 telegram from Poincaré. This telegram reflected how intensely France believed that Germany had not accepted defeat, had tried to elude payment, and had tricked Britain into accepting its allegations. Only force could make Germany pay and keep it from splitting the Allies. The telegram also showed the depth of French fear of Germany and some of the reasons France felt that it could not accept British views without risking its independence. If France started talking to Germany before resistance ended, England would appear the mediator, and Germany could say that it was the strongest and had imposed its will on France. See Poincaré to Saint-Aulaire, June 29, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 50-56.

Saint-Aulaire on July 6 delivered the long-awaited French reply which was, amazingly, dated June 14. Before addressing itself to the British questionnaire, the document defined the position of the French government: France and Belgium had occupied the Ruhr under rights given by the Treaty of Versailles, and in December and January the British government had raised no legal objections; they would examine no German proposal until resistance had ceased. The French also requested that the present Allied conversations remain secret so as not to encourage German resistance and said that no conference could be called until they and the British had prepared the ground and reached an agreement.

The document then turned to the British questionnaire and declared that in order for passive resistance to end the German government would have to withdraw the decrees that had enjoined resistance. Although this did not mean that the government would be responsible for the acts of the population committed without its consent, it should try to stop such acts. The population would not be compelled to cooperate with Allied authorities, but it should not be allowed to obstruct them. Even though many minor officials and railwaymen might be allowed to return after resistance ended, there could be no amnesty for murderers, saboteurs, or high officials responsible for revolts or strikes.[35]

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[35]Response of the French Government to the British memorandum of June 13, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 56-58.

France, the document made clear, wanted no British mediation between itself and Germany on the subject of passive resistance because if Britain were to appear as a mediator Germany would draw dangerous conclusions and increase its demands. When "the affirmation of an unshaken determination" had made the Germans yield, "the relations between France and Germany can become in all respects what they were on the left bank of the Rhine, and consequently the military character of the occupation will become less and less emphasized. . . ." Finally, France asserted again that the object of the occupation was to secure payment of the German debt, which had, in accordance with the Versailles Treaty, been established at 132,000,000,000 gold marks.

> Under the treaty the debt thus assessed cannot be reduced except with the unanimous consent of the Allies. No consideration as to the capacity for payment can therefore result in a reduction of the debt. They can only entail the grant of moratoria until such time as German capacity for payment shall have improved.
>
> In these circumstances, the French Government, who abide by the treaty and simply demand its application, have no proposal to make.[36]

Curzon expressed keen disappointment in the communication, saying that Poincaré had failed to recede from his previous position and seemed to think that a reply to the German note was unnecessary. Such views would displease

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[36] Ibid., p. 59. Middlemas and Barnes called the French response "utterly hostile"; see Baldwin, p. 186. This description seems somewhat harsh.

his colleagues, who would feel that Britain could no longer remain silent.[37]

Both a letter from Curzon to Crewe and Cabinet Minutes revealed that other British officials did indeed dislike the French July 6 response. On July 8 the Foreign Secretary wrote:

> Even the pro-French element in the Cabinet. . . . are indignant with Poincaré and are hot for independent action. We have shown patience, toleration, even weakness. But now we mean to move. . . . You may rely upon me to go as far as is possible in keeping together the Entente. But act we must and will.[38]

The Cabinet, meeting on July 9, declared the French document intolerable and agreed that Curzon and Baldwin should make identic announcements in Parliament on July 12 about British reparations policy. Cabinet members outlined the points to be covered in the Parliamentary statement and said that it "should be couched in terms of extreme friendliness to France. . . ." They also instructed Curzon to begin preparing a draft reply to the June 7 German note and a draft response to the French communication transmitted on July 6.[39] When the Cabinet met again on July 12, it considered two

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[37]Conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, July 6, 1923, FO 371/8642, C 11803/1/18; Saint-Aulaire to Poincaré, July 7, 1923, Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 61-62.

[38]Curzon to Crewe, July 8, 1923, in Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Curzon (3 vols.; London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1928), III, 357.

[39]Cab 23/46, 35(23)1(a,b,d).

drafts of the statement to be made in Parliament that afternoon, one prepared by Curzon and a shorter one by Baldwin. Curzon, who was to have prepared the statement, had finished his draft between midnight and 3:00 A.M. on July 11. Derby complained that it failed to pressure Germany to comply, and Baldwin felt that it was provocative. That evening at a party he and his secretary, J. C. C. Davidson, formulated a new draft. The Cabinet accepted Baldwin's version with minor modifications, and the Prime Minister read it in the House of Commons at 3:45 P.M.[40]

Carefully worded, the statement sought to avoid offending France. It began by saying that the Allied powers disagreed only about the most effective method of collecting reparations and bringing about European security. Britain, although as determined as anyone else that Germany should pay to the extent of its capacity, had, correctly, believed since January that the Ruhr occupation could not effectively produce the maximum return. Currently, the Allies were receiving smaller payments than they had before the occupation began, and while Germany was moving rapidly toward economic disaster other countries were suffering economically. Public opinion throughout Europe had grown alarmed, and it seemed that both the

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[40]Cab 23/46, 37(23)1; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 187.

recovery of the world and the preservation of peace were endangered.[41] Because of these conditions, Britain must act quickly, for the situation could not correct itself.

> There will, I believe, be general agreement to the following propositions: that the period of conflict should as soon as possible be terminated; that the indefinite occupation by one country of the territory of another in time of peace is a phenomenon, rare and regrettable in itself, to which an honourable end should as soon as possible be found; that the debtor should not merely be called upon to pay his debts, but should be placed in a position where he can do so; that his capacity, where it is in doubt, should be tested and determined, and that united efforts should be made to accomplish these ends.
>
> Peace will not finally be obtained and recovery will not be ensured until a solution has been found to three great questions. They are (1) the payment of reparations, (2) the settlement of inter-Allied debts, and (3) the security of a pacified Europe.[42]

In order to achieve these goals, the British government planned to prepare a draft reply to Germany's June 7 note and submit it to France, Belgium, and the other Allies in the hope that they would be able to agree about the terms and engage in united action.[43] After another month of inaction and delay, Britain had, therefore, taken the initiative once more.

French official and public reaction to Baldwin's address was rather restrained, perhaps indicating a desire to avoid antagonizing Britain unnecessarily. Most newspapers commented on the friendly sentiments expressed by

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[41] Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 166, cols. 1584-1587.

[42] Ibid., col. 1587. [43] Ibid., cols. 1588-1589.

Baldwin in the House of Commons and Curzon in the House of Lords. Le Matin, at that time supposedly in close touch with Poincaré, said that in spite of its friendly tone the speech revealed that disagreement persisted. It objected to both the failure to condemn passive resistance and the view that Germany was an honest country paying all it could. The paper, nevertheless, hoped conversations would continue and Britain would try to understand France. Le Temps, after remarking that the address contained statements that were inaccurate and failed to propose a real solution, urged that England end its aloofness in the forthcoming draft reply to Germany and stop encouraging Germany to resist. Saint-Aulaire told Curzon on July 16 that although France appreciated the warm sentiment expressed by Baldwin it especially regretted that Germany had not been urged to abandon passive resistance and was disappointed that the Prime Minister seemed frequently to support Germany.[44] When Poincaré made one of his usual Sunday addresses at Senlis on July 15, it was evident that neither the recent diplomatic exchange nor Baldwin's July 12 statement had changed his outlook. He denounced German war crimes, praised France's role in the war, and said that

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[44] Le Matin, July 13, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, July 14, 1923, p. 1; see also L'Oeuvre, July 13, 1923, p. 1; L'Ère Nouvelle, July 13, 1923, p. 3; Le Petit Parisien, July 13, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, July 13, 1923, p. 1; conversation between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire, July 16, 1923, FO 371/8643, C 12370/1/18.

France did not seek German collapse, for no creditor wanted the dissolution of its debtor. In closing, he declared that he, as always, faithfully supported the Franco-British alliance and believed that the Allies would eventually recognize that France was right. France must carefully execute the Versailles Treaty to prevent destruction of the whole diplomatic framework constructed at the close of the war, and in defending its own rights it was defending those of all the Allies.[45]

British press reaction to the Baldwin speech was mixed. Several of the papers remarked that the speech said nothing new and that France should be pleased by its conciliatory tone. The Daily Mail, which during the first week of July again started publishing several pro-French letters each day, called it "guarded and colorless" and said that it left the situation unchanged. On the other hand, both the Manchester Guardian and The Times felt it indicated that Britain was going to move from a passive to an active policy and once more take the initiative. J. L. Garvin, writing for the Observer, praised it highly: "The nation has found a man to its mind. . . . Mr. Baldwin's declaration was not merely a speech. It was also a great State Paper, ranking as one of the principal documents of European history after the war." After "six

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[45] Le Temps, July 16, 1923, p. 2.

months of impotence," the British government had "ceased to be a cipher" on questions vital to its existence.[46]

Soon after the July 12 Parliamentary statement, as Curzon and Crowe began preparing the draft reply to Germany, Lord Crewe made a specific suggestion about the contents of the document. He wrote that he could not emphasize strongly enough the necessity of referring to the cessation of passive resistance, for that omission from the July 12 address had caused much criticism in Paris. Furthermore, because French public opinion had recently shown more signs of willingness "to make concessions on both the occupation of the Ruhr and on the question of inter-Allied debts," he believed that if the reply contained "even a pious wish regarding the cessation of passive resistance," the public might condemn Poincaré if he rejected the draft.[47] On July 19, Curzon presented to the Cabinet a draft reply to the German June 7 note and a draft covering letter to the Allied governments. After hearing reports from Curzon, the Cabinet discussed the two documents and suggested several

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[46] Daily Mail, July 13, 1923, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, July 13, 1923, p. 8; The Times (London), July 13, 1923, p. 13; Observer, July 15, 1923, p. 12.

[47] Crewe to FO, No. 680, July 14, 1923, FO 371/8643, C 12240/1/18. Several articles in the Paris press during the next few days confirmed Crewe's opinion. Even L'Oeuvre, which usually criticized Poincaré's policy, said that no compromise was possible on the question of passive resistance. See L'Oeuvre, July 17, 1923, p. 3; Le Petit Parisien, July 15, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, July 20, 1923, p. 1.

modifications. That the pro-French element in the Cabinet had not been completely alienated by the July 6 note is obvious, for most of the alterations made reflected its influence. For example, the Cabinet advised that in the phrase "the whole case for a further moratorium would emerge in a new perspective," reference to the word "moratorium" should be omitted since it was "unacceptable to the French Government." For that phrase should be substituted the following: "The whole problem would assume a different aspect." The Cabinet then agreed that since the draft covering letter should be revised by the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, they would meet the following day to consider the revised draft. Revision was, they felt, necessary for the following reasons:

> In its present form the covering note is likely to be less acceptable to the French Government than the draft reply to the German Government. There was a risk that the more grudging attitude of the covering note might interfere with the good impression which the draft note to Germany was otherwise likely to produce. It was therefore felt to be important to amend the covering note, not only because of the immediate impression it might produce on the French Government, but also in order that, if it were eventually published, it might make a favourable and conciliatory impression on French, no less than on British and world public opinion.[48]

After Curzon and Baldwin revised the documents, the Cabinet on July 20 approved them with only minor alterations,

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[48]Cab 23/46, 38(23)1(a,b,c).

one being the addition of a paragraph indicating British willingness to consider the security question.[49]

On that day, the Foreign Office dispatched both documents to the Allied Ambassadors in London and communicated copies privately to the American Embassy. The covering note--the longer of the two documents--pointed out that the German note of June 7 had remained unanswered for seven weeks and traced British efforts to obtain Franco-Belgian participation in a collective reply. Speaking of the June 13 questionnaire, the covering note remarked: "The replies that have been returned to these questions have not completely lifted the veil of uncertainty in which the situation is still in parts involved." While deadlock prevailed, the international situation was daily becoming more acute, and ". . . the occupation of the Ruhr, whether justified or not in its conception, fails to produce the desired effect; Allied unity is strained. . . ." So long as Germany's chief industrial area was under military rule and suffered political agitation, none of the problems could be solved. The note then made a major concession to French demands by saying that if passive resistance was the chief obstacle to recovery, Britain would be willing to join the Allies in calling for its cessation. Before

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[49]Cab 23/46, 39(23)1. See Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 188-189, for a brief discussion of the formulation of the two July 20 documents.

it could do so, however, two conditions would have to be satisfied: Germany's capacity to pay--not its liability--must be determined, and "proposals should be made for the restoration of the Ruhr to that condition which will enable it to become an area of fruitful production, rather than one of international strife."

With reference to the first of these two conditions, the note stated that the 1921 reparations figure "no longer corresponds to the realities of the situation" and that even though the Treaty of Versailles had provided for a reduction of the debt total only through the approval of the governments concerned, there was no reason that those governments or the Reparation Commission could not turn to some expert body for assistance and advice. If Germany were to accept the advice to cease resistance, the British government believed--and hoped that France and Belgium agreed--that the nature of the occupation should quickly change. The number of troops in the Ruhr "should be reduced as rapidly as possible; and . . . assurances of ultimate and complete evacuation, when the guarantees have been put into effective operation, should not be withheld," and coercive measures should be cancelled or relaxed. In closing, the note urged the opening of inter-Allied discussions, "whether by conference or otherwise, for the purpose of elaborating a comprehensive plan of a general and final financial settlement."

The draft note, which summarized the May 2 and June 7 German notes and discussed the unacceptable facets previously called to Germany's attention, focused upon and attempted to give the views of the Allied governments concerning the three major points mentioned in the June 7 document: the offer to let an impartial international commission establish the amount and methods of payment, the proposed guarantees for payment of the liabilities established by the commission, and a conference to discuss the solution of all those questions. It accepted, somewhat cautiously, the suggestion for an impartial examination of Germany's capacity to pay, stipulating that this must be done within the framework of the Treaty. It reserved opinion on the guarantees offered by Germany because their economic value depended upon factors not mentioned in the June 7 note--stabilizing the mark and balancing the German budget--and said that no guarantees would be acceptable without some type of international control over German finances. Germany, as provided in the Treaty, should be consulted and allowed to present its case, but before the Allies could discuss any of these questions, the Germans would have to cease passive resistance. The draft note devoted a long paragraph to this subject and specifically called upon Germany "to withdraw without further delay the ordinances and decrees which have organised and fomented this

form of resistance. . . ."[50] Since Britain had, it appeared, finally offered to meet French demands concerning passive resistance, diplomats wondered if this step would suffice to win French assent to sending the collective reply.

While France and England were arguing about a reply to the second reparations proposal, the occupying powers continually tightened their grip on the Ruhr and Rhineland. Around June 10 the French occupied the Altenessen-Katernberg-Wanne-Herne railroad line and all stations but one in Essen, and the Rhineland High Commission, Kilmarnock abstaining, voted on June 12 to occupy the port of Karlsruhe to facilitate customs collection.[51] On the same day General Degoutte, saying he feared German attempts to destroy bridges across the Rhine, requested and received High Commission authorization to forbid night traffic on the Rhine within established distances of any bridge or permanent work.[52] On June 30 a delayed-action bomb placed in a Belgian leave train exploded on the Duisburg-Hochfeld bridge killing ten soldiers and wounding forty. Because of this sabotage and intelligence reports that more saboteurs were

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[50]Curzon to French, Italian, Belgian, and Japanese Ambassadors, July 20, 1923, FO 371/8644, C 12540/1/18.

[51]Acting Consul-General Charlton to FO, No. 252, June 11, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 10358/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 362, June 12, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12747/313/18.

[52]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 361, June 14, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 10499/313/18.

arriving from unoccupied Germany, the High Commission on July 1 closed to Germans all circulation in both directions between occupied and unoccupied territories for a period of two weeks and later extended the restrictions for a brief time. On July 26 the High Commission adopted an ordinance forbidding the stockage or deposit of merchandise along the banks of navigable waterways in occupied territories. Although the French used as a pretext the possibility of the introduction by water of explosives for sabotage and the need for leaving docks free for military transport, Kilmarnock felt that the true purpose lay elsewhere: since the Germans, seeking to avoid using Régie trains, transported most local merchandise by river, he believed Degoutte sought to stop this and force them to use the trains.[53]

Beginning in June, British newspaper accounts charged the French and Belgians with preventing food supplies from entering the Ruhr. After being pressed by Parliament on the subject, the Foreign Office on June 21 questioned Kilmarnock, who reported three days later that the charges seemed to be false. The Régie had offered to transport foodstuffs, German authorities in the Ruhr had made no complaints, and most of the difficulties resulted from German refusal to use railroad lines under French control. Early

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[53]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 304, June 30, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12747/313/18; No. 306, July 1, 1923, FO 371/8742, C 16674/313/18; No. 315, July 20, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12609/313/18; No. 316, July 26, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12896/313/18.

in July he said that although food reserves were low at Essen and Bochum, he believed that supplies would be maintained, for the French had no desire to starve the population.[54]

While France was exerting increasingly intensive pressure upon the Germans, the British government, although it had shown some initiative in trying to devise a common reply to Germany, still acquiesced in the face of most French moves in the occupied territory and did nothing there to make the position of the invaders untenable. Several events in the Ruhr involved the British government directly, one of them being the railroad problem. The High Commission on June 12 authorized the Régie to double the track between Euskirchen and Duren--just west of the British zone--because France and Belgium wanted to improve the transport of troops to and from

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[54]FO to Kilmarnock, No. 165, June 21, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 10692/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 299, June 22, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 10916/313/18; No. 468, July 4, 1923, FO 371/8735, C 11740/313/18. The French complained frequently of British reports of Ruhr conditions and events, which they claimed were frequently distorted. In late May, Poincaré told Tirard to try to exercise some influence on British correspondents in newly-occupied territory, and Tirard replied on May 25 that he had instructed André François-Poncet, head of the Press Bureau in the Ruhr, to send one of his staff members to Cologne to give reports daily to British correspondents. In this way he hoped to counteract the "intentionally misleading information" the British had been receiving from German sources. See Poincaré to Tirard, No. 1174, May 24, 1923, A.N., AJ9 4311; Tirard to Poincaré, No. 9760, May 25, 1923, A.N., AJ9 3046. This move appears to have had little effect on the nature of British reporting.

the Ruhr and increase reparations coal deliveries. When Kilmarnock reported that this step, by diverting much traffic from the British zone, would avoid a possible French request for additional traffic facilities through Cologne, the Foreign Office decided not to protest, even though the labor cost of the project was to be taken from Régie receipts and the material to come from seized German stocks.[55] Another incident in July reflected British concern to avoid irritating France. Kilmarnock on July 4 wrote that the Kölnische Zeitung had been publishing violent articles against France. Since British efforts to urge moderation on the publishers had been unsuccessful, he wondered if he could suppress the newspaper if such articles continued to appear. The Foreign Office replied the following week that he could do so if inflammatory articles appeared in the future.[56]

When trade difficulties in the occupied territory continued to trouble them, however, the British frequently made formal complaints to France. In June and July, French authorities entered the Badische Company at Ludwigshafen

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[55]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 360, June 14, 1923, and Minute by Lampson on June 20, 1923, FO 371/8732, C 10493/313/18; British Delegation, Reparation Commission, No. B.R.305/23, July 5, 1923, FO 371/8735, C 12019/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 553, July 23, 1923, and Minute by J. C. Sterndale Bennett, July 28, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 12862/313/18.

[56]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 468, July 4, 1923, and FO to Kilmarnock, No. 173, July 10, 1923, FO 371/8742, C 16674/313/18.

and seized dyestuffs earmarked for England. Only after a lengthy correspondence did the British government succeed in having them released and shipped to their destination. The British also encountered delays in obtaining licences for shipment of large quantities of steel to British buyers, but Lord Kilmarnock eventually worked out a relatively satisfactory solution. On June 19, in discussing the steel licence situation, he made an interesting observation about trade problems. He said that although the French had done much to postpone the issue of licences, the British traders themselves were not entirely blameless, for they had delayed applying for the full quantities needed. Furthermore, British merchants had, under the influence of London newspaper accounts, been led to believe that no goods could come in or out, and they had often failed to make application for licences: these statements were inaccurate, and most licences were being issued for the heavy steel Britain needed.[57]

During the exchange of correspondence between Britain and France over the German reparations proposals, various British officials continued to consider the question of the legality of Franco-Belgian action. Discussion of Rhineland

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[57]Board of Trade to FO, No. I.M.195/23, June 27, 1923, and Curzon to Crewe, July 4, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 11224/313/18; Crewe to FO, No. 660, July 8, 1923, FO 371/8735, C 11808/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, No. 395, June 19, 1923, FO 371/8742, C 12747/313/18. During June and July, scores of dispatches dealt with trade problems.

Ordinance No. 153 and No. 154 resumed in early July. As mentioned earlier,[58] France had on May 25 stated, in effect, that when the Reparation Commission declared Germany's default, its functions had ended, and Lampson had on June 6 sent the Treasury a draft reply challenging the French contentions. O. Niemeyer on July 3 transmitted the Treasury response, which said that although the French note was completely unsatisfactory, it might be unwise to send an answer at that time. In accordance with a suggestion by the Treasury, Lampson requested the Law Officers' advice on the matter, and their July 30 opinion somewhat surprised the Foreign Office. The Attorney-General and Solicitor-General failed to agree about one of the main points--whether the Rhineland High Commission or the respective governments should decide the measures to be taken under Paragraph 18. Because of this, the Foreign Office decided that it could not protest the French claim that after the declaration of default the Rhineland High Commission could, by a majority vote, take measures justified under Paragraph 18. In addition, the Law Officers' report disappointed the Foreign Office in that it said that measures contemplated in Paragraph 18 could be taken in the Rhineland. Lampson decided that Treasury officials should be consulted to see if they wished to pursue the matter further.[59] Throughout this period,

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[58] <u>Supra</u>, pp. 203-205.

[59] Treasury to FO, No. F.6115, July 3, 1923; FO to Attorney-General and Solicitor-General, July 12, 1923; Law

notably in the July 20 covering letter to the Allied governments, the British government failed to act upon Curzon's June 11 statement to Saint-Aulaire labelling French action illegal and continued to refrain from openly challenging the legality of French coercive measures. When J. Fischer Williams in July prepared a lengthy memorandum stating that the threatened May, 1921, occupation of the Ruhr in no way prevented Britain from contesting the legality of current French action because it would have been a measure "taken in accordance with international practice," Crowe simply noted that the document might be valuable later on and that the arguments contained therein were sound, although not new.[60] It seems that the British government remained silent on the legal issue because it feared that the public would be unable to differentiate between action purportedly based on a specific Treaty provision and that previously threatened upon the basis of nebulous "international practice."

While working for a collective reply to the German June 7 note, the British government carefully watched domestic affairs in France. Several reports in June and July indicated that Poincaré might be meeting increasing

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Officers of the Crown to Curzon, July 30, 1923, FO 371/8734, C 11608/313/18; Minute by Lampson, August 2, 1923, FO 371/8736, C 13098/313/18.

[60]Williams to Hurst, July 3, 1923, and Minute by Crowe, July 25, 1923, FO 371/8734, C 11652/313/18.

internal opposition, especially from Millerand. Crewe heard from "a reliable opposition source" that Millerand, Loucheur, and Barthou resented Poincaré's inflexible attitude and wanted to begin conversations with Britain, and on June 25 the Foreign Office learned that Monsieur Bompart, Secretary to Millerand, said that the President, fearing France would be isolated by an Anglo-German rapprochement, wanted to remove Poincaré so that England and France could cooperate. Phipps wrote on July 30 that Millerand, who seemed to realize that the occupation was a failure and to believe that France should extricate itself from the Ruhr if possible, was reportedly criticizing Poincaré for not having presented a definite reparations program.[61]

Those who read of the French Senate session of June 29 should not, however, have been very encouraged. After listening to Poincaré speak and giving him a standing ovation, the Senate unanimously voted 307,000,000 francs for Ruhr expenses. The President of the Council's speech reflected absolutely no modification of his position: once more he traced in detail Germany's failure to pay and repeated that France and Belgium, who had occupied the Ruhr under Treaty provisions in order to preserve the peace settlement, were there only to take guarantees and to create

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[61]Crewe to FO, No. 581, June 10, 1923, FO 371/8638, C 10052/1/18; S.I.S. to FO, No. CX/521/Ia., June 25, 1923, FO 371/8733, C 11241/313/18; Phipps to FO, No. 719, July 30, 1923, FO 371/8737, C 13108/313/18.

in Germany the will to pay. Had they had annexationist designs, they would have instead occupied the valley of the Main in order to separate Bavaria from Prussia and cut Germany in two. Poincaré then devoted quite a bit of time to statistical information and indicated that the endeavor was becoming increasingly profitable. Contrary to what the Germans said, France was not trying to keep food supplies out of the Ruhr: instead, more foodstuffs were entering the area than before the beginning of the occupation, and France had organized shops and soup kitchens at a cost of over 100,000 francs monthly. Finally, he repeated the old theme that the German government alone had initiated passive resistance and that such resistance was useless, for France and Belgium were determined to bring the Ruhr policy to a successful conclusion and keep the Ruhr until they were paid.[62]

The report of a July 22 conversation between Phipps and Poincaré also cast gloom over the Foreign Office. Crewe described the encounter in graphic terms: "His attitude, which was personally most friendly, left me breathless from the political point of view. Unless he waters considerably his very potent wine he will shortly present to His Majesty's Government a draught which they may well decline even to sip." Phipps said that it was, amazingly, the question of passive resistance that provoked Poincaré--

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[62] J.O., Sénat, June 30, 1923, pp. 1355-1361.

this in spite of the prominent place given that issue in the draft reply.[63] French press response on the eve of the Franco-Belgian replies was only slightly more encouraging, with two articles in the semi-official Le Temps being of particular interest. On July 26 Herbette argued that because the hope of British intervention sustained German resistance, France had to hold firm to its principles and could neither "prejudice the cessation of passive resistance by any promise," nor submit a settlement of the reparations question to the arbitration of any new international organization. Referring to the part of the covering letter which reflected British willingness to discuss the security question, he wrote the following day that because security and reparations were two completely separate questions and must remain so, France could not make a financial sacrifice in exchange for any promise of military guarantee.[64]

Although the Annual Register said later that while England was waiting for Poincaré's delayed reply to the July 20 documents, "Not a voice was raised in Parliament

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[63]Phipps to FO, No. 696, July 22, 1923, FO 371/8644, C 12613/1/18. Crowe wrote the following day: "It looks as if those were right who believe that M. Poincaré does not really desire a settlement, preferring to remain in the Ruhr and to see Germany reduced to impotence, as ends valuable in themselves." See Minute by Crowe, July 23, 1923, FO 371/8644, C 12619/1/18.

[64]Le Temps, July 26, 1923, p. 3; July 26, 1923, p. 1. The tone of Le Petit Parisien differed somewhat from that of Le Temps; see Le Petit Parisien, July 27, 1923, p. 1.

or the country while British interests were being visibly sacrificed and British influence on the Continent fading away," the statement was not completely true, for some British newspapers anxiously watched the diplomatic scene. In the days following the dispatch of the covering letter and draft reply, The Times had several leading articles pointing out both the rapidly growing chaos in Germany and the danger of delay, and on July 27 it said that since Britain had taken the first step it could not let this initiative "be thwarted by any intentional delays."[65] The Spectator also voiced alarm:

> If France continues to demand her full pound of flesh, whether it kills or does not kill her prisoner, we cannot merely regret her action and deplore its consequences. We must actively oppose her and do our very best to prevent the destruction, moral and economic, of a nation whose existence, whatever her past crimes, as a stable working community is essential not only to the welfare of Europe, but to the continuance of civilization. . . . We shall not, of course, attempt to use force against France to stop her progressive occupation and destruction of Germany, but if France persists in her present course we must pursue a line of policy which cannot but end in her isolation.[66]

Even though a portion of the British press was expressing intense concern over the impact of the occupation upon Germany, the diplomatic scene had remained basically unchanged during June and July as France, sensing the approach of German defeat, refused to change its position.

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[65] Annual Register, 1923, p. 77; The Times (London), July 23, 1923, p. 13; July 27, 1923, p. 11.

[66] Spectator, July 28, 1923, p. 109.

Although the British government had resumed the initiative by dispatching the June 13 questionnaire and July 20 draft reply and by offering to call on Germany to cease resistance, it had failed to follow up on these moves. When France delayed and refused to be precise about the form the occupation would take after the end of passive resistance, the British merely asked for clearer explanations. It seems that the indecisiveness of Curzon and the influence of the pro-French element in the Cabinet stymied the efforts of those Foreign Office officials who were urging the government to take independent action to end the impasse. As July drew to a close, however, all eyes turned expectantly toward Paris. British diplomats wondered if President Millerand had been able to modify Poincaré's unyielding position and if France would agree to communicate the draft reply to Germany.

CHAPTER VI

PROCLAMATION TO PARLIAMENT AND PUBLIC APPEALS THROUGH PUBLICATION, JULY 30-AUGUST 20, 1923

From July 30 through August 20, Britain and France engaged in a battle of notes. Because the British government considered the July 30 French response to the covering letter and draft reply unsatisfactory and noted grave conditions in Germany, it decided to appeal for world support through a statement in Parliament, publication of the post-June 7 reparations correspondence, and a detailed response to the latest French note. France, believing that German resistance was about to end, replied to the British document with an extremely lengthy, unyielding statement of its own position, and the two documents, which were published in full, increased animosity between Britain and France. After the position of each country had been clearly exposed, some observers expected immediate action to end the crisis.

The French reply of July 30, which Curzon and some British officials believed controversial and hostile in tone, was in reality more dispassionate and conciliatory than several previous French pronouncements and included

no detailed legal justification for Franco-Belgian action. It nevertheless reflected little modification in the French position and indicated that France was stalling. Although it discussed most of the points in the British covering letter, the note hardly mentioned the draft reply. It said that while France appreciated and shared the British desire for a settlement of the reparations question and wanted to seek a solution together with the British, it did not believe that the June 7 proposals indicated any desire to execute the Versailles Treaty, particularly since they made no promise to end passive resistance. After indicating a willingness to answer further British questions, the note emphasized a previously-stated principle: France and Belgium would evacuate the Ruhr only in proportion as they received payments from Germany; they could not abandon the pledge for mere promises.

In dealing with the British question concerning the nature of the occupation after the cessation of passive resistance, the French were no more specific than they had been in previous verbal and written communications. "As to passive resistance, if Germany discontinues it completely, we will introduce into our occupation the modifications which we consider compatible with the safety of the troops and engineers and with the retention of the pledge in our hands." They then denied the British assertion that the occupation had failed to produce the desired effect and

explained that France knew that it could not obtain "the immediate and total payment of reparations" even if the German government cooperated. It had another purpose:

> What we wanted was first and foremost to create in Germany, by a seizure of pledges and by coercion, the will to pay; it was to cause such inconvenience in the economic and political organisation of the Reich that it would prefer the execution of the Treaty of Peace to this inconvenience; it was to obtain what we have not obtained for four years, i.e., the recognition by Germany of her obligations, not from the general and theoretical point of view, but from the practical point of view.

The note contended that had Germany not counted on a split between the Allies it would have quickly capitulated. The Germans themselves were responsible for trade and commercial difficulties because they refused to apply for Allied licences and to use Régie trains. France then reaffirmed that cessation "must be preliminary and could not possibly be accompanied by immediate advantages" and that it could never enter into negotiations with Germany before resistance ended.

Having made these preliminary remarks, the French turned to the two factors Britain had said must precede a demand for cessation of resistance: the establishment of Germany's capacity to pay and the return of the Ruhr to productive condition. First, they questioned the necessity of making a new assessment of the total reparations figure, asking why an estimate made in 1923 by so-called experts should be more accurate than the one made in 1921 and why figures determined in 1923 would still be accurate in ten or fifteen years. Furthermore, since a state's capacity to

pay was a variable thing, it should not be determined once and for all. Because of this, Article 234 of the Treaty had called for periodic reassessment by the Reparation Commission itself. France, believing that it would be foolish to fix Germany's debt at a time when its capacity to pay was at the lowest point, would consent neither to fixing a final total nor to cancelling a part of Germany's debt--except in exchange for a cancellation of a like portion of its own debt. Moreover, it would never be possible to determine a figure which Germany would accept as just and reasonable. At this point French nationalism, which characterized the entire note, became obvious:

> We cannot forget that in 1871 no one in the world thought of finding out whether France found the Treaty of Frankfurt just and realisable. No one then prevented Germany from occupying a considerable portion of French territory pending total payment of an indemnity . . . claimed by a victorious country which had not been invaded, and which had suffered no war damage, and which stole two provinces from the vanquished.

Turning to the Anglo-German suggestion for utilizing an impartial expert commission in the assessment of Germany's capacity to pay, the note asked about the relationship of the experts to the Reparation Commission. What would be the nature of the opinion they would give, and how and by whom would they be chosen? While welcoming more active American participation, it asked what members other than American ones could be called impartial and said that before France reached a definite opinion it needed more

precise answers to these points. France did not at this time, it should be noted, totally refuse to consider the creation of such a body.

After reaffirming that they could not evacuate for mere guarantees and refusing to make specific promises about the reduction of troops, modification of High Commission ordinances, and the return of expelled German nationals, the French declared that "Details of the measures which will be adopted cannot be settled in advance as they will depend on the attitude of the Reich and the population." Finally, they asked if the British government included the question of inter-Allied debts when it talked of a "general and final settlement." With reference to the last paragraph of the July 20 covering letter, in which the British had expressed willingness to discuss French security, they said that although France would always be pleased to discuss the matter, it should be discussed separately because it had nothing to do with the Ruhr occupation.[1]

Foreign Office reaction to the July 30 note was immediately unfavorable. Curzon, upon perusing the document presented by Saint-Aulaire, told the Ambassador that it was disappointing, disquieting, and a rebuff to Britain, for it met every British suggestion with either opposition or questions, seemed designed to lead to correspondence that might

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[1]Saint-Aulaire to Curzon, July 30, 1923, FO 371/8645, C 13105/1/18. See this also in Doc. dip.: notes sur réparations, pp. 76-82.

last weeks or even months, and gave no hope for a collective reply to the June 7 note. On July 31, Sir Eyre Crowe and Counsellor Miles W. Lampson prepared Minutes commenting upon the French note and discussing future British action, and within a few days the Treasury prepared a memorandum on reparations and Allied debts, as well as observations on the French note.[2] Before criticizing several sections of the French reply, Lampson, asking what Britain could do next, suggested that publication of the recent reparations correspondence might be advantageous: this would "make clear to British and world opinion the attitude and motives" of the British government and "simplify the question of what answer (if any) is to be returned to Germany." In his criticism of the contents of the French note, Lampson condemned particularly the French failure to mention the draft reply to Germany and the refusal to make commitments in advance about the nature of the occupation after passive resistance ended. Believing that the French had destroyed all possibility of sending a joint reply to Germany, he suggested

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[2]Conversation between Saint-Aulaire and Curzon, July 30, 1923, FO 371/8645, C 13162/1/18; Minute by Lampson, July 31, 1923, FO 371/8646, C 13519/1/18; Minute by Crowe, July 31, 1923, FO 371/8648, C 13562/1/18; Treasury Memorandum on Reparations and Inter-Allied Debts, August 4, 1923, FO 371/8647, C 13584/1/18; Treasury Observations on the French Reparation Note of July 30, August 8, 1923, FO 371/8647, C 13591/1/18. The Treasury Memorandum on Reparations declared that Britain could discuss inter-Allied debts only after Germany's reparations obligation had been determined. The Treasury observations formed part of the forthcoming British reply.

once more that the British go ahead with an independent investigation.[3]

The comments of Permanent Under-Secretary Crowe upon the July 30 note give a keen insight into the unenviable position held by Britain. Crowe confessed that the field of British action was severely restricted: "We are not really in a position to advocate a separate line of policy, since it is in France's power, by her mere opposition, to frustrate any separate arrangement that we could propose to Germany," and even if an independent inquiry were conducted, it would do little good as long as France remained in the Ruhr. Britain could neither join with France in the occupation nor use a policy of force to get it out of the Ruhr, for it had no means of carrying "out a policy of constraint, and, if we had, it is doubtful whether our public opinion would approve it." He felt that only one course lay open to Britain: "Stand aside, dissociating ourselves as openly and clearly from the French occupation, appealing to public opinion, in the hope of producing a revulsion of feeling in France itself."[4]

The French reply also caused both consternation and uncertainty among Cabinet members. While Baldwin showed keen disappointment with the French reply and the Belgian one of the same date, several members of the Cabinet wanted

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[3]Minute by Lampson, July 31, 1923, cited above.

[4]Minute by Crowe, July 31, 1923, cited above.

to drop the whole problem and leave matters as they were. Lord Robert Cecil, on the other hand, suggested that the neutrals be allowed to bring the matter before the League of Nations, but Curzon refused to adopt either of these courses.[5] When the Cabinet met on July 31, Curzon circulated the French and Belgian replies and reported on his July 30 conversations with the French, Belgian, German, and Italian Ambassadors. The Cabinet decided to meet the next day to discuss future British action in the face of the "somewhat discouraging and negative tenour of the French Note."[6] At the August 1 Cabinet meeting, Curzon analyzed the French and Belgian replies in detail, emphasizing that the French note indicated that France wanted no immediate settlement and intended to prolong negotiations until Germany had collapsed. After lengthy discussion the Cabinet instructed Curzon to draw up for Baldwin's approval a statement on the reparations question to be made in both Houses of Parliament the following day. After outlining the contents of the statement, the Cabinet instructed Curzon to consult the Allies about publishing the key documents pertaining to the June 7 German note and to begin preparing for Cabinet consideration a reply to the July 30 notes from

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[5]Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 364; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 190.

[6]Cab 23/46, 42(23)2(a).

France and Belgium. This reply should be couched in conciliatory terms, include a statement of British reparations policy, and be designed as "an appeal to the public opinion of the world, setting forth the reasons of the British action in proposing a joint reply to Germany and deeply deploring that their efforts had met with so little response."[7]

When Curzon appeared before the House of Lords and Baldwin before the House of Commons on August 2--the last day of the session--those bodies were clamoring for information about the July 30 notes. The relatively brief statement traced the course of events since receipt of the June 7 note and discussed the major points of the July 20 draft reply to Germany, emphasizing that it had encouraged the Germans to cease passive resistance. Turning to the French and Belgian replies of July 30, Baldwin said that, although written in a cordial and friendly fashion, they contained no material for formulating a collective Allied reply to the German note--in fact, they did not even mention the draft reply. Instead of showing concern about "an early alteration of the situation in the Ruhr, or of the commencement of the discussions about reparations, to both of which His Majesty's Government had eagerly looked forward," they appeared to envisage weeks of conversation among the Allies before anything could be done to end the current situation.[8]

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[7]Cab 23/46, 44(23)3(a,b,d,e).

[8]Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, Vol. 167 cols. 1773-1775.

He declared that because European conditions were growing constantly more precarious, the British government could agree to no such prolonged conversation. Faced with these conditions, it had decided to publish the pertinent documents as soon as possible in order to explain the entire situation and to "convince the world of the imperative necessity of prompt and united action to deal with it."[9]

French press reaction to the address was, with a few exceptions, basically dispassionate. Pertinax, writing for the conservative and strongly nationalistic L'Écho de Paris, was among those who wrote that France had nothing to fear from publication, which would show the strength of its position. The semi-official Le Temps warned that publication might boomerang and cause much disagreement among Germany's creditors. The popular Le Matin criticized the British suggestion for an expert inquiry into Germany's capacity to pay, the proposed international control of German finance, and the suggested plan for a general financial settlement, and both Le Temps and Le Journal des Débats condemned the apparent British effort to mediate between France and Germany.[10] The two leading opposition papers, however, took a somewhat different position. L'Oeuvre wrote that the tone of the declaration was friendly, there had been no rupture,

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[9] Ibid., cols. 1775-1776.

[10] L'Écho de Paris, August 3, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, August 3 and 4, 1923, p. 1; Le Matin, August 3, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, August 4, 1923, p. 1; Le Journal des Débats, August 4, 1923, p. 1.

and England was still attached to the Entente. L'Ère Nouvelle expressed surprise at the statement that Britain had agreed to call on Germany to abandon resistance and asked why this information had not previously been released.[11]

Ambassador D'Abernon reported that the Parliamentary statement met a cool reception in Berlin. German newspapers noted British failure to condemn the illegality of French action and criticized the portion of the draft note calling for financial control of Germany. They said that the essential point in that document was the demand for the abandonment of passive resistance: unless England altered this part of its note, negotiations with Germany would be fruitless from the beginning. The German Foreign Minister told D'Abernon on August 7 that Germany would resist to the end.[12]

In Britain, the Parliamentary statements brought into focus the rising tide of impatience with the current course of events in Germany. The British press agreed almost unanimously that they indicated the gravity of the diplomatic situation. While none of the papers surveyed lauded the Prime Minister's speech, some condemned it.

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[11] L'Oeuvre, August 2 and 3, 1923, p. 1; L'Ère Nouvelle, August 3, 1923, p. 1.

[12] D'Abernon to FO, No. 504, August 6, 1923, FO 371/8648, C 13765/1/18; No. 264, August 7, 1923, FO 371/8737, C 13589/313/18.

The Conservative Daily Telegraph, which during the preceding week had grown extremely critical of British policy and demanded definite action, said that the speech revealed that the government was determined to let the matter drift no further, considered negotiations with France closed, and was "invoking the aid of publicity to solve a problem that baffles the diplomatists." While The Times said that the government had taken "a definite step forward" and praised the draft reply to Germany, the Manchester Guardian and the Observer, both Liberal organs, were pessimistic about the picture painted by Baldwin. The Guardian, noting that there was no hint of what step Britain planned to take after publication, wondered if the government had decided upon a definite policy. Although he had praised Baldwin's July 12 Parliamentary statement, J. L. Garvin, impatient with the government's passivity, wrote in the Observer that the August 2 debate was "the very gravest to which the House of Commons has listened in our time, or perhaps in any time" and that the country wanted more than good speeches: "What the nation wants and demands is the power of action. Of that capacity, Ministers have given no sign as yet." Although the country was waiting, it would not do so long. The British government must realize, he said, that the military supremacy of France was more absolute than in the days of Louis XIV or Napoleon; furthermore, after publication of the documents it must establish Germany's capacity

to pay and prevent Poincaré's breaking up Germany and obtaining a "huge coal and iron combine."[13]

The Foreign Office quickly began to enact the measures outlined in the Parliamentary statements. On August 2, Crowe asked the French Ambassador for permission to publish correspondence concerning the second German reparations proposals, specifically the June 7 note, the June 13 questionnaire, the French reply delivered on July 6, and the July 30 French and Belgian notes. The following day Saint-Aulaire called on Crowe and read extracts from a telegram from Poincaré giving permission to include the French documents and stating that the French government itself would at once publish parts of the correspondence without waiting for publication in London. Saint-Aulaire then said that Poincaré had no intention of ending Anglo-French talks designed to reach agreement about the solution of the reparations problem. When, however, Crowe asked what additional steps Poincaré contemplated and pointed out that the July 30 note held little prospect of reaching an agreement on essential points, the Ambassador was unable to answer. Saint-Aulaire next asked whether Curzon, who was going to Bagnoles at the end of the following week, would pass through Paris. If he were to do so, perhaps a meeting could be arranged with Poincaré since even a brief talk between these two men

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[13] Daily Telegraph, August 8, 1923, p. 8; The Times (London), August 3, 1923, p. 11; Manchester Guardian, August 3, 1923, p. 8; Observer, August 5, 1923, p. 8.

might do some good and serve as a preliminary to a Baldwin-Poincaré conversation. Crowe replied that he did not know Curzon's travel plans and added that a meeting between British and French Prime Ministers might accentuate the differences between the two governments.[14]

Soon after the August 1 Cabinet meeting, British officials began discussing and disagreeing about the policy the government should follow and the contents of the forthcoming reply to the July 30 notes. When Lord Robert Cecil went to Paris to talk to both Millerand and Poincaré, Colonel Requin, a close friend of the Premier, told him that Poincaré considered security more important than reparations and wanted to find a way out of the impasse. Hearing this, Cecil proposed a new mutual guarantee treaty. His activities, however, irritated Curzon, who on August 7 wrote Baldwin complaining about Cecil's interference in Paris: "If he is to be at liberty to go over there . . . and propound a policy of his own . . . it renders my position quite impossible, and I shall have no alternative but to ask to be relieved of it."[15] The same day the Foreign Secretary told

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[14]Conversations between Saint-Aulaire and Crowe, August 2, 1923, FO 371/8646, C 13333/1/18, and August 3, 1923, FO 371/8646, C 13356/1/18. The French that day published the June 14 instructions sent to Saint-Aulaire and the July 30 note. On August 13 the British government published a White Paper containing the documents mentioned above, the covering letter and draft reply of July 30, and the British note of August 11.

[15]Curzon to Baldwin, August 7, 1923, in Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 190-191.

Crewe to notify Cecil that the line of policy he presented to Millerand conflicted with the policy suggested by the Treasury: "I cannot therefore authorise you to speak in the same sense to M. Poincaré, and you must make it absolutely clear that the suggestions you have put forward have no authority. . . ." Later in the day, Cecil sent a telegram through Phipps to the Prime Minister telling him about Curzon's message and sharply criticizing government policy: "I must, therefore, ask very respectfully what are the views of the government. At present it appears to me that we have no policy and the dangers of that situation, always great, are in the present state of European affairs overwhelming." He requested that the Cabinet meet to agree upon a British policy.[16]

When the Cabinet met on August 9, the first item of business was consideration of the draft of the reply to France. Although many people later called it one of Curzon's masterpieces, Crowe had written the reply, the Foreign Secretary had condensed it and toned down some of the more biting phrases,[17] and Baldwin had revised the Curzon-Crowe draft. The Cabinet gave general approval to both the

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[16]FO to Crewe, No. 296, August 7, 1923, FO 371/8647, C 13536/1/18; Phipps to FO, No. 740, August 7, 1923, FO 371/8647, C 13547/1/18.

[17]The Earl of Ronaldshay quoted an August 24 letter from Lord Curzon to Lady Curzon telling about the note: "The famous British Note . . . was written by Crowe, and all I did was to tone down some of its worst asperities

document and the summary of the argument prepared by the Treasury. When francophile members of the Cabinet began to redraft the reply, however, Baldwin and Curzon agreed to examine it again and soften some of the sections that might offend French public opinion. The Cabinet also instructed them to revise the summary in order to make it more suitable for publication in the newspapers which would not publish the whole document.[18]

Even though the Cabinet had adopted a detailed response to France, the last section of the minutes of the August 9 meeting indicates that it had failed to formulate a clearly-defined British plan of action. The minutes stated that the Cabinet agreed:

> In view of the difficulty in present conditions of determining a policy more than a few weeks ahead, to reserve the question of the next step to be taken, and more particularly as to the possible "separate action" referred to in the last paragraph of the Draft Note, until a reply had been received from the French and Belgian Governments, and the general effect of the publication of the Note was known.[19]

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and curtail and re-write parts that had been badly expressed." See The Life of Curzon (3 vols.; London: Ernest Benn, Ltd., 1928), III, 362. Curzon to Crowe, August 6, 1923, FO 371/8647, C 13588/1/18, shows Curzon's revision of Crowe's draft notes.

[18]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 190; Cab 23/46, 46(23)2(b,c). Saint-Aulaire wrote that Baldwin disapproved the note but felt unable to prevent its being sent; see Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), p. 663. Nicolson, as well as Middlemas and Barnes, indicated that Curzon pressured Baldwin and the Cabinet to accept and send it. See Nicolson, Curzon, p. 365; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 191.

[19]Cab 23/46, 46(23)2(d).

Saint-Aulaire received the massive British note on August 11. Composed of fifty-five numbered paragraphs, plus a twelve-paragraph memorandum on inter-Allied debts, it was a response to both the French note delivered by Saint-Aulaire on July 6 and the French and Belgian replies of July 30, as well as a statement of the official British position on the Ruhr, reparations, and Allied debts problems. The note first expressed disappointment in the French and Belgian responses to the July 20 covering letter and draft reply. Although Britain, seeking to avoid offending France, had endeavored to avoid infringing the rights of the Reparation Commission and had suggested that Germany abandon passive resistance, the French and Belgians had responded negatively and caused the British government to believe that they refused to modify their views at all. Particularly astounding was the French failure to mention the draft reply--the focal point of British efforts.

Turning to the reparations issue, the note said that the Belgians and French had indicated that they would consent to no assessment of Germany's capacity to pay unless they received some corresponding advantage. Although the Belgian note had claimed no precise figures, official and semi-official French and Belgian statements had indicated that France insisted on receiving a minimum of 26,000,000,000 gold marks above its debts to England and the United States, and Belgium required 5,000,000,000 marks, for part of which

it asked for further priority. These demands were excessive, for even under existing reparations agreements, the present value of annuities was 65,000,000,000 gold marks. The French share of this, according to the Spa percentages, would be 34,000,000,000 marks, and since France owed about 12,000,000,000 marks to Britain and 15,000,000,000 to the United States, it would have a balance of only 7,000,000,000 even if Germany were able to pay the figures established by the Schedule of Payments. The British also condemned Belgium for seeking a special priority for restoring its own and France's devastated areas and said that to do this would, in effect, be to select only certain types of damages to receive priority. This would be unfair to Britain and would, in reality, alter the Spa percentages in favor of France and Belgium.

> No justification for such a proposal can be found in the armistice terms or in the Peace Treaties. . . . Sunk ships and cargoes rotting at the bottom of the sea may not shock the eye like the ruined villages of France and Belgium. But they are equally material damage caused by German aggression, and represent equally heavy losses of national wealth.

The British then said that although France had, in the form of numerous questions, completely rejected the suggestion of inviting an impartial expert commission to investigate Germany's capacity to pay, they would reply to several of them. It was unclear what Poincaré meant when he said that he saw no reason why "an estimate made to-day by experts . . . should be more exact than that made in

1921," for in 1921 the Reparation Commission had merely estimated the amount of damages for which Germany could be held responsible. Since neither the Reparation Commission nor any other body had ever assessed Germany's capacity to pay, that task, called for in Article 234 of the Treaty, needed to be discharged. Furthermore, an impartial expert inquiry held to assist the Reparation Commission and the Allied governments in carrying out their duties under that article would in no way violate the Treaty. The British also questioned the French and Belgian contention that the Reparation Commission was well qualified to execute the inquiries, saying that since the American representative had failed to sit on the Commission it had "become in practice an instrument of Franco-Belgian policy alone." With reference to French questions about the composition and function of such an expert commission, the British note declared that "the more comprehensive its constitution, the greater will be the value of its findings." Britain would, nevertheless, listen to any French desires about its composition and, although willing to bind itself in advance to recommend that the Reparation Commission accept the findings of the expert commission, would agree, if France and Belgium preferred, that the experts would have a purely advisory function.

The British then focused upon the Ruhr occupation itself and declared that although they had shown willingness

to advise Germany to cease resistance, they could not "subscribe to the thesis that passive resistance must cease unconditionally because it is contrary to the Treaty of Versailles." Britain was unable to accept the contention that Franco-Belgian action was justified by Paragraph 18 of Annex II to Part VII of the Versailles Treaty.

> The highest legal authorities in Great Britain have advised His Majesty's Government that the contention of the German Government is well founded, and His Majesty's Government have never concealed their view that the Franco-Belgian action in occupying the Ruhr . . . was not a sanction authorised by the Treaty itself. But they would be quite willing that this or any other difference respecting the legal interpretation of vital provisions of the Treaty--in so far as they cannot be resolved by unanimous decision of the Reparation Commission . . . should automatically be referred to the International Court of Justice at the Hague or other suitable arbitration.[20]

At this point in the note the British, utilizing the arguments prepared much earlier by J. Fischer Williams and certain Foreign Office personnel, said that France was wrong in charging them with inconsistency for having on two previous occasions threatened an occupation of the

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[20]Neither the International Court of Justice nor any other international legal body ever settled the question of the legality of the French occupation. Erich Eyck wrote that jurists were still divided on the issue; see A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 301. Of the works surveyed in this study, 15.6 per cent said that the legal position was unclear, 37.5 per cent called the occupation illegal, and 46.9 per cent considered it legal. The authors' nationality does not appear to have been a factor in determining their position, for some Frenchmen called it legal and others illegal. The same was true of British and American writers.

Ruhr and for having actually participated in the occupation of Dusseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort. They argued:

> The action taken then or threatened was never claimed to be in pursuance of the Reparation Clauses of the Treaty. The Allies jointly decided to threaten Germany with the occupation of further territory just as they might have threatened her with a renewal of war, for her failure to perform her Treaty obligations some of which had no connection whatever with Reparations.

The British also stated that Paragraph 18 authorized no military occupation of territory.

The note then criticized several parts of the French July 30 reply. It remarked that if the French went into the Ruhr in order to create the will to pay, they were foolish, for "the will to pay is useless without the power," and the occupation was diminishing Germany's power to pay. It also attacked the reference to the indemnity and occupation imposed upon France in 1871: "the recovery after the short campaign of 1870-71 of an indemnity equivalent to 4 milliards of gold marks . . . is not really comparable to the enforcement of a thirty-three fold claim against a country financially exhausted by four years of strenuous warfare and blockade." Britain was, in addition, perturbed about the French failure to make specific proposals for ending the occupation after resistance ceased. Since both France and Belgium seemed to indicate that they would evacuate the Ruhr completely only after Germany had paid its total reparations obligations, and

since they insisted on the entire 132,000,000,000 mark figure, it appeared that they planned to remain in the Ruhr for at least thirty-six years, and perhaps in perpetuity if the Schedule of Payments could not be met. Such a condition, which would create a threat to international peace and prosperity, had already had a gravely detrimental effect on the economy of Germany, Europe, and perhaps the world.

Before presenting a five-paragraph summary of its argument and talking about the future, the note condemned the French snubbing of the British offer to discuss the security question. The summary affirmed that the British government had never contemplated relieving Germany of all reparations payments. Germany should pay to the maximum of its capacity, and that capacity should be determined "by impartial inquiry into the facts" rather than by asking Germany's creditors how much they would like to receive. After Germany's reparations obligation had been accurately ascertained, Britain would deal generously with the question of inter-Allied debts, asking from Germany and the Allies only the amount necessary to cover its debt to the United States. In the final paragraph of the note, the British government hinted about a new course of action:

> It is the hope of His Majesty's Government that the above explanations will convince the French and Belgian Governments of the reasonableness of the

> British position, and will win their assent to its acceptance. They are reluctant to contemplate the possibility that separate action may be required in order to hasten a settlement which cannot be much longer delayed without the gravest consequences to the recovery of trade and the peace of the world.

Attached to the British note was a memorandum on inter-Allied debts which focused on two topics. First, it reaffirmed that Britain would require from Germany and the Allies only the 14,200,000,000 gold marks necessary to pay the United States. The figures to be paid by the Allies could, of course, be settled only after the reasonable and practicable determination of Germany's obligation. The memorandum then forcefully reminded France of its own duties as a debtor: "That a French Government Treasury bill given to the British Government for value received is a less binding obligation than a similar bill given to a private investor is a doctrine inadmissible. . . ." It reminded France that when, during the war, the French government was unable to raise sufficient loans directly from British investors, the British government intervened and gave its own securities to the individual lenders for the amounts needed by France, thus enabling France to borrow a larger amount, and at a lower rate of interest, than would have otherwise been possible. Currently, the British government itself was paying interest on those French Treasury bills. When the loans were made, France had not said that repayment would depend on the collection of money from Germany. Although the British government had continued

to renew the bills since the war, it must remind France that redemption "remains an obligation of the French Government which cannot honourably be repudiated," that interest could not continuously be added to capital, and that at least interest payments should begin as soon as the sterling-franc exchange became reasonably stable.[21]

This clear statement of the British position and open declaration of the illegality of the occupation caused a furor in France and revealed clearly the chasm that had developed between the two countries. French press reaction to the August 11 British proclamation was utterly hostile and, for the first time since the beginning of the occupation, united. Even L'Oeuvre, previously the most consistent supporter of the British case, attacked England in an article which asked if the note were a denunciation of the Entente. This paper, along with several others, remarked that it was unjust for France to be asked to pay England even if Germany did not pay. Furthermore, it resented the charge that the occupation was illegal and doomed to failure. French newspapers in general objected to England's putting the German and French debts on the same footing, and Le Matin declared that the document--a marvel of confusion and contradiction--blamed, argued, grasped, and exacted 14,000,000,000 marks. It also resented the British

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[21]Curzon to Crewe, August 11, 1923, FO 371/8648, C 13659/1/18.

statement that the French debt could not "be repudiated with honor" and said that France was unaccustomed to repudiating its debts.[22] The usually moderate Le Journal des Débats and Le Temps were no less biting in their criticism. The former declared that France had to face the possibility of a definite rupture. "France is asked to pay for everyone and would find herself in the position of the defeated party economically and financially. The war debt and the German reparations debt are lumped together. Such a theory is monstrous." Le Temps argued at length against the British contention of the illegality of the occupation and denied that France had on July 30 rejected the offer of security.[23]

News from the United States indicated that Britain's effort to rally American support was somewhat unsuccessful. On August 15, Henry G. Chilton, Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, reported that American press comment was divided. The New York Times had attacked the note bitterly, called it awkward in tone and ill-timed, and said that Britain implied that American non-participation in European affairs

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[22] L'Oeuvre, August 13, 1923, p. 1; Le Matin, August 13, 1923, p. 1; see also L'Écho de Paris, August 13, 1923, p. 1.

[23] Le Journal des Débats, August 14, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, August 14, 1923, p. 1. Saint-Aulaire said that he telegraphed the French government on August 14 asking the French press to abstain from "dangerous and unjust generalizations." He feared that inconsiderate attacks against England would "paralyze our numerous friends" and result in the fall of Baldwin; see Confession, p. 658.

was the basic cause of the most serious problems. It also stated that the note tried, in terms reminiscent of the Balfour Note, to make America appear the hard-hearted creditor who prevented Britain from giving its European debtors easy terms.[24]

Predictably, the August 11 note met a more enthusiastic response in the British press than in either France or the United States. Only the Rothermere papers attacked it severely, with the Daily Mail accusing Baldwin and his colleagues of deliberately trying to divide the Allies and saying that the British people did not support their government in this attempt. Perhaps the most laudatory comments came from the New Statesman, which called the note the "first frank and authoritative statement of British views and British policy that has been made since Mr. Lloyd George originally became Prime Minister" and said that the outlook had become brighter because the note marked "a new era in European politics." Both the Spectator and the Manchester Guardian said that the plain speaking of the note was welcome, even though it had startled some people, and the Guardian felt that Britain should have long before openly declared French action illegal.[25]

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[24]Chilton to FO, No. 353, August 15, 1923, FO 371/8649, C 14086/1/18. In the Minutes on this telegram, Tyrrell noted: "The most influential American Press is I am sorry to say not favourable to us."

[25]Daily Mail, August 13, 1923, p. 6; New Statesman, August 18, 1923, p. 536; Spectator, August 18, 1923, p. 209;

The Times and the Spectator, nevertheless, expressed concern about the future implications of the British statement and said that Britain, having finally taken a definite position, must act upon it. This concern was evident in an article in the Spectator, which declared: "To denounce the policy of a friendly nation as the British Government have denounced that of France and then to do nothing more would be self-stultification and humiliation." The Times expressed a similar opinion:

> What chiefly concerns us at this moment however is not the strength of the argument, but the effect it may be expected to produce, the consequences to which it may lead. . . . The British Government foreshadow the possibility of taking alternative action on their own account. . . . The danger is lest British policy, after long delays, should now lag far behind events, lest in the growing confusion it should not be able to gain directive power. . . . If the British Government is to act she must act quickly, for her own sake and for the sake of Europe.[26]

The French press, therefore, had reacted to the August 11 note with more unanimity than its British counterpart.

In Germany, the impact of the British note was striking. On August 12--the day before the note was published--the conservative cabinet of Wilhelm Cuno resigned and Gustav Stresemann became both Chancellor and Foreign Minister.[27]

Manchester Guardian, August 13, 1923, p. 6; see also Daily Telegraph, August 13, 1923, p. 9; Observer, August 19, 1923 p. 8.

[26]Spectator, August 18, 1923, p. 212; The Times (London), August 13, 1923, p. 9.

[27]D'Abernon to FO, No. 273, August 12, 1923, and No. 276, August 13, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18.

The new government and the German people enthusiastically received news of the August 11 note, which the government distributed widely in both the original and a German translation. This threat to put pressure on France encouraged Stresemann to seek assistance in Britain, and German credit and confidence revived. D'Abernon wrote on August 16 that it helped restore order, courage, and the determination of the ruling classes to save themselves. Nevertheless, as R. B. Mowat pointed out, it also strengthened German resistance.[28]

While the exchange of notes occupied the center of the diplomatic stage, events in the occupied territory continued to attract attention. During August, British newspapers printed articles almost daily telling about severe food shortages or even starvation as well as French acts of terrorism and brutality against the Ruhr population. From August 8, 1923, through June 25, 1924, the British Bureau for Ruhr Information published twenty-three issues of its Bulletin, each containing excerpts from various

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[28]Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles. A Fight for Reason (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1953), p. 61; Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 255; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 192; Nicolson, Curzon, p. 365; Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace. Pages from the Diary of Viscount D'Abernon (Berlin, 1920-1926), Vol. II: The Years of Crisis: June 1922-December 1923 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 233; D'Abernon to FO, No. 278, August 14, 1923, FO 371/8649, C 13991/1/18; R. B. Mowat, A History of European Diplomacy, 1914-1925 (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927), p. 252.

newspaper accounts depicting abysmal Ruhr conditions. The French, on the other hand, declared that such reports were the work of German propaganda. Because contradictory statements appeared in the press, as well as in pamphlets and books, it is difficult to ascertain the veracity of the charges made against France.

Conflicting reports were also given by men who visited occupied Germany late in the summer of 1923. W. S. Bainbridge, Commander of the New York Grand Commandery, Military Order of Foreign Wars of the United States, travelled in the Ruhr and Rhineland in July and August, 1923. Having heard reports of French brutality, he demanded free access so as not to be subjected to a biased or staged view. In the twenty-eight page record of his visit, he stated that the French had been unduly criticized: there was no starvation, the prisons were sanitary and well-run, and Dusseldorf and other cities were operating normally, their shop windows filled with both luxuries and necessities, and their theatres, cafes, restaurants, and beer gardens full. Soup kitches provided food for all those who needed it, most people were adequately clothed, and even strikers were well nourished. He also reported that charges that the colored troops abused the inhabitants were exaggerated.[29] On the other hand, both Joseph King

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[29]W. S. Bainbridge, A Report on Present Conditions in the Ruhr and Rhineland (New York: Office of the

and C. J. C. Street painted a dismal picture of French activities in the Ruhr. King declared that very early the French began turning machine guns on crowds and forcing the Germans to provide buildings, furniture, and women for brothels.[30] Street, who travelled in the Ruhr in August and September, 1923, reported that in Dusseldorf "French soldiers filled the streets, French officers decorated the tables of all the cafes. Their attitude was frankly that of a conquering race. . . ."[31] After charging that the German towns had to quarter imported officials and their whole families, he described in the most derogatory terms the behavior of colored troops and said that the population was dragooned, terrified, and constantly

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Commandery, 1923), passim. An anonymous publication entitled Misstatements and Facts Concerning Conditions in the Ruhr (Paris: Imprémerie Rouffé [1924]), attempted to refute many charges made against the French. It listed several individual complaints and countered each with information said to be taken from official French and German reports. In Prelude to Hitler (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), p. 85, B. T. Reynolds stated that the French troops "behaved extremely well under very trying circumstances." A report by Sir William Larke, director of the National Federation of Iron and Steel Manufactures, who travelled in the Ruhr in late July, indicated that although trade was restricted and production had virtually ceased, there was no apparent food shortage, and the population seemed well-clothed; see Andrews (Department of Overseas Trade) to Bennett, No. 20160/F.W., August 16, 1923, FO 371/8738, C 14160/313/18.

[30]Joseph King, The Ruhr. The History of the French Occupation of the Ruhr: Its Meaning and Consequences (London: British Bureau for Ruhr Information, 1924), pp. 13, 21, 27.

[31]C. J. C. Street, Rhineland and Ruhr (London: Alfred Couldrey & Co., Ltd., 1923), p. 19.

watched by French spies who reported the "smallest actions to the secret police. . . ."[32]

Available evidence seems to indicate, nevertheless, that the German propaganda machine and anti-French elements in Britain fabricated much of the information about French cruelty and German hardships. Koppel S. Pinson, in discussing conditions in the Ruhr, said that the German government, which sent agents into the Ruhr to direct resistance, issued

> a flood of propaganda . . . both in Germany and throughout the world, charging the French with carrying out a policy of terror, brutality, rape, destruction, abuse of justice, sadism, and willful creation of starvation and disease. Accounts of the so-called "national passive resistance" have been greatly exaggerated.[33]

Keith L. Nelson wrote that Germany, which had since 1920 had a very active propaganda machine for creating horror stories about the misconduct of black troops in the Rhineland, utilized that machine extensively for another purpose in 1923: "Much of the German propaganda attacking the Ruhr occupation bore a striking resemblance in form to the atrocity stories of previous years. . . ."[34]

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[32] Ibid., pp. 59, 63-68. Keith L. Nelson has recently written that because Poincaré during the Ruhr occupation purposely refrained from sending black troops to the Ruhr in order to avoid criticism, there were very few of them present; see "The 'Black Horror on the Rhine': Race as a Factor in Post-World War I Diplomacy," Journal of Modern History, XLII, No. 4 (1970), 623-624.

[33] Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (2nd ed.; New York: The Macmillan Co., 1966), p. 431.

[34] Nelson, "The 'Black Horror on the Rhine,'" p. 624.

Even though accounts of French brutality were exaggerated, the French definitely continued to use the Rhineland High Commission ordinances in intensifying the occupation, and the Germans experienced severe economic hardships. For example, because the French and Belgians found it increasingly difficult to obtain reparations coal when stocks of coal and coke accumulated in the Ruhr approached exhaustion, the High Commission on August 5 passed Ordinance No. 199, which gave the MICUM full authority to seize all collieries--including those privately owned--and to work them either directly or through concessionnaires. It also empowered them to charge to the German government the cost of working the seized properties.[35] German economic conditions were so severe that on August 11 Ambassador Sthamer told Assistant Under-Secretary Lindsay that his government would, after that date, temporarily cease to deliver reparations in kind to Britain because it could no longer afford to pay German producers for the necessary materials. It did hope, however, to resume deliveries after German finance was more firmly established.[36]

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[35]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 634, August 5, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18.

[36]Conversation between Sthamer and Lindsay, August 11, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18. When D'Abernon reported that Germany had also suspended deliveries to Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia, Portugal, and Rumania, the Foreign Office replied: "You should at once give a strong hint in the proper quarter that Germany will be better advised to drop this stupid proposal before worse occurs and to refrain from a measure involving direct evasions of

As conditions grew worse in Germany, there were rumors of unofficial negotiations between France and certain German industrialists. As early as July 30, Ambassador D'Abernon reported from Berlin that the French were making inquiries about German readiness to discuss terms with them. Although these were, he heard, carried on by persons in close touch with Poincaré, there was no evidence that Poincaré was behind them.[37] Similar accounts appeared in the British press fairly often in August.

During that month, the British complained of fewer trade difficulties than previously. Kilmarnock reported on August 11 that the MICUM was permitting the import of coal covered by valid licences, and a Board of Trade note dated August 1 stated that orders for imports and exports placed before February 1 were being filled. Trade problems, nevertheless, continued to cause ill will between the two countries. After receiving complaints from the President of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce about a circular from a French firm offering to sell miscellaneous goods at low prices, the Foreign Office instructed Phipps to warn France to avoid placing any considerable quantity of seized German

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treaty obligation, which may quite conceivably leave His Majesty's Government no alternative but to modify their whole attitude." See D'Abernon to FO, No. 274, August 13, 1923, and FO to D'Abernon, No. 135, August 29, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18.

[37]D'Abernon to FO, No. 486, July 30, 1923, FO 371/8646, C 13373/1/18.

goods on the market in competition with British goods and selling them at less than world prices.[38] Another source of contention grew out of the December 29, 1922, French prohibition of the export or re-export of iron and steel waste and scrap. In practice, the embargo had since that date been applied to Britain, but not to Italy and Belgium. Britain had protested that this violated Article 3 of the Anglo-French Convention of 1882 and had requested supplies of scrap iron for its firms. Although on July 26 the British government threatened to demand arbitration if France continued the embargo, it received no reply during August.[39]

Meanwhile, as the British were awaiting a reply to the August 11 note, Baldwin began to consider meeting Poincaré. According to Middlemas and Barnes, the Prime Minister discussed the matter with Sir William Tyrrell, "his most trusted adviser," on August 14-16. About the same time, Eric Phipps reported that some permanent Quai d'Orsay officials, including Jacques Seydoux, wanted Poincaré to meet Baldwin when the latter journeyed through

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[38]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 329, August 11, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18; Shackle (Board of Trade) to Duff Cooper, August 1, 1923, FO 371/8737, C 13324/313/18; Board of Trade to FO, No. C.R.T. 4344/23, July 31, 1923, and FO to Phipps, No. 2550, August 7, 1923, FO 371/8737, C 13190/313/18.

[39]Crewe to FO, No. 15, January 1, 1923, FO 371/9389, W 138/138/17; Curzon to Phipps, No. 2444, July 26, 1923, FO 371/9389, W 5837/138/17.

Paris on his way to a holiday at Aix-les-Bains.[40] Nevertheless, no concrete plans materialized before receipt of the French reply.

During the nine-day period that separated publication of the British and French notes, correspondence between London and Paris decreased, and a sense of expectancy gripped both capitals. Phipps wrote on August 16 that in France there seemed to be a growing desire to find a solution to the impasse. Hoping that this desire might affect Poincaré, he did not want to contact the French Premier, for to do so might make him "assume that typically unyielding attitude." When the Chargé d'Affaires did meet Poincaré two days later, however, the Frenchman assured him that there would be no change in his previous position. Although he agreed with Phipps that Britain's claiming only 14,200,000,000 gold marks was a hopeful factor, he stated that Germany could easily pay 50,000,000,000 gold marks after a moratorium of a year or two.[41] In a speech the following day at Charleville, the President of the Council's tone was, nevertheless, much more conciliatory than usual--a fact warmly received in the Paris press, which now seemed to be desirous of mitigating Franco-British

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[40]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 193; Phipps to FO, No. 761, August 17, 1923, FO 371/8649, C 14145/1/18.

[41]Phipps to FO, No. 759, August 16, 1923, FO 371/8649, C 14096/1/18; Phipps to FO, No. 765, August 18, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14216/1/18.

misunderstandings. After giving an account of the military operations in that district during the war, he made a long appeal for Allied unity. Discussing the Ruhr occupation, he denied the charge that it was responsible for unemployment and economic problems in Britain and stated that while British unemployment had been higher in 1922 than it was in 1923, British imports and exports were greater than during the same period of 1922. Surprisingly, he barely mentioned the issue of legality.[42] In the last few days before the dispatch of the French reply to the August 11 note, even the tone of the French press was relatively subdued. L'Oeuvre called upon Poincaré to produce a specific plan, like Britain had done when it called for 14,200,000,000 gold marks, and then to draw Germany into the new conversations. Discussing the possibility of reaching some solution, Le Journal des Débats declared that the question of legality must be set aside, for if Britain made France plead its case before a court of justice, no progress could be made. Instead, both powers should discuss ways in which France could recover from Germany the sums necessary for reparations and Britain could receive the 14,200,000,000 gold marks it claimed.[43]

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[42] Le Temps, August 20, 1923, p. 2.

[43] L'Oeuvre, August 16, 1923, p. 3; Le Journal des Débats, August 17 and 20, 1923, p. 1; see also L'Ère Nouvelle, August 16, 1923, p. 1; Le Matin, August 16, 1923, p. 1.

The British press during the same period expressed little optimism about the diplomatic scene and the impending French reply. Both the Manchester Guardian and The Times mentioned the Entente. The former declared that the Entente, so far as it implied Anglo-French cooperation on important questions, was dead: France was afraid of Germany, and England was not, and so long as Poincaré remained in power, there would probably be no basic change. The Times, refusing to believe that the August 11 note had resulted in the death of the Entente, said that since Britain had clearly stated its policy there was still time to solve the basic problems confronting Europe.[44] Poincaré's Charleville speech caught the attention of several British newspapers. Although The Times agreed with his desire for united action, it reminded the world that it was France who occupied the Ruhr "in spite of the express disapproval" of Britain. It then mentioned a familiar theme in British newspapers: the occupation must end because British trade was suffering from the air of uncertainty in Europe. The day after the Charleville speech, Labour's Daily Herald said that Baldwin had to prevent any attempt by Poincaré to prolong discussions.[45]

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[44]Manchester Guardian, August 16, 1923, p. 7; August 20, 1923, p. 8; The Times (London), August 16, 1923, p. 9.

[45]The Times (London), August 20, 1923, p. 11; Daily Herald, August 20, 1923, p. 1. On August 15, the

The French sent their reply to Belgium for consideration on August 17, and after a brief delay Belgium approved. Phipps received the note on August 21, and it was published the following day. This voluminous document was three and one-half times longer than its British counterpart, and Sisley Huddleston marveled at Poincaré's ability to write in one day a 13,000 word answer to a British note which had been in preparation well over a week.[46] After devoting approximately 70 per cent of the document to a general survey of the reparations question since 1919, Poincaré wrote an annex consisting of a paragraph by paragraph reply to the August 11 note and memorandum on inter-Allied debts. The tone of the survey section was more cordial than that of the annex, which was very caustic in several places. As a summary of the repetitious document will reveal, it abounded in statements previously made by Poincaré and revealed no French willingness to budge in the slightest detail.

In setting forth a general statement of the French position, the Premier, as he had done so often, began with the Treaty of Versailles and the fixing of Germany's

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Daily Telegraph had written: "It is not the legality or illegality of the occupation which interests the British public . . . but its disastrous effect upon British commerce directly and indirectly"; see p. 8.

[46]Phipps to FO, No. 761, August 17, 1923, FO 371/8649, C 14145/1/18; No. 773, August 20, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14319/1/18; Sisley Huddleston, Poincaré: A Biographical Portrait (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), p. 34.

reparations debt. Charging that Germany, who was responsible for its own financial difficulties, had from the beginning failed to fulfill its obligations, he justified the Ruhr occupation by citing previous threats against Germany. The Allies had at San Remo and Spa in 1920 and at Paris in January, 1921, threatened to occupy additional German territory, and at an Allied conference in London in February and March, 1921, even Lloyd George had attacked Germany for failure to pay and had threatened and then assented to the occupation of Duisburg, Ruhrort, and Dusseldorf. Furthermore, the Allies had planned to occupy the Ruhr valley if Germany refused to accept the Schedule of Payments in May, 1921.

The five following pages were devoted to a defence of the legality of the Ruhr occupation. Poincaré quoted Paragraphs 17 and 18 and stated:

> This text is clear, and if any measure taken in pursuance of it were allowed to be referred to the League of Nations, under the pretext that this measure involved a menace of war, it is evident that this would result in the pure and simple suppression of the text. . . .

He reaffirmed that after the Reparation Commission declaration of German default, "France was perfectly entitled to act alone and still more entitled to act with the assistance of Belgium and the technical participation of Italy." In addition, the Premier argued that Britain was incorrect in saying that Paragraph 18 authorized no military occupation of Territory, for when, at the London Conference in

March, 1921, the German delegate said that this paragraph authorized the occupation of no territory in addition to the left bank of the Rhine and the bridgeheads, Lloyd George had failed to agree with his contention.

After this affirmation of the legality of the occupation, the note made the familiar statement that France occupied the Ruhr because Germany had for three years "fulfilled none of her obligations." If France had had political or territorial objects, it would have occupied the Main valley, but it had no ulterior motives of annexation; instead, the only object was "to seize pledges and to exercise pressure on a recalcitrant Germany." Although France had planned no military occupation, the German government, through so-called passive resistance, had caused it to retaliate. Poincaré then declared that when the resistance ceased, progressive evacuation would take place "in accordance with the payments effected." France would work closely with German organizations, and a "considerable alleviation in the burdens of the occupation" would result, as had been set forth in the latest Yellow Book. He repeated that France wanted to remain in the Ruhr no longer than necessary.

The French Premier then discussed reparations and inter-Allied debts. He said that France, who had "advanced enormous sums on the German account" and could neither interrupt the reconstruction work nor continue it indefinitely

at its own expense, asked the Allies, "if they refused all priority for reparations," to allot it 26,000,000,000 gold marks of A and B bonds (France's share according to the Spa percentages) and sufficient C bonds to pay the amounts claimed from it for inter-Allied debts. In a rather far-fetched effort to justify the French statement that receipts from Germany should precede the payment of inter-Allied debts, Poincaré discussed an Allied economic conference held in Paris on June 14, 1916, and quoted one of the resolutions adopted at that time.

> In proclaiming their unity for the restoration of the countries which are victims of destruction, spoilation, and improper requisitioning, the Allies decide to seek in common the means of having restored to these countries as a matter of privilege or of aiding them to reconstitute their raw materials, their industrial and agricultural equipment, their live stock, and their mercantile marine.

This, he said, showed that "it was clearly in the minds of the Allies that debts contracted between them for collective war expenditure could not be recovered before the payment of reparations." He used further examples to try to support his contention and asked if Allies could make demands upon each other before Germany had paid: "In other words are friends going to be treated more severely than the enemies of yesterday?"

Next, a lengthy section of the note discussed Germany's capacity for payment. In it Poincaré categorically rejected any adoption of the British suggestion for having a so-called impartial committee determine this capacity,

saying that the proposal "would entail the destruction of several essential clauses of the diplomatic document signed at Versailles by the Allies." There was no need to go back on the figure fixed by the Reparation Commission in April, 1921. Furthermore, the Reparation Commission itself was, according to Article 234, the proper body to examine Germany's capacity to pay, and it already had all the powers which could be attributed to the type of body suggested by Britain and Germany. Poincaré also objected that the proposal that Germany's obligation be definitely and finally fixed contradicted Article 234, which called for periodic reassessment. It was particularly astonishing that Britain contemplated making such an estimate at a time when Germany's capacity to pay was severely reduced. If this were done, it would mean that Germany, through an economic and political maneuver, would have evaded the payment of reparations and gotten rid of its internal debts. After repeating that any settlement could be entrusted to the Reparation Commission, which had "always given proof of loyalty, of competence, and of a spirit of justice," he attacked the British statement that the Commission had become a tool of French policy, pointing out that all declarations of German default had been decided by a majority of three votes.

In the conclusion of his general survey of the reparations question, Poincaré said that France remained

willing to discuss any questions with the Allies and had published the recent notes only because the British had forced it to do so. He felt, however, that it would be desirable for future negotiations to be conducted more discreetly. France requested that the Allies strengthen rather than weaken the Reparation Commission so that it could periodically estimate Germany's capacity for payment. During the period in which Germany was re-establishing its finances, it should make cash payments and deliveries in kind as determined by the Commission, and the Allies would continue to hold their pledges.

The annex was much more bitter. In several cases Poincaré failed to reply directly to the basic points raised in the corresponding paragraphs of the British note of August 11, and many statements merely repeated what had been discussed in the earlier part of the document. He began by saying that the French reply of July 30 should have caused no disappointment in London, for Britain had long known French views; furthermore, he failed to see where the British government had made any effort to conciliate its point of view with the French one. France had ignored the draft reply because the British, contrary to what they said, did not in their note and draft reply take into consideration the French insistence that any reply to the German note of June 7 must deal solely with the abandonment of passive resistance.

Poincaré then turned again to the question of Germany's debt and capacity to pay:

> We confess that we cannot follow the reasoning of the British note in regard to the capacity of payment of a country. German capacity of payment actually is equal to zero, by wish of the Reich itself. . . . Does the British Government wish entirely to suppress the German debt, on the ground that the capacity of payment of Germany is temporarily reduced to zero?

France had never said that it would demand the 34,000,000,000 mark figure mentioned in the British note: its claim, "as theoretically fixed," was for 68,000,000,000. Since the Schedule of Payments in effect reduced Allied claims on Germany, why should not French debts be reduced? Curzon was correct in saying that unanimity of Allied governments was necessary for reducing the German debt, but this unanimity did not exist, for France would give up none of its claim. Furthermore, the French declared "that Germany is and will always be rich enough to pay us; all that is required is that she should wish to do so." Once more he attacked the idea of utilizing an expert commission: "Either this commission of experts is the Reparation Commission itself and its agents; in which case why all this discussion? Or else it is a substitute for the Reparation Commission, and then it is contrary to the Treaty." When Britain used the word "impartial" to describe the expert commission it was, he believed, implying that the Reparation Commission was partial. This was false, for the French chairman of the Commission had used his casting vote only one time, and that concerned an Hungarian question.

Then Poincaré returned to the legality question and said that France was unable to accept the British assertion that passive resistance was not contrary to the Treaty. Furthermore, the British government, "by definitely coming out on the side of the German contentions, takes up a position in contradiction to that repeatedly upheld by England in the past." France had no need to refer its interpretation of Paragraph 18 to any court: all it had to do was quote the opinions "previously expressed by the British government themselves." Britain was in error in asserting that its previous threats to occupy German territory were not based on the reparations clauses of the Treaty. The President of the Council next discussed the British refutation of the parallel France had drawn between the obligations imposed on itself in 1871 and those imposed on Germany in 1919. The indemnity placed on Germany was not, he argued, thirty-three times greater than that paid by France in 1871, for the value of money had changed greatly. Whereas France, who in 1871 had paid the total cost of the war, was willing to pay, Germany was not. That was the main point of difference.

When he turned to the British statements about inter-Allied debts, Poincaré waxed bitter and attacked the claim that when Britain paid America, any deficiency in its receipts from Germany should be made up by the Allies.

> Thus it will be the Allied debtors of England who will pay her what Germany does not pay of the 14,200,000,000 due to the United States. The

> British Cabinet thereby links up Germany and her own Allies, and places war debts and inter-Allied debts on the same footing.
>
> Is it, however, possible, to mix up the sums which the Allies spent to win the war with those which Germany owes for having ravaged our territories?
>
> Every pound and every dollar which France owes to England or the United States represents a saving of Allied blood. The gold marks of Germany represent an expenditure of Allied blood.

He also remarked that the 14,000,000,000 which Britain claimed represented exactly the British percentage (22 per cent) of the 65,000,000,000 gold marks which it considered the current value of the German debt. "On the basis of these figures England, therefore, renounces nothing of the London Schedule. Where then is the sacrifice which she is to make in return for those which she demands from her Allies?"

In closing, Poincaré briefly touched upon several items. He declared that France did not say in the July 30 reply that it was uninterested in discussing the security question; instead, it merely intended that the two questions should be discussed separately. France, he reaffirmed, remained ready to discuss the problem of security. In next to the last paragraph, he ignored the British offer to waive a major portion of inter-Allied debts and, finally, said that France, like Britain, wanted world peace. His reply to the memorandum on inter-Allied debts can be summed up by reference to the concluding paragraph:

> France has never repudiated her debts, nor will she do so, but she is convinced that no British Government will ever bring to bear on an Allied country the pressure which the London Cabinet does not think it possible

> to bring to bear today on the ex-enemies of France and England. We can therefore only repeat that we shall only be able to repay our debt to England, or even to pay interest thereon, when payments from Germany shall have placed us in a position to complete the reparation of damages caused to our country by invasion and the shock of war.[47]

The August 20 note, therefore, indicated that Poincaré, whose power was at the time virtually unchecked, appeared to be more unyielding than ever. After refusing to utilize the impartial expert commission suggested by Germany and Britain and saying that France would consent to no reduction of the German debt, he had declared that it would not even pay interest on the French debt to Britain until after receipt of payments from Germany. Thus the August battle of notes had, it seemed, failed to hasten a solution. In fact, even though the British government had finally become so exasperated that it openly called the occupation illegal,

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[47]Poincaré to Crewe, August 20, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14380/1/18. Most secondary sources surveyed in this study hold that Poincaré defeated Curzon in the August battle of notes. Both French and British writers, as well as some German ones, take this position. For example, see Edouard Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la IIIe République, Vol. III: L'apres-guerre, 1919-1924 (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1959), p. 357, who called it a "magesterial exposé"; Paul Reynaud, Mémoires, Vol. I: Venu de ma montagne (Paris: Flammarion, 1960), p. 172, who said that the note was one of "rigorous logic." Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 255, said that even Poincaré's opponents had to agree that he won the "paper skirmish." Harden, Germany, p. 305, praised it, and Huddleston, Poincaré, p. 153, said that Poincaré easily scored more points than Curzon. For similar opinions see Jacques Chastenet, Raymond Poincaré (Paris: René Julliard, 1948), p. 247; Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 192; R. B. Mowat, Diplomacy, 1914-1925, p. 253; Frank H. Simonds, How Europe Made Peace Without America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), p. 253.

neither France, Britain, nor Germany had changed the basic positions held in January, for Germany was determined to continue passive resistance, France was determined to break the German will, and Britain was making ineffective attempts to end the strife between the two Continental neighbors. Since, however, Britain had on August 11 threatened to take independent action if France failed to make a serious effort to settle the reparations question, and since Poincaré had made absolutely no concessions, observers wondered if the hostile French response would finally cause Britain to take decisive action to bring an end to the stalemate.

CHAPTER VII

EXASPERATION, VACATION, INFLATION, HESITATION, CONFRONTATION, AND CAPITULATION: THE RUHR OCCUPATION, AUGUST 21-SEPTEMBER 26, 1923

Although the Foreign Office criticized the French reply of August 20 and felt that it offered no way out of the impasse, the British government failed to take the threatened independent action. While the British hesitated, Poincaré, who saw signs of diminishing resistance, refused to modify his policy. With Britain and France thus immobile, Germany came to occupy the center of the diplomatic stage as Stresemann attempted to secure concessions for his inflation-ridden nation. When the Chancellor was unable to bring about any modification of the occupation, Baldwin met Poincaré on September 19 in an effort to break the deadlock. After the press communiqué issued at the close of the encounter led them to believe that Baldwin had been overpowered by Poincaré and that they could no longer hope for British assistance, the Germans capitulated and ceased passive resistance the following week.

Not one hopeful, kind, or positive word is to be found among the many pages of Foreign Office comment on the

August 20 note. Lampson remarked that France remained immovable, that many of the note's financial sections displayed no common sense, and that Britain was right where it had been in January. A Treasury memorandum said that the document contained neither a sign of weakening in the French attitude nor a constructive suggestion. France's statement that Germany could borrow vast amounts while its reparations debt stood at 132,000,000,000 gold marks and the invaders were in the Ruhr indicated no capacity to grasp financial matters. The Treasury, adding that some of the paragraphs of the annex were sheer effrontery, particularly objected to the French allegation that Britain had offered to make no sacrifice in return for what it asked of the Allies. According to the French evaluation of the Schedule of Payments, Britain was to receive 14,300,000,000 marks from Germany, and the Allies owed it 24,000,000,000, making a total of 38,300,000,000: this meant that it was offering to abandon 24,000,000,000 marks. Crowe said that the note contained several misrepresentations and that Poincaré was weak on both financial and legal aspects and had, in the annex, failed to deal effectively with any of the British arguments. Britain would have no difficulty in continuing the controversy if it wished to do so.[1]

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[1]Minute by Lampson, August 22, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14380/1/18; Treasury to FO, August 22, 1923, FO 371/8650,

The Central Department, under Lampson's supervision, prepared a voluminous set of documents criticizing the French note. This body of material was composed of a sixty-six page Central Department comment on the French note and eight appendices totalling fifty-five pages, as well as additional memoranda. Among the appendices were notes from the Ministry of Labour giving 1922 and 1923 unemployment figures, one from the Department of Overseas Trade, another from the War Office, as well as one from the Board of Trade, all of which focused upon and attempted to refute particular sections of the French reply. Tyrrell relayed all of the material to Curzon for consideration on August 28.[2] Having the mass of data on hand, British policy makers had to decide how best to utilize it and what step to take next.

Faced with a truculent French response and a Germany nearing collapse, the British government hesitated and then did nothing. Why did the British, having in recent notes expressed concern for the perilous condition of Europe, lapse into a state of inactivity? A glance at the calendar gives a partial answer: it was August, and many Britishers were in the midst of their annual holiday. Parliament, it

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C 14454/1/18; Crowe to Lampson, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14678/1/18. In an August 22 Minute, Tyrrell wrote: "It has obviously been written for publication and M. Poincaré's suggestion that publication should cease with his Note is decidedly ingenious. . . ." See FO 371/8650, C 14380/1/18.

[2]Foreign Office Memorandum (Central Department), August 28, 1923, FO 371/8652, C 14733/1/18.

will be recalled, had recessed on August 2 and was not scheduled to meet again until November 13, and Cabinet members had scattered after their last meeting on August 9. Even some key Foreign Office personnel were gone at the time the French note arrived: Sir Eyre Crowe was in Scotland, and Curzon, Wigram, and Hurst away from London; others were soon to leave.[3] Even before receipt of the French note it had appeared likely that a British response would be formulated slowly. Lampson had told Wigram on August 18 that he saw no reason for hurrying an answer, and after reading Poincaré's epistle he said that only the Cabinet could decide whether or not to send a reply to France. He also wondered if the Cabinet should move toward taking the separate action mentioned on August 11 or should wait to watch developments in Germany. Tyrrell replied that Baldwin, who wanted time to examine the French note, still planned to leave on his vacation in a few days, and Curzon, commenting on the August 20 note, said that he was opposed to playing Poincaré's game by sending a long, controversial reply. Although he listed several alternatives Britain could take, he endorsed none of them.[4] Obviously, the British leaders at that point did not know what to do next.

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[3]Crowe to Lampson, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14678/1/18, and Lampson to Wigram, August 18, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14858/313/18, show that Hurst, Crowe, and Wigram were gone.

[4]Lampson to Wigram, August 18, 1923, cited above; Minutes by Lampson and Tyrrell, August 22, 1923, and by Curzon, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14380/1/18.

During the next four or five days, Lampson suggested that the government act, but Baldwin, Curzon, and Crowe--all groping for a policy and showing a lack of leadership--seemed to prefer delay. Crowe wrote that although he felt Britain would have no trouble answering the note, he remained "doubtful as ever as to what action or general line of policy" was open to it. He believed that no decision should be made before both the Cabinet and the Dominions--at the Imperial Conference scheduled to meet in October--had thoroughly discussed the question of general policy. This delay would give Britain "breathing space" and an opportunity to see how conditions developed in the Ruhr. Baldwin, too, felt that a "pause for reflection" was desirable and wrote Curzon on August 25 that he saw no necessity for an immediate Cabinet meeting. That day the Prime Minister left for his annual holiday in Aix-les-Bains.[5] Lampson, nevertheless, remained convinced that Britain should take action. In the Central Department comment on the August 20 note, he suggested three alternatives, including referring the matter to the League of Nations. The course he preferred, however, was telling France that if it refused to accept an expert committee's assessment of Germany's capacity to pay, Britain would be released from its proposals to reduce inter-Allied debts and would

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[5]Crowe to Lampson August 23, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14678/1/18; Baldwin to Curzon, August 25, 1923, in Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin: A Biography (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 193.

instead, claim all of the debts due it. If Frenchmen realized that the obstinacy of their government was depriving them of an advantageous settlement, they might force Poincaré's hand. Later that day, however, he noted that no decision could be made until Curzon had consulted the Cabinet and Baldwin had returned from his holiday. Meanwhile, the Foreign Secretary, who had gone to Bagnoles for a cure, wrote on August 28 that no one knew what Britain should do next and that he foresaw "prolonged discussions--indefinite delay--and a harmful result."[6]

Perhaps a bit of the government's inaction stemmed from the reaction of the British press to the August 20 note, which was published in full in several papers. Although some of them criticized, none attacked it nearly as bitterly as the Foreign Office personnel. While the Daily Herald said that the note showed clearly that France remained where it was and that its policy was one of no change and declared that the exchange of notes had accomplished nothing, some of the papers took a more lenient view. After saying that the note indicated that Britain could not let itself be drawn into "protracted negotiations

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[6]Foreign Office Memorandum (Central Department), August 28, 1923, FO 371/8652, C 14733/1/18; Minutes by Lampson, August 28, 1923, and by Curzon, August 29, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14380/1/18; Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 368. Nicolson said that Curzon "amused himself by writing his book on British Government in India."

based on some slender hope of agreement," the Spectator acknowledged that the plain-speaking on August 11 had done more good than harm: Poincaré had at least suggested a definite financial compromise. The Daily Telegraph, noting that Poincaré's language was courteous and conciliatory, welcomed his statement that France wanted the occupation to end and promised that it would be modified after the cessation of passive resistance. Surprisingly, the Manchester Guardian failed to denounce the note, writing instead:

> M. Poincaré . . . goes an enormous long way round in the attempt to reach the point, but without ever reaching it. Still, it is something that he should realise that there is a point which has got to be reached if there is to be any agreement. . . . That is in itself a step forward, even a considerable step, and shows goodwill if not much more.

The Guardian had no clear advice about the next step, but it warned that the British government could be neither incredulous nor indifferent. Even The Times responded in a positive fashion. It noted that "the tone of the reply is, generally speaking, moderate and friendly" and said that no responsible person in Britain wanted a break with France. Three more times the article commented about the friendly tone of the note.[7] Since Ruhr coverage decreased significantly in most British newspapers during the last week of

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[7]Daily Herald, August 23, 1923, p. 1; Observer, August 26, 1923, p. 8; Spectator, August 25, 1923, p. 241; Daily Telegraph, August 23 and 24, 1923, p. 8; Manchester Guardian, August 23, 1923, p. 6; The Times (London), August 23, 1923, p. 11; see also Daily Mail, August 23, 1923, p. 6.

August, it seemed that the British press and public were, along with their government, more interested in vacationing.

German and American response also failed to encourage the British government to take independent action. Lord D'Abernon reported that German press reaction to the French note was skeptical and negative, but not violent. The general consensus was that it might constitute some progress regarding evacuation before completion of payment, but there was much suspicion of French ambitions. Most papers felt that Germany should concentrate on internal reconstruction instead of hoping for outside help. At the same time, information from several sources indicated that the United States, although it did not strongly endorse the August 20 note, tended to support the French. Even as late as the end of August, many Americans declared their sympathy with French policy in the Ruhr.[8] It seemed in late August, therefore, that the British had failed in the effort to turn crucial American opinion against the French occupation.

In general, the French press enthusiastically approved the terms of Poincaré's reply. Many French organs expressed the hope that the note would end the open, written stage of the controversy and that the two countries would return to a system of negotiating through conversations. Le Temps

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[8]D'Abernon to FO, No. 287, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14463/1/18; Chilton to FO, No. 1049, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15165/313/18; Phipps to FO, No. 2012, August 30, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 14902/313/18.

said that Poincaré had attempted to save the Entente at a perilous moment: if others wished to break it, they must assume the responsibility for doing so. The exchange of notes had accomplished at least one thing, for France, Belgium, and England, by announcing how much they intended to claim, had fixed a rough total of the German debt. Le Journal des Débats, however, took a slightly different approach. It declared that although nothing in the French note made maintenance of the Entente more difficult, nothing facilitated or improved relations between the two countries. Hoping that France and England would again try to reach an agreement, it urged France to abandon theoretical discussions and to take the first step toward decisive negotiations by formulating definite and clear proposals.[9]

Two leading French politicians and journalists echoed some of the sentiments expressed in Le Temps and Le Journal des Débats and revealed that not all Frenchmen welcomed the strife between their country and Britain. On August 23, Phipps talked to Robert de Jouvenel, proprietor of the leading opposition organ, L'Oeuvre, and his brother Henri de Jouvenel, editor of Le Matin, a Senator, and likely candidate for President of the Council should Poincaré fall. The fact that the two brothers of very different political leanings had coinciding views caught Phipps' attention.

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[9]Le Temps, August 23, 1923, p. 1; Le Journal des Débats, August 23, 1923, p. 1.

They felt that England and France should quickly return to quiet conversations behind closed doors, and although Poincaré's reply seemed uncompromising, they felt that it made some advance toward the British viewpoint. Henri de Jouvenel wanted France to agree to the appointment of an international commission, under the Reparation Commission, empowered to determine not Germany's capacity to pay, but the guarantees it might offer for an international loan. When the Chargé d'Affaires met them again five days later they continued to reflect a marked desire for agreement between France and England. Henri de Jouvenel, who emphasized that conversations should begin at once, wanted to help prepare the groundwork for them: since he was going to Geneva to represent France at the League of Nations early in September, he proposed going from Geneva to Aix-les-Bains to talk over matters with Baldwin. Phipps pointed out the risks of such a venture, recalling the ill effects of the Loucheur visit, but de Jouvenel said that there would be no danger, for his conversation with Baldwin would appear to be that of a French journalist interviewing the Prime Minister about the beauties of France. In reality, he would be preparing the way for a more meaningful conversation between Baldwin and Poincaré in the future. He emphasized that both Millerand and Poincaré wanted to find a way out of the impasse, and this could be done only through friendly conversations. After hearing that the Foreign Office approved of the proposed conversation, the Chargé d'Affaires told de Jouvenel to be careful

to avoid giving the impression that he was attempting to go behind Poincaré's back.[10]

Talk of a Baldwin-Poincaré meeting came from additional sources in France. Knowing that Baldwin was leaving in two days for Aix-les-Bains, the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs on August 23 called Phipps to ask if the Prime Minister were coming through Paris, and Phipps replied that he planned to go directly to Aix without stopping in Paris. Frequently in the latter part of August, various Paris newspapers urged a meeting between the two heads of state. For example, Le Journal des Débats remarked that the intervention of the human element was badly needed to prevent the two countries from quarrelling at the moment when conditions for an agreement were present. A conversation designed to get to the bottom of things was the only chance of preserving the Entente, and since no one appeared to be taking the initiative in proposing a meeting, Poincaré should suggest such a move to Baldwin.[11]

During the period covered in this chapter, both France and Britain tended to follow previously-established

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[10]Phipps to FO, No. 778, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14484/1/18; No. 791, August 28, 1923, FO 371/8652, C 14752/1/18; No. 2038, September 2, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15069/1/18.

[11]Phipps to FO, No. 780, August 23, 1923, FO 371/8650, C 14465/1/18; Le Journal des Débats, August 31, 1923, p. 1. On August 23, Phipps reported that Philippe Millet was also anxious for Baldwin to see Poincaré on his return from Aix

patterns of action in dealing with occupied Germany: France continued to tighten its grip on the Ruhr through such measures as the almost indiscriminate seizure of marks and the holding of German hostages for Régie railway workers seized by the Germans, and when the Germans protested these actions, the British remained unwilling to intervene. As conditions in occupied territory grew worse, Germany, in spite of British protests, continued to suspend deliveries in kind, saying that it could not afford to pay producers for them.[12] Although food shortages in some towns remained severe, the food situation improved in others primarily because of good crops, and several British diplomats in the Rhineland reported that most food shortages continued to grow out of German refusal to offer goods for sale and use Régie trains. When, in early September, some German districts asked for British assistance in obtaining food, the Foreign Office decided to make no response.[13] One German problem, however, grew increasingly critical. As the following chart indicates, the value of the German mark declined drastically:

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and wanted to talk to him beforehand to try to explain the situation to him; see Phipps to Tyrrell, FO 371/8651, C 14707/1/18.

[12]Ryan to FO, No. 732, August 28, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14850/313/18; Kilmarnock to FO, September 17, 1923, and Minute by Cadogan, September 24, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 16293/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 283, August 21, 1923, and Conversation between Tyrrell and Sthamer, August 27, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16916/313/18.

[13]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 692, August 21, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14433/313/18; No. 786, September 11, 1923,

Date	Marks Per Dollar
January 2	7,450
January 9	10,000
May 19	50,000
June 14	100,000
July 31	1,000,000
August 30	10,000,000
September 5	25,000,000
September 7	60,000,000
September 12	100,000,000

After September 12, the mark plummeted even more, and the crisis in public finance was complete.[14]

In the face of such conditions, German determination began to waver. During the first two weeks in September, articles appeared frequently in both the British and French press, as well as in some German newspapers, indicating that passive resistance was waning. The Ruhr population, it was said, desired more than anything else to see the conflict end. On September 8, Colonel Ryan, Acting British High Commissioner, reported that in the past ten days the attitude of German workers and employers had changed greatly, the struggle seemed to be nearing the end, and even those districts which had resisted most bitterly realized they soon had to surrender.[15] Nevertheless, Germany refused

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FO 371/8741, C 16189/313/18; Thurstan to FO, No. 353, September 3, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15305/313/18.

[14]Henri Lichtenberger, The Ruhr Conflict: A Report Supplementing the Report Entitled "Relations Between France and Germany" (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1923), p. 9.

[15]Le Matin, September 7, 1923, p. 1; Foreign Office Memorandum (Central Department), September 7, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15528/313/18; Ryan to FO, No. 768, September 8, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 15723/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 637, September 16, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 16303/313/18.

to take the big step, for it still hoped for British intervention.

Anglo-French relations in occupied territory were marked by somewhat less acerbity than in previous weeks. The completion of doubling the railway track between Duren and Euskirchen diverted most Franco-Belgian military and Régie traffic from Cologne, thus removing a source of constant friction between France and Britain. In addition, complaints about interference with British trade diminished, even though the Foreign Office continued to warn France to avoid selling seized German goods at prices below market level.[16]

After having on August 11 called the Ruhr occupation illegal, the British in the following weeks failed to press the legal issue. Evidence indicates that they did so because some Foreign Office personnel believed that it would be difficult to condemn current French action while justifying previous British threats to occupy the Ruhr. An August 27 memorandum by Hurst, the Foreign Office Legal Adviser, illustrated this:

> From the point of view of arguing a case before an arbitration tribunal, we need not fear M. Poincaré's precedents [in the August 20 note], but I do not feel confident that the man in the street will understand

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[16]Ryan to FO, No. 709, August 24, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14613/313/18; Ministère des Affaires Étrangeres to British Embassy in Paris, August 27, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 14874/313/18; Central Department to the Chancery, Paris, September 24, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 14964/313/18.

> the somewhat subtle distinction between coercion in the form of an occupation of German territory applied by the Allies jointly because of general German backwardness in fulfilling the obligations of the Peace Treaty and occupation of German territory by individual Powers because the Reparation Commission has notified a default in the execution of certain specific obligations.
>
> In the face of M. Poincaré's categorical statements, the British explanations--even though sound--would look obscure, and the public at large would become doubtful.

Hurst then said that the British government should continuously emphasize its willingness to submit its view of the legal question to the decision of an international court. The Legal Adviser showed additional reservations by saying that the earlier British threats to occupy territory--especially the Ruhr--and the consent to the occupation of the three right bank towns required "a good deal of explaining." Moreover, the Coal Protocol and the Disarmament Protocol signed at Spa weakened the British contention that Part XIV of the Versailles Treaty "excluded the occupation of German territory other than the Rhineland as a means of enforcing the Treaty." When he turned to the March, 1921, Allied occupation of the three German towns, he expressed even more concern:

> I feel bound to add that personally I have always believed and advised that the occupation of these three towns was inconsistent with the Treaty of Versailles and we may find it difficult to justify this part of our action if the present controversy with the French is submitted to arbitration.[17]

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[17]Foreign Office Minute (Sir C. Hurst), August 27, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14734/313/18.

All that Britain could do would be to repeat that the earlier threats differed from the current occupation in that they were based upon the "general right of one party to apply coercion to another party to the Treaty who flouted its terms" and not upon Paragraphs 17 and 18.[18]

The British government also hesitated to call for League of Nations discussion of the Ruhr and reparations problems even though various articles and speeches had urged League intervention almost from the beginning of the occupation. On August 24, Lord Robert Cecil, British delegate to the League of Nations, wrote that he felt it would be impossible to avoid dealing with the question in the September session at Geneva. Believing that one or more of the neutral nations would almost certainly bring up the question, he asked Baldwin what course he should pursue: could he, before the session began, talk to Henri de Jouvenel, the French delegate, about possible courses of action they could take if the matter were discussed? He wanted to suggest to de Jouvenel that they state that although the League was unable to intervene in a question between the Allies and Germany since that matter had been dealt with by the Treaty, perhaps it could intervene in the Anglo-French dispute over how best to compel Germany

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[18]Foreign Office Minute (J. C. Sterndale-Bennett), August 28, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14793/313/18. Lampson wrote that Bennett's Memorandum was useful and should be kept in reserve until Britain knew "what reply (if any) is to go to France."

to pay. Britain would, of course, accept any recommendation made by the League Council.[19] In his answer to Cecil, Curzon agreed that the neutrals were likely to bring up the matter before the League Assembly and approved Cecil's talking to de Jouvenel. If, as he feared, de Jouvenel refused to accept the proposal, Cecil should telegraph for instructions before acting further. Curzon then repeated what he had said on earlier occasions: even though Britain wanted to take any action necessary to facilitate a solution of the reparations problem, it wanted to do nothing that might wreck the League.

> I remain more than sceptical whether the question is ripe for the League--or rather whether the League, which is still young, has sufficient strength to carry such a burden on its shoulders. At the moment the prospect of a Reparation settlement seems remote, and all our information as to the attitude of France should the matter be referred to the League is most discouraging. It would never do for us to add to the existing complications by imperilling the existence of the League itself.[20]

That day Sir William Tyrrell drafted a note to the British Ambassador to Switzerland, as well as to the British representatives in Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands, saying that the Foreign Office had heard rumors that those governments intended to raise the reparations question in Geneva. It requested them to ascertain the truth of the

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[19]Cecil to Baldwin, August 24, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14704/1/18.

[20]Curzon to Cecil, August 27, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14704/1/18.

rumor, but asked that the information be obtained cautiously. "You should use utmost discretion in making your enquiries, so as to avoid all appearance of our wishing in any way to encourage or promote such an intention." Within three days the responses to this telegram indicated that neither Norway, Switzerland, nor the Netherlands intended to raise the question at the forthcoming session.[21] Although Henri de Jouvenel said on September 3 that the line of action proposed by Cecil would do no harm and might be beneficial, nothing positive was accomplished. De Jouvenel reported on September 19 that Poincaré violently opposed any discussion of the reparations question in the Assembly, and, furthermore, wanted Cecil to prevent anyone else from raising the question.[22] Cecil acquiesced.

While Britain was standing still, diplomatic activity on the Continent accelerated in early September. After hearing several reports that France and Germany were secretly negotiating a settlement of the Ruhr question, the Foreign Office asked Phipps and D'Abernon for confirmation. D'Abernon quickly answered that official German sources

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[21]FO to Sir M. Cheetham, No. 17, August 27, 1923, FO 371/8651, C 14643/1/18; M. Findlay to FO, No. 47, August 29, 1923, FO 371/8652, C 14827/1/18; M. Cheetham to FO, No. 19, August 30, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 14923/1/18; C. Marling to Fo, No. 369, August 28, 1923, FO 371/8652, C 14999/1/18.

[22]Cecil to FO, September 3, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15247/1/18; Consul London (Geneva) to FO, No. 67, September 19, 1923, FO 371/8656, C 16327/1/18.

indicated that nothing serious was going on; nevertheless, since receipt of the August 11 note, the French attitude had changed somewhat, for France and Belgium seemed more eager to get in closer touch with Germany. While believing that French agents were still trying to negotiate unofficially, he felt that the Germans were skeptical about this type of activity. Crewe replied that he had no reason to suppose that secret Franco-German negotiations were taking place on the Ruhr question. Poincaré had said too many times that the cessation of resistance was a preliminary for the resumption of negotiations.[23]

Two days before Lord Crewe's telegram, however, France and Germany had begun official negotiations. On September 3, Monsieur de Margerie, French Ambassador to Germany, called on Chancellor Stresemann, who told him that the French and Germans should begin discussing matters meaningfully instead of making long speeches. Before he could negotiate with France, he must know whether it would be satisfied with economic guarantees, for he could not suggest that the Germans abandon resistance unless he knew precisely what France would offer in exchange.

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[23]FO to D'Abernon, No. 142, and to Phipps, No. 315, September 1, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15008/1/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 298, September 1, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15039/313/18; Crewe to FO, No. 828, September 5, 1923, FO 371/8740, C 15340/313/18. Paul Reynaud wrote that in late August and around September 5, Stresemann invited him to come to Germany to talk. Poincaré refused to let him go either time; see Mémoires, Vol. I: Venu de ma montagne (Paris: Flammarion, 1960), pp. 173-174.

Although Germany, he admitted, had great financial difficulties, he would make no agreement between Germany and France alone. After he said that any agreement must be between Germany and the Allies, de Margerie hinted that Britain was not directly involved in the affair. Stresemann replied that it was indeed concerned: because the Ruhr crisis was making it impossible for Germany to pay reparations, England was suffering. He added that even though French and German industrial groups might in the future make private arrangements, the German government could participate in no such negotiations.[24] On September 8, Monsieur de Montille, then French Chargé d'Affaires in London, informed Sir William Tyrrell of the de Margerie-Stresemann conversation. According to the Chargé d'Affaires, Stresemann discussed the question of security by suggesting a pact between France, Belgium, England, Switzerland, Holland, and the United States which would guarantee frontiers between Germany and France. He also suggested that before he could call off passive resistance, Franco-Belgian-German conversations should attempt to formulate a proposed settlement of the reparations problem. The French Ambassador, under instructions from Poincaré, had repeated that the cessation of passive resistance must

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[24]D'Abernon to FO, No. 302, September 4, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15335/1/18; Eric Sutton, trans. and ed., Gustav Stresemann, His Diaries, Letters, and Papers (2 vols.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), I, 99.

precede any discussion and had reaffirmed, as Poincaré had done on August 20, that there was no connection between reparations and security.[25]

Soon after his conversation with de Margerie, Stresemann made proposals for a settlement of the reparations question. He told D'Abernon on September 4 that he was considering accepting the conditions set forth in the British draft reply of July 20. To think of thus abandoning passive resistance was painful, but the current condition of Germany necessitated it. He asked that the decision be kept secret because premature disclosure might cause his fall. About the same time, the Chancellor contacted the Belgian Minister in Berlin and made more specific proposals for a settlement: concerning security, Germany suggested a reciprocal pact guaranteeing the current frontier; with reference to productive pledges, it would offer a mortgage on all industrial and agricultural property within the nation and consider both a mortgage on railways and Allied participation in German industry. Germany would contemplate

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[25]Conversation between Tyrrell and Monsieur de Montille, September 8, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15565/1/18. The Foreign Office comment on the conversation between Tyrrell and Monsieur de Montille contains a lucid statement of British aims in early September: "Our main objects are two. (1) to get rid of the incubus on British trade which the Ruhr situation represents: (2) to clear up our financial situation by ascertaining how much money we can expect from Germany and our Allies and when we can expect it. A subsidiary object perhaps is to get the French out of the Ruhr." See Foreign Office Memorandum, September 10, 1923, FO 371/8655, C 15855/1/18.

cessation of passive resistance if an agreement in principle could be reached on those bases and the evacuation of the Ruhr could be discussed at the same time.[26]

During the second and third weeks of September, Chancellor Stresemann solicited British assistance and intervention. On September 7, the German Chargé d'Affaires, Herr Dufour-Feronce, after telling First Secretary Cadogan that Germany could continue resistance four weeks at the longest, requested financial assistance and warned that if Britain failed to help, Germany would either collapse or "throw herself into the arms of France" and accept any conditions dictated by the victor. In addition, Britain would be excluded from a Franco-German industrial alliance which might follow Germany's surrender. Cadogan replied that the Foreign Office would consider the request but explained that similar informal requests had previously been denied. Were Britain to assist Germany financially, it would destroy almost all hope of reaching an Allied agreement on the reparations question.[27] Having received

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[26]D'Abernon to FO, No. 303, September 4, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15320/1/18; Grahame to FO, No. 200, September 5, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15404/1/18. The following day, D'Abernon said that he believed that Stresemann could carry out the conditions indicated to the Belgian Minister. This could be done, however, only if he received some immediate financial assistance. The Ambassador urged his government to advance funds to Germany for this purpose. The Foreign Office made no reply to D'Abernon's request for assistance for Germany. See D'Abernon to FO, No. 306, September 6, 1923, FO 371/8654, C 15459/1/18.

[27]Conversation between Cadogan and Dufour-Feronce, September 7, 1923, FO 371/8746, C 18305/313/18.

no reply to the Dufour-Feronce request, Stresemann talked to D'Abernon one week later. He reported that he had made little progress in his conversations with de Margerie, for the French continued to insist upon cessation of passive resistance before negotiations could begin. This made progress impossible because his government would fall at once if he ordered the end of resistance without having been guaranteed counter-concessions. Stresemann asked Britain to intervene to try to help Germany make terms acceptable to France and to secure from France terms which he could accept "without destroying foundations of orderly government and risk of social revolution." Since the government had already agreed to accept the basis set forth in the July 20 dispatch, he suggested that Britain intervene in the discussion on this basis. If it would do so, and if German prisoners were liberated and evicted citizens returned to their homes, he would bring about the resumption of work in the Ruhr.[28]

Ambassador Sthamer, who called on Tyrrell the next day to make a similar plea, asked whether he thought it would be safe for the Germans to call off resistance. They feared that doing so would leave them to deal with France alone and worse off than when they had to deal with all the Allies. He also asked Tyrrell if he agreed that

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[28]D'Abernon to FO, No. 316, September 14, 1923, FO 371/8655, C 16013/1/18.

France was determined to dismember Germany, and the Assistant Under-Secretary answered that France had repeatedly promised that as soon as conversations were resumed with Germany it wanted Britain to join them. He also reminded Sthamer that Poincaré had frequently declared that France had no political aims in occupying the Ruhr. When the Ambassador asked Britain to mediate between the two parties, Tyrrell reminded him of Poincaré's previous statements that France would accept no mediation and advised him that the only obstacle to the resumption of negotiations seemed to be passive resistance.[29] For a few more days, Germany continued the attempt to convince England to pressure France into granting at least some appearance of concessions so that it could surrender without stirring up domestic reaction. Stresemann even threatened that if French and Belgian troops were not soon withdrawn Germany might have to consider itself no longer bound by the Versailles Treaty. These pleas, however, failed to prod Britain into action. The day Tyrrell talked to Sthamer, Wigram wrote that since Britain's efforts to intervene would invite a rebuff from France, it could not do so. The Germans must first cease resistance and then submit to all the Allies proposals for inter-Allied discussions. Until that occurred, Curzon wrote, Britain's task was to stand aside.[30]

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[29]Conversation between Tyrrell and Sthamer, September 14, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 16199/313/18.

[30]Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles. A Fight for Reason (Stanford, California:

While Germany was seeking British intervention, Poincaré continued to make Sunday speeches, which reflected no change in the French outlook. At Damvillers on September 9 he mentioned recent guarantees offered by Stresemann in a September 2 speech at Stuttgart and declared that these added nothing to the securities already possessed by the Allies in their lien over all German assets. When he spoke the next Sunday at Dun-sur-Meuse, the Premier disappointed those who had hoped that in answering Stresemann's speech he might outline a definite plan for the actual payment of reparations. He recalled the suffering inflicted on the town's population by the Germans during the war and said that since defeated Germany had sworn to pay for the damages it committed, these promises should not be forgotten in the midst of all the talk about France's excessive claims. The duty of fixing Germany's debt and the conditions under which it was to be paid had been delegated to the Reparation Commission. Those who wanted to remove that duty from the Commission did so because they believed it was unlikely to grant additional concessions. Such concessions would be illegal, and France was determined to keep the pledges until it had received satisfaction.[31] On September 23 he spoke at

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Stanford University Press, 1953), pp. 64-65; Antonina Vallentin, Stresemann, trans. by Eric Sutton (London: Constable and Company, 1931), p. 106; Minutes by Wigram and Curzon, September 15, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 16199/313/18.

[31]Le Petit Parisien, September 10, 1923, p. 1; Le Temps, September 17 and 18, 1923, p. 2.

Champenoux and Toul. At the former he stated that Germany had forgotten how generously it had been treated by its conquerors. German nationalists, pretending that their country had not been defeated, were leading it toward further disasters by encouraging resistance. In the second speech he declared again that Germany's prosperity had not been seriously diminished by the war and that not even the current crisis had permanently lessened the nation's capacity of payment. He reminded his listeners that Germany, who had started and lost the war, must execute the promises it made. Until it did so, the French would remain where they were.[32]

Four days before the Champenoux and Toul speeches, however, the hoped-for conversation between Baldwin and Poincaré had been held in an effort to try to find a way out of the diplomatic stalemate. Although conflicting accounts have been given of its origin and contents, there is less dispute about the results of the encounter between the two Prime Ministers. Both Saint-Aulaire and Harold Nicolson have given the French Ambassador most of the credit for arranging the meeting. Saint-Aulaire wrote that he, from the time Baldwin became Prime Minister, had felt that only through a direct confrontation between the two men--away from Curzon--could a solution be reached. When the Corfu crisis at the beginning of September caused a loss of

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[32]Le Temps, September 24, 1923, p. 2.

British prestige and weakened Curzon's authority in the British Cabinet, the Ambassador thought the time advantageous for arranging the Baldwin-Poincaré meeting which had been urged by both the British and French press for at least two weeks. Saint-Aulaire reported that he arranged the visit with the assistance of Sir William Tyrrell.[33] Both the Middlemas and Barnes biography of Baldwin and some Foreign Office papers have, however, shed new light on the origin of the September 19 meeting. As mentioned previously, Baldwin and Tyrrell discussed the possibility of such a conversation as early as August 14. After receipt of the uncompromising French reply of August 20, the Prime Minister "decided to assert himself directly in policy-making." In doing so, he did not mean to ignore Curzon, but to do something that the Foreign Secretary could not do:

> A Prime Minister must, as a Foreign Secretary need not, retain a free hand to dispense with established procedure. . . . Baldwin decided to exercise an option which could only be useful once, but which, if fortunate, might serve to break through the entrenched barriers of mistrust and national pride.[34]

While Middlemas and Barnes wrote that after the August 14 meeting with Tyrrell, Baldwin's decision to meet Poincaré never changed, Lampson mentioned to Wigram on

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[33]Auguste de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d'un vieux diplomate (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), pp. 666-667; Nicolson, Curzon, p. 372.

[34]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 192-193.

August 18 that although Tyrrell wanted the two to meet, Baldwin was uncertain about the wisdom of doing so. Nevertheless, a week later the Prime Minister wrote Curzon that he told the Foreign Office that if Poincaré wanted to see him privately he would agree because he felt that the time for a personal encounter was drawing near.[35] The same day that he wrote Curzon, Baldwin left for his holiday at Aix-les-Bains, and Monsieur de Montille, who came to Victoria Station to see him off, was given a hint that the Prime Minister would welcome an invitation from Poincaré. During the first week in August, J. C. C. Davidson and the Marquis de Chambrun--Baldwin's private secretary and a French political leader--were working in Paris, where they laid the groundwork for the meeting by sounding out Poincaré and talking to leading French journalists in an effort to create a favorable press response.[36]

By September 14, the meeting had been arranged, and on that date Baldwin wrote Curzon asking him to send Tyrrell to Paris on September 18 to brief him on events since his departure from London. The Prime Minister set forth his purpose in the forthcoming talk with Poincaré:

> My chief desire in seeing this singularly difficult President of Council, is to get into his head that our Government speaks the truth and can be trusted,

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[35]Lampson to Wigram, August 18, 1923, FO 371/8739, C 14858/313/18; Baldwin to Curzon, August 25, 1923, in Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, pp. 193-194.

[36]Middlemas and Barnes, Baldwin, p. 194.

> and that the P.M. and the F.O. speak with one voice. I am convinced that profound distrust of Lloyd George was the primary cause of the lessened confidence between Paris and London; the feeling grew in France until it became an obsession. If I can make him believe I speak the truth I propose to tell him of the various currents of feeling in England. An attempt to settle properly with Germany and to provide other sanctions in the military occupation will infallibly alienate English sentiment. . . . In short, my object is to work for the Entente and for a prompt settlement by every means that may occur to me. If I cannot move him, we shall have a difficult course to steer. . . .[37]

Unfortunately, no similar account of Poincaré's objectives for the conversation is available. Even though no one seemed to know what to expect from it, the impending encounter between the two Prime Ministers had received much publicity in the British and French press, and a sense of expectancy gripped both countries. Perhaps Baldwin and Poincaré could manage to bridge the chasm between the two Allies and break the deadlock that had been plaguing Europe.

After lunch at the British Embassy with Lord Crewe and President Millerand, Poincaré and Baldwin, with the assistance of an interpreter, talked privately and informally for over two hours.[38] The record of the conversation approved by both men reveals that although Baldwin spoke more frequently than Poincaré, he failed to win concessions from the French leader. Baldwin began by saying that he regretted the absence of Franco-British confidence and

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[37]Baldwin to Curzon, September 14, 1923, in *ibid.*, p. 196.

[38]*Ibid.*, p. 197.

harmony necessary to preserve the Entente. This, he felt, had resulted from the failure of the 1919 guarantee pact and the loss of French confidence in the British government since the days of Lloyd George. He requested France to trust him as it had trusted Sir Edward Grey, and Poincaré agreed to do so, saying that he firmly believed in the necessity of maintaining the Entente. The British leader then discussed public opinion in his country and said that the "English people were puzzled by the impression that France apparently no longer wanted England to be with her." Baldwin stressed that France should take seriously British opinion, for it was not manufactured by the government; in fact, the British press was entirely independent of the government. Instead of being deceived by what appeared in the Rothermere press, France should realize that almost the entire Liberal and Labour parties were taking an anti-French stand, and even some Conservative party members were doing so. They resented French refusal to acknowledge the British offers to cancel a large portion of inter-Allied debts, condemned the delay in settling the reparations question, and believed that events since January 11 had impaired the possibility of a settlement. He then stressed another source of British antagonism:

> English temperament was peculiar in certain respects and was doubtless difficult to French understanding; but the average Englishman pre-eminently disliked the military occupation of a civilian district; it antagonised and roused him. . . . No British Government would be able to co-operate fully in order to make

> the Entente what it ought to be as long as the military character of the occupation of the Ruhr remained unchanged.

Balwin also warned Poincaré about the reaction that might follow their failure to work together:

> I expressed the belief that no other Government in Great Britain could be found more willing or desirous to work together with France; and that after his . . . disagreement with Mr. Lloyd George and with Mr. Bonar Law in January last the British public would feel that the responsibility lay not with ourselves but with the French Prime Minister if I too found it impossible to work with the French.

After telling Poincaré that as recently as September 15 the Foreign Office had once more urged Germany to cease passive resistance and "to try and come to terms," he asked what France planned to do after Germany did stop resisting. Had he prepared any plans for the future? If so, he should let the British leaders consider them and reach basic agreements before they became public "in order to avoid abortive conferences." What ideas did Poincaré have about a moratorium, stabilizing German currency, or establishing the rate of payment? In his concluding remarks, Baldwin once more revealed the primacy of economic interests: he said that England wanted a settlement first because "she attributed the greater part of her unemployment to the present disorganisation in the trade of the world" and second because, "seeking order and peace, she feared that until this great question was disposed of there would be the more probability of disorder and fighting in a Europe which had already suffered far too much."

According to the record of the conversation, Poincaré "at the outset associated himself unreservedly with the views" presented by Baldwin and "expressed his appreciation of the frankness" extended to him. He went on to say that the French government was not the master of the press in its country and that the government's Ruhr policy was, he believed, approved by at least 99 per cent of the French people. In discussing the origin of Franco-British discord, Poincaré said that the real impetus for French action lay in the fact that "every time the Allies had met since the Treaty of Versailles French claims had been jeopardised until she found her share of reparations dwindling away." When Germany asked for a moratorium and France insisted upon guarantees, both Lloyd George and Bonar Law had objected; if, however, Britain had agreed to guarantees, no military occupation would have been necessary. Only because Germany had anticipated a fight between the Allies had it resisted, and all the trouble had arisen from this resistance--not from the occupation itself. Knowing that the resistance must collapse, he had "declined Lord Curzon's offer of intervention at Berlin because Germany would then have capitulated on Great Britain's demand and not under French pressure. . . ." Poincaré, obviously, had failed to modify his earlier stand. The President of the Council then stated that although he wanted to continue exchanging personal views, "no alien factor should be allowed to

intervene." The "alien factor" he mentioned was the possibility of allowing the reparations issue to be discussed by the League of Nations--a move France could not tolerate.

The French leader then turned to some of the questions asked by Baldwin, and the answers were no more precise than previous ones. After saying that French plans for action following the cessation of resistance had already been given to Curzon in the Yellow Book, Poincaré added that "he would be quite prepared to allow a certain latitude subject to conditions, in order to allow Germany to stabilise her position." Furthermore, he reaffirmed that there could be no solution to the problem until Germany had discouraged resistance and ceased subsidizing it, "for by this means she was dissipating her resources and violating the Treaty." When he promised that as soon as resistance had ended France wanted to consult with the Allies through either the Ambassadors or additional personal conversations, Baldwin interpreted the statement to mean that Poincaré had devised no definite future plans. At the close of the interview the two Premiers agreed upon a communiqué to be issued to the press.[39]

Varying interpretations have been made about the September 19 encounter and its significance. One of Baldwin's earlier biographers, George M. Young, wrote that

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[39]Note on Conversation with M. Poincaré, September 19, 1923, FO 371/8657, C 17871/1/18.

Poincaré defeated and humiliated the British Prime Minister. According to the Annual Register, Baldwin gave Poincaré "the strongest encouragement to persist in his policy," and Henry A. Turner wrote that Baldwin publicly endorsed Poincaré's position. Wickham Steed declared that Poincaré made promises about French policy following the cessation of resistance, and when he failed to carry them out, it appeared that Baldwin had been duped; nevertheless, Baldwin's action had "staved off a serious crisis in Anglo-French relations and brought home to the French people a sense of the dangers involved in the Ruhr policy."[40] Middlemas and Barnes, like Steed, believed that Baldwin accomplished much in the interview. According to them, the Prime Minister won the discussion on the reparations question and did not surrender Britain's position. Instead,

> . . . Baldwin had got what he wanted. He had won from Poincaré a renunciation of any territorial ambition in Germany [this statement did not appear in the available record of the conversation]. The whole affair of the occupation was henceforth to be confined to the technical question of reparation and the enforcement of the Versailles Treaty. . . . He had re-opened the channels of communication, effectively blocked since January, and in private had established a strong position. In

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[40]George M. Young, Stanley Baldwin (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952), p. 62; Annual Register, 1923, p. 102; Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 117; Wickham Steed, The Real Stanley Baldwin (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1930), p. 61. Steed reported that Poincaré's failure to keep his promise had a depressing effect upon Baldwin. It was "the first public sign of the 'passivity' which afterwards came to be regarded as Mr. Baldwin's characteristic fault in critical situations."

> effect, Poincaré would now be deprived of any means to disguise the stark balance sheet of profit and loss in the Ruhr. . . .[41]

Although Young was inaccurate in saying that Poincaré defeated and humiliated the British Prime Minister, it appears that Middlemas and Barnes were far too optimistic about Baldwin's achievements. Even if Poincaré had renounced territorial ambitions, this was no new development, for he had done so repeatedly since the occupation began. In addition, Baldwin had been no more successful than Curzon in extracting precise information about French plans for the future. The French Premier made absolutely no concessions, and the Prime Minister's efforts to mitigate the occupation and modify French policy seemed to have been futile.

There is less disagreement about the impact of the official communiqué issued at the close of the conversation. Drafted by Tyrrell, the document announced:

> A meeting of the Prime Ministers of France and Great Britain took place this afternoon, of which they took advantage to proceed to an exchange of views on the general political situation.
>
> It is not to be expected that in the course of one meeting M. Poincaré and Mr. Baldwin were able to settle upon any definite solution, but they were happy to establish a common agreement of views, and to discover that on no question is there any difference of purpose or divergence of principle which could impair the co-operation of the two countries upon which depends so much the settlement and the peace of the world.[42]

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[41] Baldwin, p. 201.

[42] Crewe to FO, No. 890, September 19, 1923, FO 371/8656, C 16279/1/18. Evidence indicates that both

Baldwin, it seems, had agreed to the nebulous communiqué because he wanted to conceal the fact that he had been unable to win any concessions from the President of the Council. Since neither Poincaré nor Baldwin released an account of the conversation, most people based their opinion upon the communiqué itself, and this led to much misunderstanding.

Official British reaction to the visit and communiqué was basically unfavorable. As late as September 25, not even the Foreign Office had received an official report of what occurred at the September 19 meeting. Curzon was horrified when he read the communiqué, which he interpreted as a repudiation of his policy. Like many others, he believed that Baldwin had abandoned the position assumed by Britain in the August 11 note. Nicolson reported that the whole incident strained relations between Curzon and Saint-Aulaire "to the point of rupture," and that from that time the Foreign Secretary refused to speak to the Foreign Office official [probably Tyrrell] whom he believed responsible for the communiqué and the interview.[43]

Harold Nicolson and W. N. Medlicott were in error in saying that Baldwin did not see the communiqué; see Nicolson, Curzon, p. 372; Medlicott, British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963 (2nd ed.; London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968), p. 53.

[43]Minutes by Cadogan on September 21 and 22 reveal that the Foreign Office had received no report of the interview; see FO 371/8656, C 16357/1/18, and FO 371/8656, C 16401/1/18. On September 25 he wrote Charles Wingfield in Brussels saying that the Foreign Office might not even

The communiqué, as Etienne Weill-Raynal pointed out, stupified the English political world. Many Britishers believed, like Curzon, that it wiped out the accomplishments of the August 11 note, weakened Britain's position, and caused it to lose influence and become subordinate to France.[44] Most British newspapers found the communiqué puzzling or even dangerous. Although at first most of them merely asked questions about what had occurred at the meeting and expressed skepticism about the statement that a sincere agreement had been reached, within a few days they were condemning both the interview and the communiqué. The Times wrote that the document "misled public opinion, both in this country and in France. It was a psychological blunder to say so much when so little was intended." The New Statesman, even more critical, declared that the communiqué "vividly recalled the bad old days of Lloyd Georgian diplomacy. . . . We had hoped that the days

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receive a record; see Cadogan to Wingfield, September 25, 1923, FO 371/8656, C 16707/1/18. For reports of Curzon's reaction to the communiqué, see Medlicott, British Foreign Policy, p. 53; Saint-Aulaire, Confession, pp. 669-670; Nicolson, Curzon, pp. 372-373; Viscount D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace. Pages from the Diary of Viscount D'Abernon (Berlin, 1920-1926), Vol. II: The Years of Crisis: June 1922-December 1923 (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 262.

[44]Etienne Weill-Raynal, Les réparations allemandes et la France, Vol. II: L'Application de l'état des paiements, l'occupation de la Ruhr et l'institution du Plan Dawes (mai 1921-avril 1924) (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1947), p. 497; Nicolson, Curzon, p. 374; Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), pp. 159-160; D'Abernon, Diary, II, 262.

when such silly lies were considered worth telling were gone forever. But here we have the silliest that was ever told." In another article on the same day, the New Statesman said that all over Europe the communiqué "appeared to mark the final triumph of French policy" and that Baldwin and Tyrrell had gravely injured Britain.[45]

The French press, on the other hand, overflowed with favorable comments on the Baldwin-Poincaré meeting. French newspapers unanimously labelled it an unqualified success even though both men maintained their respective viewpoints. In L'Oeuvre, Robert de Jouvenel stated that official circles were delighted with the interview and that Baldwin's coming breathed new life into the Entente at a time when it seemed to be dying. L'Écho de Paris praised the two men for straining every nerve to try to renew the Entente and declared that events were moving in favor of France. Le Matin, stressing the contrast between the September 19 communiqué and the talk of rupture which had previously filled the British press, emphasized that any disagreement between the two countries was one over the methods to be employed to make Germany pay.[46]

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[45] The Times (London), September 24, 1923, p. 13; New Statesman, September 22, 1923, pp. 661, 696. See also Manchester Guardian, September 20, 1923, p. 6, and Daily Telegraph, September 20, 1923, p. 9.

[46] L'Oeuvre, September 29, 1923, p. 1; L'Écho de Paris, September 20, 1923, p. 1; Le Matin, September 20, 1923, p. 1; see also Le Petit Parisien, September 20 and 21, 1923, p.1; Le Temps, September 21, 1923, p. 1.

There is almost no disagreement about the impact of the communiqué upon Germany. It shocked Stresemann and other German leaders and revealed that aid from England was unlikely: no longer could they hope that Britain might pressure Poincaré to end the stalemate in time to save them. The day after the communiqué appeared, the Chancellor asked the Cabinet for authorization to begin planning the cessation of resistance.[47] Thus the September 19 meeting and the blundering communiqué hastened the end of passive resistance.

As the mark plummeted, serious disturbances occurred with increasing frequency and there were rumors of impending insurrections. Believing that Germany was on the verge of a civil war and could no longer subsidize resistance, Stresemann called Cabinet meetings on September 22 and September 24, and the Cabinet agreed that the Ruhr impasse must be ended before any of the other problems could be solved. The Chancellor also discussed the situation with deputies from the Ruhr and Rhineland, workmen's representatives from those areas, and the presidents of the German states, and explained that since he had failed

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[47]Nicolson, Curzon, p. 373; Edouard Bonnefous, Histoire politique de la IIIe République, Vol. III: L'après-guerre, 1919-1924 (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1959), p. 358; Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of the Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 256; Turner, Stresemann and Politics, p. 117.

to obtain conditions from either France or Britain, there was only one course: Germany must capitulate.[48] On September 26, he issued to the German people a proclamation concerning the cessation of resistance, the first sentence of which called Franco-Belgian action illegal. After describing the sufferings, expulsions, and murder inflicted upon the German population, it announced that the German government was no longer financially able to sustain resistance and that Germany must surrender in order to avoid collapse. The government, which would endeavor to have prisoners released and expelled persons returned, would certainly give up no German soil. The next day, the Chancellor delivered the proclamation to British, French, Italian, American, Belgian, and Japanese representatives in Berlin, and on September 28 he signed a proclamation cancelling all the official instructions which had instituted and maintained passive resistance.[49] Whether or not he planned it, Baldwin's consent to the publication of the communiqué and his failure to repudiate the interpretations given it had

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[48]Kilmarnock to FO, No. 364, September 22, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 14657/313/18; D'Abernon to FO, No. 328, September 23, 1923, FO 371/8741, C 16455/313/18, and No. 331, September 25, 1923, FO 371/8742, C 16645/313/18; S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918-1933 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 264.

[49]Daily Telegraph, September 27, 1923, p. 10; D'Abernon to FO, No. 336, September 27, 1923, FO 371/8742, C 16780/313/18, and No. 340, September 28, 1923, FO 371/8743, C 16848/313/18.

hastened Germany's capitulation. Poincaré, it appeared, stood triumphant on September 26.

For a time, many Frenchmen believed that France was more victorious in September, 1923, than in November, 1918, for on the earlier occasion it had won as a member of a coalition, but in 1923 it triumphed with only the aid of Belgium. President Millerand, who called September 26 the greatest day since the armistice, believed that since Germany, convinced that France wanted to remain in the Ruhr, was willing to make sacrifices, the time had come for France and Germany to begin direct negotiations. He wanted the French government to contact immediately both the German government and the great German industrialists and force the latter to give France a large share of the ownership of the industries of the Ruhr.[50] Unexpectedly, however, he encountered resistance from the President of the Council.

In the opinion of several French historians, Poincaré, who failed to capitalize upon the German surrender, threw away the fruits of victory at the very moment of

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[50]Maurice Baumont, Gloires et tragédies de la Troisième République (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1956), p. 341; Bertrand de Jouvenel, D'une guerre à l'autre, Vol. I: De Versailles à Locarno (Paris: Calman-Lévy, Éditeurs, 1940-1941), p. 328; Jacques Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième République, Vol. V: Les années d'illusions, 1918-1931 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1960), pp. 109-110; Raoul Persil, Alexandre Millerand, 1859-1943 (Paris: Société d'éditions Françaises et Internationales, 1949), p. 152; William L. Shirer, The Collapse of the Third Republic: An Inquiry into the Fall of France in 1940 (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 128.

triumph. On September 26, important conversations took place among Millerand, Foch, Poincaré, and Charles Reibel, the Minister of Liberated Regions. Although no account of those conversations was published for over twenty-five years, Reibel told in 1949 of the events of that crucial day. About 10:30 A.M., Millerand called him to the Elysée Palace and said that Germany had ceased resistance and that neither he, Seydoux, nor Foch had yet been able to get Poincaré to specify the conditions to be imposed upon Germany at the end of resistance. Reibel said that at noon Millerand sent him to talk to Poincaré, who had just been informed by Baron von Hoesch of the end of resistance. When Reibel congratulated him, the Prime Minister exploded, saying that the Minister should realize the terrible difficulties France was going to encounter. Reibel replied that, to the contrary, there should be rejoicing, for Poincaré was then "the absolute master of the situation" and should immediately talk with Germany and impose conditions on it. When Poincaré answered that to talk with Germany would embroil him with England, Reibel declared that if he were afraid of doing that, he should not have gone into the Ruhr.[51] The Minister of Liberated Regions then insisted that Poincaré obtain all he could from Germany and rectify all the points of the Versailles Treaty that he had criticized. France

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[51]Charles Reibel, "Une grande occasion manquée: le premier drame de la Ruhr," Écrits de Paris, No. 55 (May, 1949), 26-28.

should use the Ruhr resources to assure its security, the payment of reparations, and the union of Ruhr coke and Lorraine ore, and to assume a position of dominance over Germany. Poincaré, sensing that Reibel was speaking for Millerand, answered that he would carry out no such policy and warned that if anyone tried to force him to do so, he would resign. Reibel immediately told Millerand of the conversation, and the startled President asked why Poincaré had gone into the Ruhr if he did not want to negotiate with Germany.[52]

After talking to Millerand the second time, Reibel saw Marshal Foch. The Marshal, who was jubilant over Germany's capitulation and said that it was the greatest day since the armistice and was, in fact, a new armistice, asked if the government would bungle the armistice and the peace a second time. When Reibel told him what Poincaré had said, Foch exclaimed: "I was sure of it: such men are incapable of making a decision. . . ." He added that at that moment Poincaré "held in his hands the entire victory of France" and, with tears in his eyes, said that if France failed to negotiate immediately with Germany, the occasion would be forever lost. Because Reibel insisted, Foch went to see Poincaré that afternoon, but at 4:00 o'clock he called to say that nothing would move the President of the

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[52] Ibid., p. 28; Louis Guitard, La petite histoire de la Troisieme République. Souvenirs de Maurice Colrat (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1959), p. 116.

Council. The tragedy, according to Reibel, had occurred: Poincaré's refusal to negotiate directly with prostrate Germany had caused France to lose a golden opportunity to strengthen its position in Europe.[53]

Several factors were, it seems, responsible for Poincaré's refusal to follow the desires of Millerand and Foch and begin direct negotiations with Germany. One of the most important of these was revealed in his statement to Reibel--he was afraid that official Franco-German conversations would cause trouble with England. Louis Guitard, writing about that fear, said that Poincaré suffered from the "complex of Delcassé," which had infested almost all French statesmen. The "complex of Delcassé" could be reduced to a sort of syllogism: because Germany was France's hereditary enemy and France was unable to struggle alone against it, France must have the help of England; therefore, it must do everything possible to maintain England's friendship. The "complex of Delcassé" meant that France could not say "no" to England, and in September, 1923, it "prevented

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[53]Reibel, "Une grande occasion manquée," pp. 29-30. Several French historians since 1949 have told of the September 26 conversations. Nearly all of them condemn Poincaré for failing to negotiate with Germany when it was defeated and asking for terms; for example, see Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 107-109; Guitard, Troisième République, pp. 98-101, 116; Favez, Le Reich, pp. 343-344; Maxime Mourin, Histoire des nations européenes, Vol. I: De la première à la deuxieme guerre mondiale (1918-1939) (Paris: Payot, 1962), pp. 90-91; Persil, Millerand, pp. 152-153; Reynaud, Mémoires, I, 173-174.

him [Poincaré] from preferring the passing discontent of England to the lasting reconciliation of France and Germany."[54]

Two additional reasons have been given for Poincaré's passivity at the moment of Germany's surrender. The first of these is France's financial condition. Contrary to assertions made by French statesmen, the occupation had been costly, and although taxes had been increased somewhat, the legislature failed to raise them sufficiently. The value of the franc had declined, France was unable to balance its budget, and efforts to secure loans had only meagre success. Adequate loans could be obtained only in Anglo-Saxon money markets, and if France were to continue antagonizing England and the United States with a policy of force, these markets would be closed to it.[55] Finally, Poincaré's temperament and character seemed to have played a significant role in the failure to conclude an agreement with Germany.

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[54]Guitard, Troisième République, pp. 94, 100. Other writers pointed to Poincaré's fear of provoking trouble with England; see Baumont, Gloires, p. 341; Bonnefous, Histoire politique, III, 388; Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, Vol. VII: Les crises du XXe siecle. I. De 1914 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957), pp. 254-255; Shirer, Collapse of Republic, p. 128; Chastenet, Troisieme République, V, 112.

[55]Renouvin, Relations internationales, Vol. VII, Part I, pp. 254-255; Chastenet, Troisieme Republique, V, 112; Piotr S. Wandycz, France and Her Eastern Allies, 1919-25: French-Czechoslovak-Polish Relations from the Paris Peace Conference to Locarno (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1962), pp. 290-291; Bonnefous, Histoire politique, III, 388-389.

While Edouard Bonnefous pointed to his "horror of extreme solutions, his natural prudence, his desire to end in a legal settlement," Raymond Recouly and others, who were more critical, said that he was timid and powerless to bring the matter to a conclusion.[56] Another closely related factor was involved--Poincaré's legalism. Having consistently preached strict adherence to the Versailles Treaty and said that the Ruhr occupation was designed to make Germany observe it, the President of the Council, when he had obtained this result, returned to the inter-Allied procedure set forth in the Treaty.[57] It seems that Poincaré's respect for rules prevented his attempting to make an independent settlement with Germany.

Thus the period between the publication of the French note of August 20 and the cessation of passive resistance on September 26 had ended ignominiously for both Britain and France. After having threatened to take

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[56]Bonnefous, Histoire politique, III, 388; Raymond Recouly, De Bismarck a Poincaré. Soixante ans de diplomatie républicaine (Paris: les Éditions de France, 1932), p. 492; Carl Bergmann, The History of Reparations (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1927), p. 207; Frank H. Simonds, How Europe Made Peace Without America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), p. 256.

[57]Chastenet, Troisième République, V, 112; Favez, Le Reich, p. 344; Shirer, Collapse of Republic, p. 128. A statement from Gordon Wright's work on Poincaré as President gives credence to this view. He wrote that Poincaré left that office virtually unchanged: "His rigid legalism was responsible for this fact. He had the jurist's respect for rules. . . ." See Raymond Poincaré and the French Presidency (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1942), p. 246.

independent action, the British government stood passively by for a month. When Baldwin went to Paris on September 19 to warn Poincaré that Britain would not tolerate the continuation of military sanctions in the Ruhr, he failed to accomplish his purpose; in addition, he both endorsed and, for some inexplicable reason, later showed indecisiveness in failing to explain or repudiate an innocuous--yet deceptive--communiqué which discredited his government and hastened the end of German resistance. The performance of Poincaré was, however, no more effective than that of the Baldwin-Curzon government. Although Poincaré had, in the interview, refused to make concessions and managed to prevent the British government from pursuing independent action, he was unprepared and unwilling to act when the long-awaited German surrender occurred. As September ended, Britain stood helplessly by as economic and political conditions in Germany deteriorated, and Poincaré displeased President Millerand by refusing to capitalize upon the victory over Germany.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

For a time after the cessation of passive resistance, the Ruhr question was allowed to drift. Although many Frenchmen wanted Poincaré to begin negotiations with the German government, the President of the Council did nothing. Saying that the Germans really had not ended resistance, he refused to talk, and during the rest of the year there were to be almost no modifications in the nature of the occupation. Meanwhile, the British continued to wait for him to act upon the promise to enter into negotiations with the Allies when resistance ended. When Germany on October 9 and 11 requested both Paris and Brussels to begin negotiations with it, however, Poincaré again refused.[1]

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[1]Paul Reynaud, Mémoires, Vol. I: Venu de ma montagne (Paris: Flammarion, 1960), p. 173; James Waterhouse Angell, The Recovery of Germany (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), pp. 23-24; Annual Register, 1923, p. 103; Etienne Weill-Raynal, Les réparations allemandes et la France, Vol. II: L'Application de l'état des paiements, l'occupation de la Ruhr et l'institution du Plan Dawes (mai 1921-avril 1924) (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1947), p. 497; Arnold Joseph Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), p. 287.

Anglo-American efforts eventually ended the stalemate. At a September 26 Cabinet meeting, Curzon announced that he intended to approach the American Ambassador about the possibility of the appointment of an American representative to the Reparation Commission. On October 11, President Calvin Coolidge surprised most observers by announcing that the United States still supported the offer made by Secretary of State Hughes in December, 1922, to participate in an international expert inquiry into Germany's capacity to pay. The following day Baldwin, wasting no time, asked the United States to participate in the appointment of such a committee, and a little later he asked Poincaré to agree to the procedure. The Frenchman consented on October 26, and on November 30 the Reparation Commission established two committees: the first chaired by an American, Charles G. Dawes, and the second by Britain's Reginald McKenna.[2]

Before the appointment of the two committees, however, France had taken new "productive pledges" in the form of the so-called MICUM agreements. On October 8, the MICUM and the Wolff industrial group in the Ruhr concluded an

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[2]Cab 23/46, 47(23)2; W. M. Jordan, Great Britain, France, and the German Problem, 1918-1939: A Study of Anglo-French Relations in the Making and Maintenance of the Versailles Settlement (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 110; Annual Register, 1923, p. 110; Toynbee, Survey, p. 339; Frederick Lewis Schuman, War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. An Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), p. 297.

agreement for coal deliveries, and similar ones were to follow. On November 23, the MICUM signed a standard agreement, to run until April 15, 1924, with the Ruhr Bergbauverein, which controlled approximately 80 per cent of the Ruhr production. The terms were onerous, and few people felt that they could be observed. By the beginning of 1924, France had concluded over forty such agreements, including one on November 30 between the Régie and the Management of the German State Railways.[3] German economic and social problems were more severe than they had been before the cessation of resistance.

Although the future seemed gloomy, a solution was not far away. The two committees appointed by the Reparation Commission began their work on January 14, 1924, and reported on April 9. In order to avoid offending France, they devised a plan which neither reduced the German reparations debt nor established the number of annual payments. The so-called Dawes Plan called for a payment of 1,000,000,000 gold marks the first year it was in effect, 1,220,000,000 the second, 1,200,000,000 the third, 1,750,000,000 the fourth, and 2,500,000,000 for the fifth and following years. If German economic conditions improved,

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[3]Toynbee, Survey, pp. 288-290; Joseph King, The Ruhr. The History of the French Occupation of the Ruhr: Its Meaning and Consequences (London: British Bureau for Ruhr Information, 1924), p. 21; G. E. R. Gedye, The Revolver Republic. France's Bid for the Rhine (London: Arrowsmith, 1930), p. 148.

the payments could be increased. After the governments concerned accepted the recommendations of the two expert committees, a conference met in London from July 16 to August 16, 1924, to discuss putting the Dawes Plan into operation. On the closing day of the London Conference, all of the interested powers officially adopted the Plan on the condition that the Ruhr be evacuated within a year. According to Frederick L. Schuman, "the 1924 settlement constituted the first move in the direction of removing the reparation problem from the sphere of international politics and power-and-prestige diplomacy into the realm of international economic and financial administration." The Dawes Plan went into effect on September 1, 1924, and on July 31, 1925, France and Belgium completed evacuation of their troops from the Ruhr.[4]

Thus ended a two and one-half year occupation that embittered Anglo-French relations. Had the venture solved France's dual problem of security and reparations? Neither French nor Anglo-Saxon historians have been able to agree among themselves about the success or failure of the operation.

Various figures have appeared concerning the economic results of the occupation, some indicating that it produced a net profit and others a deficit. It is difficult to

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[4]Jordan, Britain, France, p. 110; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, pp. 297-298; F. Lee Benns, European History Since 1870 (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1938), p. 549.

assess the financial results because, as Schuman wrote, "the complexity of the budget and the juggling of the accounts" made it impossible to devise an accurate statement of financial results, and also because figures given in some sources cover a different period of time from those given in others. For example, while the anonymous French publication, The Franco-Belgian Achievement in the Ruhr, declared that the occupation yielded a profit of 479,195,000 francs up to January 10, 1924, a member of the French Chamber Commission of Finance estimated that it resulted in a net deficit of 134,000,000 francs.[5] Most of the works surveyed, however, declared that the occupation was financially unprofitable, with even some French authors taking that position.[6] Although René Albrecht-Carrié and D. W. Brogan indicated that the occupation produced barely enough revenue

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[5]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 296; The Franco-Belgian Achievement in the Ruhr (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1924), p. 46. Poincaré denied the validity of the statement about the deficit. Toynbee wrote that the figures given in The Franco-Belgian Achievement were challenged by foreign economists; see Survey, p. 292. Other figures concerning the economic results of the occupation are given in Maxime Mourin, Histoire des nations européenes, Vol. I: De la première à la deuxième guerre mondiale (1918-1939) (Paris: Payot, 1962), p. 58, and Camille Georges Picavet, L'Europe politique de 1919 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan, 1931), p. 84.

[6]A. de Gramont-Lesparre, Politique et réparations. L'occupation de la Ruhr (Paris: Imprimerie J. Mersch, F. Seitz et Cie., 1925), p. 33; Jacques Kayser, Ruhr ou plan Dawes? Histoire des Réparations (Paris: André Delpeuch, Éditeur [1925]), p. 59; Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, Vol. VII: Les crises du XXe siecle, I. De 1914 à 1929 (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957), p. 255.

to meet expenses, many other writers indicated that it produced no profit whatsoever. Lloyd George said that France and Belgium received only one-sixth as much coal as in 1922, and Raymond L. Buell pointed out that the French franc declined and that France received fewer reparations deliveries than in 1922.[7] In spite of its apparent failure to extract large payments from Germany, the occupation may nevertheless have helped bring the reparations problem nearer solution, for French, English, and German writers have agreed that the Dawes Plan, which led to four years of relative calm, would have been impossible without the Ruhr occupation. André François-Poncet said that since the Dawes Plan sums were all France ever received from Germany and since the occupation had made these payments possible, the endeavor must be considered a success.[8]

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[7]René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 396; D. W. Brogan, The French Nation: From Napoleon to Pétain, 1814-1940 (London: Arrow Books, Ltd., 1961), p. 259; David Lloyd George, Is It Peace? (2nd ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton Limited [1923]), p. vii; Raymond Leslie Buell, Europe: A History of Ten Years (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 59.

[8]André François-Poncet, De Versailles à Potsdam--La France et le probleme allemand contemporain, 1919-1945 (Paris: Flammarion, 1948), p. 119; Mourin, Nations européenes, I, 57; Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. by Harlan Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, Vol. I: From the Collapse of the Empire to Hindenberg's Election (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 302; T. W. Foerster, Europe and the German Question (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1940), p. 279; R. B. Mowat, A History of European Diplomacy, 1914-1925 (London: Edward Arnold & Co., 1927), p. 245.

Although it was not a striking financial achievement, the Ruhr occupation can in some respects be considered a French political victory. Several writers have pointed out that the occupation has been incorrectly judged unsuccessful because of the failure to collect large reparations payments. In their opinion, the most important result of the occupation was the change effected in the German attitude. Whereas before the occupation began Germany had virtually refused to fulfill its Treaty obligations, after 1923 it surrendered and agreed to perform them. France, with Belgian assistance, had broken German resistance--an impressive accomplishment. Germany had to admit that it stood alone and powerless, and German industrialists, seeing that France could hurt them, changed their attitude toward the payment of reparations and became willing to pay themselves in order to get France out of the Ruhr. They saw that French engineers could work Ruhr coal mines and operate the intricate railroad network and that France had the upper hand. This awareness, according to Sir Arthur Willert, placed the German government in a better position to execute Treaty provisions. If, therefore, the aim of the occupation was to produce German acquiescence, the venture succeeded, for the Germany of 1924 was more compliant than that of 1921 and 1922, even though its hatred of France had reached an unprecedented level.[9] This

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[9]Albrecht-Carrié, Diplomatic History, p. 396; Franco-Belgian Achievement, p. 48; René Albrecht-Carrié,

political victory over Germany gave France a momentary sense of economic and military mastery and satisfied its self-esteem. During the negotiations which followed in early 1924, fear of the future seemed to subside, and as the French grew more confident, they became somewhat more compliant.[10]

Although France had won a temporary psychological victory, it had failed to attain security. As mentioned previously, England at the time of the Cannes Conference in January, 1922, had offered a guarantee pact. After the occupation, France was forced to return to a system of conferences, but failed to attain even the previously rejected formal guarantees. In addition, the Ruhr venture weakened France's security by antagonizing many people and increasing its diplomatic isolation. S. William Halperin summarized the situation well: "It had alienated opinion in Great Britain, whose support France needed to achieve the kind of security she wanted. It had evoked widespread sympathy for the Reich . . . and

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France, Europe and the Two World Wars (Geneva: Librairie E. Droz, 1960), p. 146; Benns, European History, p. 547; Un An d'occupation: L'oeuvre franco-belge dans la Ruhr en 1923 (Dusseldorf: Imprimerie de l'armée du Rhin, 1924), pp. 69-70; Sir Arthur Willert, Aspects of British Foreign Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1928), p. 45; Rufus C. Dawes, The Dawes Plan in the Making (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1925), p. 100; Eyck, Weimar Republic, I, 302.

[10]Toynbee, Survey, p. 293; Dawes, Dawes Plan, p. 109; Pierre Miquel, Poincaré (Paris: Librairie Artheme Fayard, 1961), p. 475.

weakened the position of the republican elements in Germany."[11]

The results of the May, 1924, elections reflected the constant feeling of insecurity among the French. When the Cartel des Gauches defeated the Bloc National, the formidable Poincaré--who personified a policy of coercion--had to resign, and the Chamber soon forced President Millerand out of office. Most observers felt that Poincaré's Ruhr policy caused his defeat. By 1924, Frenchmen were tired of complications, frightened by isolation, and opposed to conscription and the growing tax burden. Many of them felt that the occupation had been a costly mistake, and even some of the extreme nationalists had lost the will to break up and punish Germany. Rightist foreign policy had been defeated and was never fully to recover, and the memory of Poincaré's defeat was to haunt any of his successors who might contemplate military action against Germany.[12]

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[11]Renouvin, Relations internationales, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 255; Buell, Europe, p. 71; David Lloyd George, The Truth about Reparations and War Debts (London: William Heinemann, Ltd., 1932), pp. 76-77; S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918-1933 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1965), p. 288.

[12]M. Baumont, La faillite de la paix, 1918-1939, Vol. I: De Rethondes à Stresa (1918-1935) (5th ed.; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 282; D. W. Brogan, The Development of Modern France, 1870-1939, Vol. II: The Shadow of War, World War I, Between the Two Wars (rev. ed.; New York: Harper & Row, 1966), pp. 581, 583-584; J. Hampden Jackson, Clemenceau and the Third

The Ruhr venture also had a detrimental effect upon the British government, whose policy during the occupation had met almost constant criticism. Particularly harmful was the failure of Baldwin and Curzon to take the independent action threatened publicly in the August 11 note: when Britain did nothing, the unfulfilled threats caused it to appear ridiculous and to lose prestige. British diplomatic prestige, according to Frank Simonds and Brooks Enemy, "sunk to the level it had known only in the age of the Stuarts."[13] Nevertheless, the British, as has been shown, took the initiative not long after the cessation of passive resistance and were to retain it in later diplomatic encounters.

Many results of the Ruhr occupation can be detected in Anglo-French diplomacy between 1923 and 1939, and the

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Republic (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 162; E. H. Carr, International Relations Between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939 (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 60; Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1940), p. 58; François-Poncet, Versailles à Potsdam, p. 7.

[13]Sisley Huddleston, Poincaré: A Biographical Portrait (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1924), p. 153; Frank H. Simonds, How Europe Made Peace Without America (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1927), p. 253; Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), pp. 367-368; Frank Herbert Simonds and Brooks Enemy, The Great Powers in World Politics. International Relations and Economic Nationalism (New York: American Book Company, 1939), p. 566. Huddleston wrote: "There has been no greater fiasco in our time than the failure of the Baldwin-Curzon Government to follow up its threats"; see Poincaré, p. 153.

first of these was French abandonment of a policy of coercion. Both Pierre Renouvin and J.-B. Duroselle noted that post-1919 French policy oscillated between two tendencies: one of using force to compel the execution of the Treaty and the other of conciliating Germany. Beginning to doubt the efficacy of a policy of strict enforcement, France adopted the latter after May, 1924, and grew reluctant to use its military supremacy. This stemmed from both unwillingness to risk disapproval of the Allies--particularly from British insistence that the policy of military sanctions be abandoned--and from the realization that the Treaty could be executed only with German cooperation, which could be secured more readily through conciliation than through threats.[14] On the other hand, by causing the British government to believe that it must either combat an aggressive French policy or give France some guarantees, the occupation made Britain realize the desirability of meeting some of the French demands for security and thus

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[14]Renouvin, Relations internationales, Vol. VII, Part I, p. 247; J.-B. Duroselle, Histoire diplomatique de 1919 à nos jours (4th ed.; Paris: Librairie Dalloz, 1966), p. 167; Geneviève Tabouis, Albion perfide ou loyale. De la guerre de cent ans à nos jours (Paris: Payot, 1938), p. 206; Brogan, Modern France, II, p. 580; Paul Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe (2 vols.; Paris: Flammarion, 1947), I, 38-39; Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 82; A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of the Second World War (2nd ed.; Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcet Publications, Inc., 1965), pp. 53-54. Taylor wrote that after the Ruhr occupation France "did not lift a finger to assert the system of Versailles. . . ." See Second World War, p. 182.

helped pave the way for Locarno.[15] Taken together, the 1924 settlement, France's renunciation of the integral application of the Versailles Treaty, the German willingness to come to terms, and the British readiness to give some satisfaction to French security demands led to the Locarno pacts of 1925 and the Briand-Stresemann-Chamberlain period of improved Franco-German relations.

Sir Lewis Namier has written, however, that Locarno marked "a turning away of France from her satellites toward Britain. . . ." After the Ruhr venture, as Arnold Wolfers affirmed, France indeed became increasingly dependent upon its British ally: when France abandoned Poincaré's policy of force and agreed to evacuate the Ruhr, "a trend was already setting in which was to lead eventually to France's complete submission to British leadership."[16] This increasing French dependence on Britain was extremely complicated and, in the long run, unfortunate. During the inter-war period, France was fettered to Britain at a time when the two nations had different conceptions of how best to handle Germany. Almost all Frenchmen, who wanted British assistance in controlling Germany, considered an agreement with Britain--an alliance if possible--the essential

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[15]Simonds and Enemy, Great Powers, p. 567; Tabouis, Albion perfide, p. 206; Miquel, Poincaré, p. 473; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 298.

[16]Lewis B. Namier, Europe in Decay. A Study in Disintegration, 1936-1940 (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 5; Wolfers, Britain and France, p. 79.

element of their security. Believing that it needed British support, France was caught in a vicious circle, for it was in no position to bargain lest it antagonize the nation upon whom it was psychologically dependent. Moreover, when Britain compelled its ally to make concessions to Germany, each act of revisionism strengthened Germany and made France even more dependent upon Britain. During the 1930's, while Britain was disarming and encouraging France to follow suit, this dependence was to imperil the peace of Europe. Having failed in 1923 to enforce the Versailles Treaty independently of Britain, France refused thereafter to use force against Germany without British consent; in fact, France would take hardly any step without British approval. According to Gordon Wright, the Ruhr episode thus "marked the end of a really independent French policy in Europe; never again during the inter-war years was a French government willing to act on its own, in defiance, if necessary, of world opinion."[17]

The heritage of the Ruhr was one of the primary factors responsible for the French failure to stop Germany's overt challenges to the Versailles Treaty during the 1930's.

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[17]P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1954), p. 21; Wolfers, Britain and France, pp. 35, 76-77; Arthur H. Furnia, The Diplomacy of Appeasement: Anglo-French Relations and the Prelude to World War II, 1931-1938 (Washington: The University of Washington Press, 1960), pp. 388, 10; Namier, Europe in Decay, p. 5; Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times, 1760 to the Present (Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, 1960), p. 442.

When Germany began to disregard Treaty provisions with increasing frequency, no one was willing to use force, for Ruhr memories were too vivid. Between 1931 and 1934 those French leaders who tried to oppose Britain's revisionist policy were unsuccessful partly because most of their countrymen feared antagonizing Britain. Only a forceful effort similar to the Ruhr occupation could have prevented German rearmament, but not even Louis Barthou was willing to risk the rupture with Britain which such a move would entail. When Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland in 1936, France acquiesced because Premier Flandin's military advisers, who remembered that force had failed in 1923, knew that Britain would support no policy of sanctions and that French public opinion, which feared antagonizing Britain, would oppose any unilateral French action. Repeatedly, French leaders refused to take action against Germany because they believed that the Ruhr occupation had been a failure.[18] After 1923, therefore, no French government dared take independent military steps to force German compliance with the Treaty of Versailles.

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[18]Taylor, Second World War, p. 54; Furnia, Diplomacy of Appeasement, pp. 391-392, 394-395; F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 431; Paul A. Gagnon, France Since 1789 (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 346, 393-395; Wright, France, pp. 496-497.

CONCLUSION

From 1918 through 1923, British and French foreign policy tended to follow the traditions that had characterized it before 1914 in that Britain was motivated by a desire to protect its economic interests and maintain the balance of power on the Continent and France was motivated by the fear of its neighbor, Germany. In two fundamental ways the working out of these policies led almost inevitably to conflict between the former Allies. First, when Britain sought to revive the German economy, France became alarmed, for it wanted no powerful country on its eastern border; on the other hand, French efforts to extract large reparations payments from Germany and keep it weak irritated Britain. Second, Britain, apparently overlooking the fact that the efforts of all the Allies had been required to defeat Germany in World War I, concentrated its attention on preventing France--rather than potentially-strong Germany--from upsetting the balance of power; this, of course, increased the friction between the two victor nations and intensified France's basic sense of insecurity. Even though these basic differences had characterized the foreign policy of France and Britain since late 1918, several years of intense

disappointments, disagreements with Britain, and unsuccessful efforts to collect reparations were necessary to induce France to take and persist in independent action to force Germany to comply with the Treaty.

On four occasions in 1920 and 1921, France threatened to occupy additional German territory in order to compel observance of the Treaty. In April, 1920, it occupied five German towns without British approval, but withdrew when Britain protested; on the three remaining occasions, however, the British joined France in threatening Germany with occupation. Moreover, when Germany refused to accept the Paris Resolutions in March, 1921, both nations, along with Belgium, occupied the towns of Duisburg, Ruhrort, and Dusseldorf. France learned from these 1920-1921 events that the threat of a Ruhr occupation was a useful tool in making Germany fulfill the Treaty and that even if England refused to participate in coercive measures against Germany, it was unlikely to interfere with them.

Several factors were involved in Raymond Poincaré's decision to send French forces into the Ruhr in January, 1923. This anti-German, ultra-patriotic French nationalist had created such a public furor through speaking and journalism that he was trapped and had almost no alternative after the breakdown of the Paris Conference; furthermore, he remembered that Briand had fallen for appearing to make concessions to England and Germany. Although the official French notification to the German government declared that

France occupied the Ruhr in order to extract reparations payments from a defaulting debtor, political motives were, it seems, significant. The question of security, which was one of the most important political motives, was closely linked with that of reparations: because Britain failed to guarantee its security, France wanted to collect reparations in order to weaken Germany, to be able to exert some control upon its affairs, and to make it cede and acknowledge defeat.

Evidence indicates, however, that Poincaré inaccurately assessed the ease with which Germany could be forced to capitulate. Failing to anticipate the extent of German resistance to the MICUM's collection of reparations payments, he made inadequate preparations for the occupation; when the Germans resisted, the French government found it impossible to execute the operation effectively, and much of the loss of life came from bungling rather than purposeful slaughter. On the other hand, both German resistance and British opposition, which had stimulated French nationalism even further, made it impossible for Poincaré to halt the occupation. Even though French statements about the objects of the occupation became increasingly confused as Germany continued to resist, Poincaré refused to modify his stance on any of the basic questions and never wavered in the determination to procure a German surrender.

Contrary to French assertions, the British government did not encourage Germany to resist the invasion; in fact, the opposite was true. From the beginning of the occupation

British leaders and diplomats suggested that resistance was unwise and encouraged Germany to acknowledge defeat. In several instances, moreover, they compelled the Germans to acquiesce: among these were the insistence that Germany recognize Allied import and export licences and the demand that it accept the Godley-Payot railroad agreement. Rather than heed the advice to yield, the Germans, encouraged by Lord D'Abernon and the anti-French utterances of the British press, continued to hope for British intervention, and in trying to capitalize upon the Franco-British quarrel in order to elude Treaty obligations, they frequently paralyzed British efforts to aid them. Furthermore, the British government throughout the occupation failed to protest Franco-Belgian action and turned a deaf ear to most German complaints. Instead of placing obstacles in the path of the French invaders, it assisted them in several vital matters: after allowing French troops to cross the British zone at the beginning of the occupation, it also permitted them to collect customs and arrest recalcitrant Germans, and in late February and early March it facilitated their efforts by ceding the portion of territory containing the Gravenbroich-Duren railway and permitting a fixed daily number of French trains to traverse Cologne. Since continuation of the occupation might have been impossible without this assistance, the British government must assume a major portion of the responsibility for the Ruhr imbroglio.

Many factors explain British passivity. The most important of these in the early stages of the occupation was Bonar Law's declaration at the close of the Paris Conference: having said that Britain would do nothing to obstruct the French effort to collect reparations, the Prime Minister kept his promise and on several occasions prevented the Foreign Office from challenging French moves. In addition, Bonar Law and Baldwin, as well as other British leaders, believed that the country could not afford to isolate itself by breaking with France; because they realized the necessity of preserving the Entente, they hesitated to offend France by condemning and obstructing the occupation. Moreover, the range of potential British action was, in reality, quite limited. Britain lacked the military strength to force France out of the Ruhr, and not all British leaders believed that the war-weary British public would support or tolerate coercive measures against the war-time ally. Finally, although newspapers and diplomats complained of the disastrous economic results of the occupation, British imports and exports from January through July, 1923, had increased significantly from the figures for the first seven months of 1922--a fact which probably removed part of the financial sting from French action.

Several observers have asked why Britain failed to force French withdrawal by formally questioning the legality of the occupation in its early stages instead of waiting until August 11 and thus rendering the move ineffective.

As has been shown, the Foreign Office, which at first completely dodged the legality question by saying that France was acting outside of rather than violating the Treaty, waited until April to ask for a ruling by the Law Officers on the matter. Although a portion of the Law Officers' report indicated that French action was illegal, the British government delayed bringing up the matter with France primarily because it felt that the October, 1920, statement by Austen Chamberlain, along with earlier British threats to occupy the Ruhr and participation in the 1921 occupation, had compromised its legal position. The legal weapon was, therefore, useless.

During the occupation the aims of each country remained relatively constant. Even though Poincaré at first said that France entered the Ruhr to collect reparations and later said that it sought to create in Germany the will to pay, economic and political motives were intertwined and could not be separated. Evidence does indicate, however, that Poincaré had no territorial ambitions in the Ruhr. Repeatedly the President of the Council declared that France had no annexationist designs in the Ruhr, and it seems that he was sincere in those statements in spite of the desire of some French nationalists to detach the Rhineland from Germany. Although the British government was, as usual, interested in preserving a favorable balance of power on the Continent, during the course of the occupation it expressed much more concern about eliminating trade disruptions and

restoring Germany's purchasing power than about getting France out of the Ruhr and maintaining the balance of power.

Because of its own powerlessness, France's determination, and Germany's failure to cooperate, Britain was unable to bring an end to the conflict. Throughout the occupation, neither France nor Britain made any sincere attempt to understand and accept the other's point of view: although Curzon frequently criticized Poincaré's obstinacy and refusal to negotiate before the cessation of passive resistance, the British themselves were scarcely more pliable. During the first nine months of 1923 the diplomatic struggle among Britain, France, and Germany had shown the inefficacy of the policy of all three nations, none of which had been able to break the deadlock. Germany had prevented the occupation from being financially profitable for France but had impaired its economy and political structure in doing so, and Britain, which had indirectly encouraged German resistance, had been unable to prevent France from punishing Germany. Although France had disciplined Germany, it had been unable to extract a permanent settlement and was caught with no plan when passive resistance ended; Poincaré, who would probably have fallen from office in 1923 had he not initiated the occupation, was defeated at the polls in 1924 for having undertaken it. The occupation of the Ruhr, which marked the nadir of Anglo-French diplomatic relations between the wars, had, therefore, ended in the humiliation of the three countries most directly involved.

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APPENDIX I

NOTE ON DOCUMENTARY CITATIONS

The major documentary collection used in this study is part of the archives of the British Foreign Office housed in the Public Record Office in London. In all citations used here for the massive General Correspondence collection (FO 371), the number following the slash indicates the volume. The key to the final series of numbers which is used to identify the document (e.g., C 1508/313/18) is as follows: (1) the initial specifies the department of the Foreign Office (Central or Western) which dealt with the paper; (2) the first set of digits is the registry number assigned to the specific paper; (3) the center set of digits indicates the file number assigned on an annual basis to the topic with which the paper deals; and (4) the last set of digits is a permanent code to specify which country the paper refers to (e.g., 18 indicates Germany, and 17 France).

APPENDIX II

ANNEX II TO PART VIII OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

Paragraph 17

In case of default by Germany in the performance of any obligations under this part of the present Treaty, the Commission will forthwith give notice of such default to each of the Interested Powers and may make such recommendations as to action to be taken in consequence of such default as it may think necessary.

Paragraph 18

The measures which the Allied and Associated Powers shall have the right to take in the case of voluntary default by Germany, and which Germany agrees not to regard as acts of war, may include economic and financial prohibitions and reprisals and in general such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances.

APPENDIX III

A PARTIAL LIST OF DIPLOMATIC, POLITICAL, AND MILITARY PERSONNEL TO WHOM REFERENCE IS MADE

Louis Barthou	French delegate to the Reparation Commission
J. C. Sterndale Bennett	Foreign Office Third Secretary
Sir John Bradbury	British delegate to the Reparation Commission
Alexander Cadogan	Foreign Office First Secretary
Monsieur Coste	Inspector General of Mines; later head of MICUM
Lord Crewe	British Ambassador to France
Sir Eyre Crowe	Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Wilhelm Cuno	German Chancellor
Lord Derby	Secretary of State for War
Lord D'Abernon	British Ambassador to Germany
Duke of Devonshire	Secretary of State for Colonies
General Degoutte	Commander of French Army of the Rhine
Dufour-Feronce	Counsellor of the German Embassy in London

Sir Auckland Geddes	British Ambassador to the United States
Captain W. C. H. M. Georgi	Technical Adviser on railways to British High Commissioner, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission
General Alex J. Godley	General Officer in Command of the British Army of the Rhine
Sir George Grahame	British Ambassador to Belgium
Sir Somerville Head	British Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin
Jean Herbette	Foreign affairs expert for Le Temps
C. J. B. Hurst	Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office
T. W. H. Inskip	British Solicitor-General
Lord Kilmarnock	British High Commissioner, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission
Miles W. Lampson	Foreign Office Counsellor
R. C. Lindsay	Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Pierre de Margerie	French Ambassador to Germany
Sir Charles Marling	Minister Plenipotentiary at the Hague
Monsieur de Montille	Counsellor of the French Embassy in London
General Payot	French Quarter Master General on the Rhine
Peretti de la Rocca	Director of Political and Commercial Affairs of the Quai d'Orsay

Pertinax [André Géraud]	Foreign affairs expert of L'Écho de Paris
Eric Phipps	British Chargé d'Affaires in Paris
Julian Piggott	Cologne Commissioner, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission
Comte de Saint-Aulaire	French Ambassador to England
Jacques Seydoux	Director of Commercial Relations section of the Political and Commercial Affairs division of the Quai d'Orsay
Edward W. Thurstan	British Consul-General at Cologne
Paul Tirard	President, Inter-Allied Rhineland High Commission
Yves le Trocquer	Minister of Public Works
Sir William Tyrrell	Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Robert Vansittart	Private Secretary to Lord Curzon
Ralph F. Wigram	Foreign Office Second Secretary
J. Fischer Williams	Legal Adviser to the British Representative on the Reparation Commission

APPENDIX IV

NOTE ON FRENCH NEWSPAPERS

French newspapers surveyed in this study include the entire political spectrum with the exception of extreme right and left. Each of the French daily newspapers consisted of from four to eight pages of much smaller size than British newspapers. There was relatively little advertising, and the papers were virtually devoid of pictures and cartoons. Most of them except Le Temps had become somewhat "Americanized" in that they devoted quite a bit of space to mass-appeal material such as accounts of murders and social events, household tips, and the theatre. All of them were patriotic and carried much political news; furthermore, as Frederick L. Schuman noted, French newspapers were marked by "such a constant mingling of fact and comment that all pretension of a separation between news and editorial interpretation vanishes."[1]

L'Oeuvre and L'Ère Nouvelle, the organs of the Bloc des Gauches, had a small circulation. The former was,

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[1]Frederick Lewis Schuman, War and Diplomacy in the French Republic. An Inquiry into Political Motivations and the Control of Foreign Policy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1931), p. 374.

according to Raymond Manévy, a quality paper which, although it criticized government policy, was not anti-Parliamentary and was the most important opposition organ. The British felt that it represented moderate French liberalism.[2]

Le Temps and Le Journal des Débats were considered journals of the center. Le Temps, with a circulation of only about 65,000 in 1931, was the most influential paper in France and the recognized organ of the Quai d'Orsay. After World War I, it continued its serious approach and the old format and had extensive foreign affairs coverage. Le Journal des Débats, founded in 1789, was also influential and was less chauvinistic than Le Temps.[3]

Both Le Matin and Le Petit Parisien were basically non-partisan papers with a large circulation. They had shorter, more sensational articles and easy-to-read editorials. Le Matin had the reputation of being strong on foreign policy coverage and was considered a leading diplomatic paper. Jules Sauerwein, its foreign affairs expert, was supposed to be in close contact with Poincaré during the time of the Ruhr occupation.[4]

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[2]Raymond Manévy, La presse de la IIIè République (Paris: J. Foret Éditeur, 1955), p. 166; Raymond Manévy, Histoire de la presse (1914-1939) (Paris: Éditions Correa & Cie., 1945), p. 50; Daily Telegraph, July 13, 1923, p. 10.

[3]Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 375; Manévy, Histoire, pp. 7, 125, 168; Manévy, Presse, p. 213.

[4]Manévy, Histoire, pp. 7, 150, 167; Crewe to FO, No. 564, June 6, 1923, FO 371/8638, C 9870/1/18.

L'Écho de Paris was a journal of the right which reflected moderate conservative opinion. Addressed to the conservative, Catholic bourgeoisie, well-written, and having a circulation of approximately 200,000 in 1931, it was extremely nationalistic.[5] Throughout 1923 it was more anti-German than anti-British and constantly attacked Germany for its failure to execute the Versailles Treaty.

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[5]Manévy, Histoire, pp. 7, 8, 155, 167-168; Schuman, War and Diplomacy, p. 375.