The Question of French Security
in British Policy towards France and Germany,
1918-1925

A thesis submitted by
Michael Anthony Laffan
of Trinity Hall

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Acknowledgments.

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Preface.

This thesis is based mainly on British cabinet, Foreign Office and private papers, and also on German documents and on secondary sources (see the bibliography). The French papers relevant to my work were opened to research only last January, when I had written all but the second half of the last chapter, and so they have not been consulted. This gap has been filled to some extent by use of the French parliamentary debates, Livres Jaunes, memoirs, British, German, Belgian and American accounts and by secondary sources.

In certain instances capital letters at the beginning of quotations have been altered to lower case.

The length of the thesis, including the appendix, is approximately 79,000 words.

It is entirely my own work.

Michael Laffan
26 vi. 1973
Abbreviations.

The following abbreviations have been used in the thesis:

- **AA**  Auswärtiges Amt, Bonn.
- **BA**  Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- **D.B.F.P.**  Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939.
- **D.D.B.**  Documents Diplomatiques Belges.
- **D.D.F.**  Documents Diplomatiques Français.
- **RM.**  Büro des Reichsministers.
- **S.I.A.**  Survey of International Affairs.
- **SS.**  Büro des Staatssekretärs.

Neville Chamberlain is not mentioned in the thesis. "Chamberlain" refers invariably to Austen.
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Introduction.

From 1918 to 1925 the question of French security was one of the main problems in European politics and diplomacy.

France's position after the armistice was a curious one; "she was a victor, but she had in many ways the psychology of a defeated nation".1 She was haunted by insecurity, by awareness that her strength, her near-predominance in Europe, was an unnatural phenomenon based not on her own capacities or resources but on Germany's weakness. She expected that this weakness would be transitory, that Germany would seek to undo her defeat, to recover her losses, and to end France's artificial supremacy. In the peace negotiations and throughout the following years she tried to formalize and perpetuate the result of the war, to keep Germany poor, divided and isolated.

The collapse of the Central Powers in October-November 1918 was so sudden and unexpected that most Germans refused to accept the finality of their defeat, and the Treaty of Versailles, far harsher than they had anticipated, strengthened their opposition to the new status quo and further deterred them from cooperating with the allies.2 Germany's revisionism was to be a more deep-rooted and durable phenomenon than that of France after 1871,3 but it was to be directed against Poland, and she had no serious designs on France. Germany's defeat had taken place only on the Western front, and at the end of

1 Brogan, The Development of Modern France, p. 543. Toynbee saw the French position as one of "uncertain strength and latent weakness" (Survey of International Affairs (S.I.A.), 1920-23, p. 59), and Maxelon described the postwar situation as one in which "Deutschland hatte zwar den Krieg unbezweifelbar verloren, Frankreich ihn aber nicht so unbezweifelbar gewonnen" (Stresemann und Frankreich, p. 84).

2 One form of cooperation desired by Brockdorff-Rantzau and Groener, the two chief architects of German foreign policy in the first half of 1919, was combined action with the allies against Russia (cabinet minutes, 24 April 1919, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Das Kabinett Scheidemann, pp. 218, 221). This policy was not accepted by the government, but it was a view widely held in Germany - and also by Winston Churchill.

3 German revanchism began early after the defeat of 1918; already by June 1919 there was a military plan for the destruction of Poland (Schüddäekopf, German Foreign Policy from Compiègne to Versailles, Journal of Contemporary History, iv (1959), p. 185).
the war she was still in possession of all Poland and vast areas of Russia; yet almost all the territorial losses imposed by the Treaty of Versailles were in the East. At the beginning of the Peace Conference the Polish foreign minister warned the Council of Ten that Germany was like the god Janus, she "had one face towards the West, where she had made peace, and the other face towards the East, where she was organising for war".¹ The history of German revanchism in the 1920s and 1930s was to vindicate this prophecy.

Nonetheless, while France's policy of containing Germany included the strengthening of Poland and the other East European states which might fall victim to German aggression, her main fear, wrongly but naturally, was for her own safety. The form which her insecurity took was a profound dread of a repetition of August 1914, of a new German invasion of Northern France, and a new destruction of Flanders and Picardy. French public opinion foresaw this less as a possible by-product of Eastern European quarrels than as the consequence of a direct Franco-German conflict. It was this misguided or misplaced apprehension which was to condition much of her inter-war policy.

Britain's situation was utterly different. She had entered the war as a satisfied and defensive power, and to all appearances she emerged from it with her position considerably improved. The two main threats to Empire security, the German fleet and the Russian designs on Constantinople, had been removed, and in 1919 her influence was probably greater than ever before or since; Curzon could claim with some justification that "the British Flag never flew over a more powerful or a more united Empire than now...Never did our voice count for more in the councils of the nations, or in determining the future destinies of mankind".²

British policy towards Germany was based on the conviction that, in the short run at least, she was no longer dangerous, and that the moderate, democratic governments in power should

¹ Speech by Dmowski, Council of Ten minutes, 29 Jan. 1919, United States Department of State, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Paris Peace Conference (P.P.C.), III, p. 775.  
² Hansard, 58., HL, 32, col. 162 (18 Nov. 1918).
be strengthened against their conservative and militarist opponents by allied friendship and concessions. All elements in Britain recognized that Germany's economic recovery was essential to the resumption of trade and so to their own prosperity, and German unity was viewed as a necessary precondition to the stability of Europe. From an early stage in the Peace Conference she adopted a policy of appeasing Germany, a policy summed up in Lloyd George's Fontainbleau Memorandum of March 1919. 1 Magnanimity coincided with self-interest.

Britain's constant desire for general stability, prosperity and contentment was thwarted by France's oppressive policy and by her sabotage of Britain's concessions to Germany. If Germany were to be appeased, and if Britain were to achieve her principal objectives in Western Europe, she would first have to appease France, to remove her reasons for obstructing a moderate, conciliatory policy towards Germany. The road to Berlin lay through Paris.

This was generally recognized in London. At all levels, from that of the prime minister down to that of the Foreign Office clerks, the conduct of British foreign policy was guided by an impressive analysis of Britain's interests and problems, of her likely future relations with France and Germany, and of these countries' relations with each other. The necessity of wooing France from her intransient anti-Germanism was appreciated fully. Yet despite this awareness,

1 The word "appeasement" was already in frequent use in the early 1920s. In 1920 Keynes defended his "advocacy of appeasement and mediation" towards Germany (letter to the National Review, June 1920, quoted in Mantoux, The Carthaginian Peace, p. 13); in 1925 Balfour told the Lords that he felt the British people and their postwar governments "have always been anxious for appeasement" (Hansard, 5e., HL, 62, col. 838 (24 Nov. 1925); St. Aulaire, the French ambassador in London, told Balfour, and Lord Robert Cecil told the French president that German entry into the League of Nations would be a measure of appeasement (memorandum by Balfour, 1 Aug. 1922, F.0.371/9820, C2072/2072/18, annex; Cecil to Baldwin, 4 July 1923, describing a conversation with Millerand, Baldwin papers, 127). The term was even used with reference to Russia. Before the Cannes Conference, when Lloyd George wanted to reach an agreement with Russia, Chamberlain wrote to him telling him "your policy of appeasement is clearly right" (25 March 1922, Chamberlain papers, AC 23/6/22).
successive British governments were not prepared to make any serious concessions to France.

The most obvious and the most important way of appeasing the French, one acutely relevant to their fears of German aggression in the future, was the conclusion of a treaty guaranteeing British assistance in the event of their being attacked.

During the Peace Conference Lloyd George offered Clemenceau such a guarantee pact, but even though the French made a form of prepayment by abandoning their demand that the Rhineland be detached from the rest of Germany, Britain skilfully ensured that her guarantee would be linked to one promised by the United States and so was freed from her commitment when the American pact fell through. France was left feeling that she had no worthwhile form of security, and one natural result was an intensification of Anglo-French disputes over Germany, leading ultimately to the near-rupture of 1923.

Between 1920 and 1925 there were innumerable discussions on the security question in the British cabinet and Foreign Office in which the desirability, even the necessity of concluding a guarantee pact was generally recognized. Only thus, it was felt, could France be induced to treat Germany in a manner congenial to British interests.

Yet when France revived the question, before and during the Conference of Cannes in 1922, Britain again evaded reaching agreement on a treaty with her, this time by imposing terms which were unrealistically high. During these years Britain offered a guarantee pact only once, at the height of the Ruhr conflict, the one time when such a solution was least appropriate to France's mood and needs.

The occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 was an attempt to crush Germany's resistance to the Treaty of Versailles, it was an alternative solution to the security question, and when it failed France renewed her demands for a British guarantee with even greater insistence than she had shown in 1922. Chamberlain, who had succeeded Curzon at the Foreign Office after the brief MacDonald interregnum, together with his senior officials, was anxious to give it to her, but after a series of discussions on the matter the isolationist wing of the cabinet triumphed and in March 1925 the proposal was rejected.
Less than eight months after this decision was taken Britain signed the Locarno Treaty, a security pact of a quite different kind in which Germany featured as a partner rather than as the presumed opponent. This provided France with a less satisfactory guarantee than she would have received under the 1919 or 1922 pacts, and in particular it did not perpetuate the wartime anti-German alliance, but it was enough to allow her in turn to make concessions to Germany.

The Locarno Treaty ended seven years of Anglo-Franco-German conflicts and tensions and misunderstandings, it solved the security question, at least for the time being, and it resulted in a marked, though temporary, improvement in the relations between the three countries. In many respects Britain found it an ideal solution. Yet until a very late stage she had hindered rather than helped such a development, and she had almost to be forced into accepting a system which she soon found so much to her liking.¹

Britain was ready to appease Germany, not only because it was in her long-term interests to do so, but because little real sacrifice was involved. She was prepared to see Germany regain Silesia, reestablish her economic hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe and even obtain changes in her frontier with Poland. But she had little or no interest in Eastern Europe and regularly and ostentatiously washed her hands of responsibility for the area. It was easy for her to adopt a moderate and broad-minded reparations policy because, from an early stage, she had no great expectations concerning the payments which Germany could or would make.

Appeasement of France was quite another matter. If Britain were to guarantee French security she would have to abandon her traditional detachment from European affairs, and this

¹ The 1925 negotiations began as a panicky reaction to a short-term crisis in Anglo-Franco-German relations rather than a serious attempt to solve the security question. One important ingredient of their success was the fruitful combination of the foreign secretary's determination to force an Anglo-French alliance on his reluctant cabinet colleagues, and the Germanophile intrigues of the British ambassador in Berlin who tried to prevent such an alliance (see below, pp. 204-35). The ambassador, D'Abernon, did more than anyone else to force Britain into negotiating the Locarno Treaty.
would be a genuine sacrifice. So even though in theory she accepted the commitment which a guarantee pact would involve as a lesser evil than the alternative, than the economic and political consequences of continued Franco-German hostility, in practice British governments were most reluctant to guarantee French security. Furthermore, long-term estimates of Britain's advantage were often subordinated to short-term gains, with the result that she often charged, or wanted to charge, a higher price for the guarantee treaty than France was prepared to pay.  

The predominant theme in Britain's European policy, and especially in her policy towards the security question, is the divorce between theory and practice, between strategy and tactics, between the knowledge that it would be in her own interest to appease France by concluding a guarantee pact with her, and reluctance to commit herself in this way.

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1 Britain's tactics were unwise, but this is not to suggest that France's policy was any better. Her governments were often equally blind to their own real interests and pursued equally ambivalent or inconsistent policies. Since this study is concerned primarily with British foreign policy, French and German follies are not emphasized to the same extent. And, with the exception of Britain's awareness of likely future developments in Europe, the makers and practitioners of foreign policy in the 1920s demonstrated considerably more folly than wisdom.

At the Peace Conference Britain and France elaborated and began to implement their differing policies towards Europe in general and towards Germany in particular. While American influence was decisive in Eastern Europe and the Adriatic, Lloyd George and Clemenceau were the major protagonists in determining the shape of the peace with Germany. They worked out their rival strategies and improvised their tactics, they manoeuvred for position, and they fought the opening battles of what was to prove a long-lasting campaign. To a large extent Anglo-Franco-German relations in the 1920s and 1930s were conditioned by the results of these negotiations.

British public opinion, reflected and encouraged by many politicians in their election speeches, demanded that Germany be treated harshly, that she be "squeezed till the pips squeak". Up to a point the Empire delegates at the Peace Conference shared this view. They fully intended to get a substantial share of Germany's reparations payments, of her commercial and battle fleets, of her colonies, and of other spoils and compensations. They were no less determined than their allies that Germany's armaments should be confiscated or destroyed and that her army should be limited drastically. It was General Smuts who proposed that war pensions be included in the reparations figures, thereby raising considerably the total payments due. Even Lloyd George, who during the conference and throughout the years which followed fought hardest to limit reparations, could say that the best safeguard against the possibility that the Germans would raise and maintain a large conscript army lay in the imposition of a huge indemnity which would prevent them from spending money in this way.

1 However such assurances were soon regretted, and Hankey wrote to Thomas Jones on 5 March that he was afraid the election promises would be "like a millstone round our neck" (Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 81).

2 This move was directed against France, not Germany. It was intended to increase the British share of reparations at the expense of the French, but its effect was raise the total burden and add to Germany's despondency. A Foreign Office memorandum written in 1922 admitted that Britain was in some measure to blame for the excessive reparations burden (memorandum by Sydney Waterlow, a first secretary in the Central Department, 9 May 1922, F.O. 371/7567, 66875/6200/18).

3 War cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1919, Cab. 23/15, Cab. 541A.
But the general opinion in governing circles was that Germany should be rendered incapable of further aggression, not destroyed: as Balfour remarked at a cabinet meeting shortly before the armistice, "I don't want to go beyond making Germany impotent to renew the war, and obtaining compensation. I don't want to trample her in the mud". Britain had no significant war aims on the European continent beyond obtaining her share of reparations and returning to a slightly modified status quo ante; she wanted as little commitment and responsibility as possible, and much of her delegation's activity at Paris was directed towards this end.

On the whole the Americans shared the British attitude even though Wilson was more moralistic and more vengeful than Lloyd George, and the president summed up the British view as well as his own when he told Clemenceau that the allies did not want and would not be able to destroy their former enemy, that their greatest mistake would be to give her good reasons for seeking revenge. Excessively hard terms would be a certain cause of future war.

Both delegations were impressed, even bewildered, by the extent to which the French policy towards Germany differed from theirs. Convinced that Germany was "unchanged and unchangeable", the French dreaded a German recovery and expected it to be followed promptly by a war of revenge. During the conference Col. House remarked that the French were preoccupied with only one idea, that of obtaining military protection, and Henry White wrote from Paris that it was impossible to understand "the extraordinary obsession felt in this country lest Germany within the next few years repeat the actions which she took in 1914". Frenchmen's hatred of Germany also

1 Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 69 (15 Oct. 1918).
2 General British policy towards France and Germany will be discussed at greater length at the beginning of chap. 2. Here it is discussed with particular reference to the Peace Conference.
3 Mantoux, Les Délibérations du Conseil de Quatre (Délibérations) i, p. 41 (27 March 1919).
4 Curzon to Derby, ambassador in Paris, 2 April 1919, relating Cambon's remarks to him (F.O.608/124, 2016/448/2/4).
6 White to Elihu Root, 19 March 1919, quoted in Nevins, Henry White, Thirty Years of American Diplomacy, p. 411. The same day Lloyd George's mistress wrote that the French were terrified of a repetition of 1914, that they could not really believe that Germany had been defeated (Stevenson, Lloyd George, p. 174).
amazed the British, and at a war cabinet meeting Churchill described it as "something more than human", while Lloyd George regarded it as "inconceivable" and "savage" — though he added that the existence of the devastated areas made it understandable.¹

France felt little confidence that she would win the next round. Her material losses had been considerably greater than those of her allies, her future position seemed far less secure, and she was haunted by the memory of her recent ordeal and of how close she had come to defeat. Germany's population was already 50% greater than hers, the difference had increased steadily since 1871, and it was expected to increase yet further in the years ahead.² She was aware that the result of the war had been a fluke in which the two greatest powers in Europe had both been defeated, and that they would have to be held down and the settlement enforced by the third and fourth ranking powers, with the assistance, soon shown to be temporary, of the United States. The Germans had damaged or destroyed most of France's industrial regions while their own remained intact. Germany's relative strategic position had improved with the fall of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires and their replacement by a power vacuum to the East, a vacuum which she could — and was to — use to her advantage once she had recovered her military strength. Clemenceau himself admitted that in many ways France had won a Pyrrhic victory, and that Germany would soon again be stronger than her demographically, industrially, commercially and financially.³

According to a report prepared by the French general staff at the beginning of 1919, the French public had mixed feelings about how Germany should be treated: "it is divided between the wish to see the collapse of the enemy's formidable system of government, and the anxiety to preserve a Germany capable of concluding a remunerative peace".⁴ Lloyd George was later

¹ Minutes of British Empire Delegation, 1 June 1919, F.0.374/22, pp. 230, 242, meeting no. 34.
² Clemenceau gave the figures as 40 and 65 millions (Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, p. 403). In a debate on the ratification of the Treaty he emphasized the necessity of a high birth-rate; without large families, France would be lost (Débats Parlementaires, Sénat, 11 Oct. 1919, pp. 1625-26).
³ Interview, 10 Feb. 1919, quoted in Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking, p. 647.
⁴ Bulletin Confidentiel résument la situation morale de l'Intérieur, quoted in Miquel, La Paix de Versailles et l'Opinion Publique Française, p. 426.
to remark that the French could never make up their minds whether they preferred reparations payments or the enjoyment of trampling on Germany, and that they could not have both.\textsuperscript{1} But the French delegates at the Peace Conference saw things differently, and for them it was not such a neat "either/or" situation. With an over-simple view of economics, they sought to extract sufficient reparations to rebuild as much as possible of France's industrial base, and they hoped that by removing weight from one side of the scales to the other, Germany would be weakened correspondingly. They felt that they were bound to win; even if they could not strengthen themselves while crippling Germany, they could at least be confident of achieving the latter object. Headlam-Morley, the historical adviser of the Foreign Office, later summed up the general British reaction to French reparations demands when he wrote that they wanted German obligations to be such that she could not fulfil them.\textsuperscript{2}

Economic and political goals interconnected and reinforced each other, but politics was always predominant and the possibility of acquiring more reparations was subordinated to the possibility of obtaining more security.\textsuperscript{3} Even though France's economic recovery could best be assured by reparations from a united Germany, one of her aims at the Peace Conference was to undo the unification of 1871. Naturally this aim was opposed fiercely by Britain.

The other side of France's policy was the wish to retain the anti-German coalition, the intention, as Clemenceau put it, that there should be "no separation in peace of the powers which have battled side by side".\textsuperscript{4} She realized how dependent she had been on the support of her allies, without whose help she would have been crushed and without whose continued assistance she expected her position to be undermined should the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1} D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace, i, pp. 127-28 (diary, 1 March 1921).
\textsuperscript{2} Memorandum on French Policy concerning the Rhineland at the Peace Conference, 22 Aug. 1922, F.O.371/7251, C11429/326/18.
\textsuperscript{3} There is an interesting and significant exception. The enormous losses sustained by the French bourgeoisie when its investments in Russia were confiscated after the revolution made it politically impossible for any French government to seek an alliance with Soviet Russia; the collapse of the 1894 alliance was one of the main contributing factors to the security question.
\end{footnotesize}
policy of dismemberment prove unsuccessful. Naturally all Frenchmen wanted the best of both worlds, to retain the friendship of Britain and America while at the same time grinding down Germany so that she could never again become a great military power. The two aims proved to be incompatible.

As France had feared, her allies' wartime zeal diminished rapidly when peace came, and differences in the attitudes and objectives of the victorious powers soon became apparent. Far away, less vulnerable and without the same industrial and demographical discrepancy vis-à-vis their former enemy, Britain and America could hope that Germany was changeable, and that the new pattern of power could be preserved without too much effort and inconvenience. They felt secure, and could afford to think in economic terms; France did not, and was obliged to think primarily in political and military terms.

The French tried to make their partners understand their reasoning even if they could not make them share it. Clemenceau summed up their predicament when he argued at a meeting of the Council of Four that "Germany no longer has her fleet. We need an equivalent on land...America is far away, shielded by the Atlantic. Even Napoleon could not strike at England. Both of you are protected; we are not." But Lloyd George and Wilson were unresponsive. After expressing his own and Balfour's sympathy for her situation House concluded that "the only hope France has for the future is the League of Nations and the spirit we hope to bring about through it", and Lloyd George told a meeting of his cabinet that "what we would say to the French was that we were relying on two things; first, the disarmament of Germany; and second, the League of Nations". This was cold comfort indeed.

Britain tried to retain her close links with France and to cooperate with her as far as possible, but she was not prepared to make any major concessions in order to reinforce the Entente. These included giving to her more than a small proportion of the former German colonies and Ottoman territories, or, more importantly, allowing her to damage Germany to such an extent that she would be unable to provide a market

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1 Mantoux, Délégations, i, p. 45 (27 March 1919).
3 War cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1919, Cab.23/15, Cab.541A.
for British exports. The French could not go beyond a certain point in their harsh treatment of Germany without alienating their ally, a point which they were to reach in 1920 and to pass in 1923. The mutual sympathy between the two countries was soon put under strain by a basic clash of interests, and France found affection a poor substitute for understanding.

The French Right wing, the most powerful and vocal members of which were President Poincaré and Marshal Foch, was not unduly perturbed by this. While desiring both forms of security it took the continuation of an effective alliance with America and Britain for granted and it assumed that, whatever might be the case with the United States, self-interest would compel Britain at least to come to France's assistance in the event of a German attack, even if, by her oppressive treatment, she had provoked the very aggression which she feared. Throughout the Peace Conference and the first post-war years the French Right urged severity, undeterred by whatever effect it might have on the allies. In 1923 Poincaré attempted to implement such a policy, but until then France vacillated between the two courses, emphasizing now one, now the other. In 1919 policy was decided by Clemenceau, who fought fiercely to combine both elements as satisfactorily as he could but who was prepared, in the last resort and after much hard bargaining, to sacrifice many of his specific objectives in order to maintain the friendship of Britain and the United States.¹

There were many disputes between the allied leaders during the Peace Conference, over Russian participation, Syria, the Adriatic, Poland, and reparations, but the most serious was that between Lloyd George and Clemenceau over the future status of the Rhineland. It took months of hard, though intermittent, negotiations before they were able to agree on the terms of a compromise, and these discussions formed one of the most important aspects of the peacemaking of 1919. They were held in private, either at official meetings of the Council of Four (in Orlando's absence) or in informal gatherings of two leaders.

¹ On 4 Feb. 1919, long before there was any question of a formal alliance between Britain, France and the United States, Paul Cambon wrote to his son that "Clemenceau veut tout sacrifier au maintien de l'alliance avec les Américains et pour cela il nous met en état de domestique" (Correspondance, iii, p. 304).
or more of a small group consisting of the three leaders and their three grey eminences, Philip Kerr, André Tardieu and Colonel House. Much to their resentment, all three foreign ministers and their officials were excluded.¹

Early in 1917, only weeks before the revolution, France had come to an agreement with the Czarist government according to which Russia would acquiesce in the separation of the Rhineland from Germany in return for French support for her designs on Constantinople. But no serious attempt was made to win British consent, and after the collapse of the Russian monarchy the plan was abandoned in mid-1917.² It remained in cold storage until Germany's defeat made such grandiose war aims more realistic and feasible. It was then revived, and in 1919 virtually all the important elements making up French public opinion agreed in demanding that the area be separated from Germany, and they disagreed only over the closeness of the links connecting it with Germany or with France.

Foch was the chief protagonist of Rhineland separation. In December 1918 he had insisted that a barrier of neutral states on the left bank of the Rhine would be useless and that Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and the Rhineland should be formed into an alliance under British, French and Belgian leadership,³ although later he modified his views and explained that while henceforth the Rhine was to be Germany's Western frontier, and while she was to be deprived of all

¹ According to House, Sir William Tyrrell of the British delegation had an interview with Clemenceau in which he criticized the French prime minister for trying to reach an understanding with Lloyd George rather than with Wilson. He commented that the "revolt" — an exaggerated term — against Lloyd George started with Balfour and ran down through the whole delegation with the exception of the prime minister's immediate secretariat (Diary, xv, p. 139 (5 April 1919), quoted in Nelson, Land and Power, p. 237). Hardinge, the permanent under-secretary of the Foreign Office, complained to Cambon that Lloyd George never told Balfour of his plans (Cambon to Fleuriau, 14 Jan. 1919, describing a conversation with Hardinge, Correspondances, iii, p. 296). Curzon was appalled at the conduct of the negotiations.


sovereignty over the left bank, he did not wish to annex the
region to France, but rather to set up new, autonomous states. 1
As late as the plenary session of the Conference on 6 May, the
day before the allied terms were handed over to the Germans,
he declared that to be master of the Rhine meant to be master
of all Germany, and not to be on the Rhine risked losing every­
thing. 2 Poincaré, who schemed and campaigned single-mindedly
to stiffen the peace terms, demanded that the Rhineland remain
occupied until Germany had paid her reparations in full. 3
Clemenceau shared these views, if somewhat less vehemently,
and he did his best to win over the allies. 4 Britain resisted
such demands from the outset - as Lloyd George and several
others put it, they wanted to create no new Alsace-Lorraines,
and wanted to avoid replacing a German injustice in 1871 with
a French injustice in 1919.

During the first weeks of the conference France pressed
her claims, Britain and the United States rejected them, and
both sides tried to assess the other's determination. At the
end of February Tardieu submitted a lengthy memorandum in
which he outlined the basis of French policy. 5 After explain­
ing France's insecure position and claiming that German
disarmament and the League of Nations could not provide her
with adequate guarantees of security, he reached three main

1 Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty, p. 146 (10 Jan., 1919).
Among the reasons Foch gave for such a step were Germany's
material and moral situation and her numerical superiority.
2 P.P.C., iii, p. 386. Foch illustrated French ambitions at
their most extreme when, after the Peace Conference, he
recommended that the allies should restore the German Confed­
eration as it had existed before 1866 (Sir H. Stuart
(Koblenz) to Curzon, 12 March 1920, describing a conversation
with Foch, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939
(D.B.F.P.), I, ix, p. 132, 185391/185391/1150/RH.
3 Poincaré to Clemenceau, 28 April 1919, quoted in Lloyd
George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, pp. 427-32.
4 Ten years later he claimed that the demand for Rhineland
separation had been an extreme position from which he was
prepared to retreat in return for British and American
concessions (Martet, Le Silence de M. Clemenceau (1929),
quoted by D. R. Watson in Waites (ed.), Troubled Neighbours,
pp. 96, 92, n. 27). Early in 1919 Balfour wrote a memor­
andum in which he concluded that while the French were
acutely aware of the danger they would run if the Rhine
were not Germany's military frontier, they would be ready
to make concessions on Rhineland neutralization to placate
British and American opinion (25 Feb. 1919, Balfour papers,
B.M., Add. MS 49750).
5 Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty, pp. 147-167; summar­
ized, pp. 778-80.
conclusions: the left bank and the bridges across the Rhine were to be occupied by the allies; the Rhine was to be Germany's Western frontier; and no German territory was to be annexed, but the area on the left bank should form one or more independent states. Among many other points he argued that the Rhinelanders were different from other Germans, they were anti-Prussian, and they would not object strongly to an allied presence. He prophesied the events of 1938-39 when he warned that if Germany remained on the Rhine she could block any assistance which the allies might send to the new states on Germany's Eastern frontier if they were attacked, while if Britain and France had troops on the river they could easily go to the assistance of their protégés, and he even used the example of German aggression against the republics of Poland and Bohemia. 1

This memorandum was discussed at two meetings of the British cabinet, and the exceptionally complete record of the conversations which ensued reveal the extent of its members' uncertainty and confusion. 2 Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain and others intervened occasionally, but the main contributors were the three ministers who were to concern themselves most with foreign policy during the next few years, Lloyd George, Curzon and Churchill.

At these meetings Lloyd George admitted or pretended that his own mind was not yet made up on the question of Rhineland separation, but while he was ready to support France in the West, he would not condone any injustices similar to the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. 3 He was detached from the passions of the moment, and was philosophical about long-term developments; there would be no war for twenty years or more, and the distant future might well see a re-shuffling of alliances. (This time-schedule of twenty years was unusually pessimistic and accurate - most estimates were more optimistic and illusory) His outlook was far removed from that of men like Clemenceau, Foch and Poincaré.

1 Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty, pp. 153, 163.
2 War cabinet conclusions, 28 Feb. & 4 March 1919, Cab.23/15, Cab.538A & Cab.541A.
3 Yet Jones noted that at this cabinet meeting the dominant note was that Britain "should do all that is possible to please France in the West in order that we should be left alone by her in the East" (Whitehall Diary, i, p. 80 (28 Feb. 1919).
After Curzon had referred to Clemenceau's wish for a buffer state on the Rhine with its neutrality guaranteed by the great powers, the prime minister said that France would be satisfied if Britain and the United States were to guarantee her against invasion, but that such a solution would be impossible since Wilson rejected all entangling alliances of this kind and put his faith solely in the League of Nations.¹ This was the first mention of the guarantee treaty which, despite Lloyd George's pessimism about its prospects, was to become the basis of the security discussions only ten days later.

Curzon, always more interested in faraway lands than in his European neighbours, advocated an all-round settlement of differences with France, and mentioned specifically disputes in Morocco and India. (In the course of his five years at the Foreign Office he was to recommend such a policy time and time again.) He urged that Britain support France's claims in Germany with the aim of diverting the French from their colonial interests, and found it extraordinary that "while they were imploring their allies to protect them, they should unfold the most ambitious projects all over the world without realizing that these ambitions must estrange those who had been associated with her in the war".² He felt that it would suit Britain to have the German frontier pushed back to the Rhine, but argued on the other hand that a separate Rhineland state would be impossible from the European point of view, and that in any case it would be no more than a temporary solution since the region would move inexorably towards either reunification with Germany or annexation by France.³ A permanent

¹ The record of Lloyd George's remark is ambiguous, and could imply either that he felt it was impossible for Britain to guarantee France without American participation, or that France would be dissatisfied with only a British guarantee. The first interpretation would seem more likely. After this meeting Curzon wrote that the difficulty would be to get Wilson to agree to anything which would violate his Fourteen Points. (to Hardinge, 4 March 1919, Curzon papers, F.0.800/150).

² Curzon found this question of France estranging Britain while yet seeking her assistance a topic of recurring fascination and resentment. However another reason which he gave for wanting an all-round settlement was the wish to be able to approach the German question with a "clean slate".

³ He still considered its establishment at least possible, for later that day he wrote to Hardinge that "some steps might have to be taken to depriving the suggested buffer state, if it be created, of any military value to the enemy" (4 March 1919, Curzon papers, F.0.800/150).
British force on the Rhine he dismissed as intolerable.\(^1\) Curzon wondered about but failed to suggest any alternative methods of giving France the security she sought once occupation of the bridgeheads was rejected.

Churchill urged the cabinet to sympathize with France so that she might be more accommodating in her Eastern policy and so that Britain might be able to influence her to treat Germany with greater mercy. He appreciated the French need for security, suggested that Britain meet it at least to the extent of constructing a channel tunnel, and accepted the idea of a buffer state, but he too wanted to wind up Britain's military commitments with the least possible delay. And underlying his cordiality towards the French was his fear that they might antagonize Germany to the point of forcing her to combine with Russia.\(^2\)

All three, and the rest of the cabinet as well, were sympathetic towards France, but no-one had any positive idea of what might be done to relieve her fear of Germany. When Lloyd George returned to Paris to resume his duel with Clemenceau he was still without a constructive policy. He was prepared to give way on such questions as the size of the German army,\(^3\) but he was most reluctant to yield on the key issues of Rhineland separation and allied occupation without having any genuine alternative to offer.

Neither Lloyd George nor Clemenceau was prepared to make concessions on the security question, weeks of discussions between them had produced no result,\(^4\) and shortly after Lloyd George came back from London the matter was handed over for detailed discussion to three advisers, Kerr, Tardieu and an American, Dr. Sydney Mezes.

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1 Henry Wilson concurred, and told the cabinet that Britain was unlikely to retain garrisons on the Rhine after the peace settlement had been organized.
2 This theme, an obsession with Churchill and a constant preoccupation with the rest of the cabinet, will be dealt with in more detail below, pp. 48-49, pp. 53-56.
3 Council of Ten minutes, P.P.C., iv, pp. 297-98.
4 House records that on 12 March Lloyd George and Clemenceau confided in him separately their concern at how the negotiations were proceeding (Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, pp. 370-71). There was a general air of pessimism, and some observers feared that disagreement on the security question might result in the break-up of the conference.
The security and Rhineland questions were debated exhaustively at the "advisers' talks" on 11 and 12 March.¹ When Tardieu repeated the argument that there should be an independent Rhenish state and that the river should be the defensive frontier of the Western democracies, Kerr conceded ready that Germany's military frontier should end at the Rhine, but he remained strongly opposed to any occupation, and in particular to the permanent stationing of British troops in Germany. He would not accept Tardieu's comparison that "to ask us to give up occupation, is like asking England and the United States to sink their fleet of battleships". Positively, and almost menacingly, Kerr told him that France's real security lay in maintaining a complete understanding with Britain and America, and that her real danger was that she might estrange herself from Britain by offending her "sense of justice and fair play". This was the first indication of what was soon to become British policy - that France would have to choose between obtaining the Rhineland and retaining her close links with her allies, but that she could not have both.

Tardieu held that France had a right to expect that if there were to be another war it should not take place on French soil, and that this could be achieved only by placing Germany's frontier on the Rhine. One of his arguments for this course was that if the allies were prepared to hand over six million Germans to the Czechoslovak and Polish governments, surely they could separate another five million. He repeated the concession which he had already made in a conversation with House,² and agreed that after a specified period of ten, fifteen or twenty years the Rhenish provinces could choose between remaining independent or rejoining Germany.

Kerr was unimpressed by this and continued his argument against an allied occupation, saying that British public opinion did not want a military commitment in Europe lasting more than a very short period, and that the Dominions

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² Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 357 (23 Feb. 1919).
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² Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 357 (23 Feb. 1919).
were reluctant to become involved in Continental affairs. He also forecast that there would be opposition from the Rhinelanders to any attempt to separate them from the rest of Germany, and that this opposition would meet with sympathy in Britain. Agreeing that some practical security was necessary for ten to twenty years, he claimed that if Germany were to attack France, British troops could be on the battlefield within three weeks. Tardieu complained that British forces would not arrive soon enough, and continued vainly his attempts to win British and American agreement to territorial securities.¹

The three advisers proved themselves as incapable of solving the problem as their chiefs had been,² and deciding that there did not seem to be much point in prolonging the discussions they referred the matter back to the heads of government.³ In his report to Lloyd George Kerr advised that Tardieu's proposals were excessive and that the reduction of German armaments and the demilitarization of the left bank of the Rhine would give France sufficient protection. He was prepared to yield on only two points. He suggested that the allies might occupy the Rhine bridgeheads for a year or so, and that the British Empire might offer to maintain an army of 100,000 regular troops capable of reaching Belgium within three weeks.⁴ A few weeks earlier Kerr had written privately to Lloyd George advising him that it would be necessary to give the French some real guarantees against German aggression in the future, and that they should be assured that if Germany were to increase her armaments,

¹ Foch even feared that British and American help might not be enough if Germany were to repeat her attack of 1914. When summoned to the Council of Four on 31 March he argued that but for Russia, France would have been pushed below the Loire before British troops could have arrived, and that Britain too would have been defeated before American troops would have reached Europe (Mantoux, Délibérations, i, p. 93).

² This may not have surprised Lloyd George and Kerr. Frances Stevenson relates that before the talks Lloyd George "told Kerr, who is in charge of the question of fixing the boundaries on the Western front, that he was not to come to any arrangement at all with the French", and that he hoped "by this means to make the French strike a bargain with him" (Lloyd George, p. 171 (11 March 1919)).

³ Cmd. 2169, p. 65 (12 March 1919). Wilson had been in the United States for the previous month, but he was due to return within a matter of days. House had deputized for him in his absence.

⁴ Cmd. 2169, p. 68 (13 March 1919).
Britain and the United States should undertake to increase theirs accordingly in order to maintain a permanent allied superiority. But in his report on the debate with Tardieu he made no mention of this or of any other form of security for France.

Lloyd George's reaction to the impasse was typically drastic and imaginative. On 12 March, in the course of a discussion with Colonel House, he attempted to bridge the gap between the demand for reliable, preferably physical, guarantees of their security, and Britain's opposition to any partition of Germany or to any European commitments, in particular to the physical commitment which would be involved in a Rhineland occupation. He realized that it might be a long time before the League of Nations could provide France with the security which she needed, and he proposed a more definite and precise guarantee, of the very sort which he had mentioned in the cabinet meeting and dismissed as impossible only a week before. He suggested that Britain and America should sign a treaty with France promising to come to her assistance in the event of a German invasion, but he was not ready "to maintain an army indefinitely at the bridgeheads of the Rhine and do all the other things which the French desired". He asked whether the United States would join Britain in giving such a guarantee, and House was obliged to answer that he did not know.

Wilson returned to Paris from Washington two days later, on 14 March, and within hours of his arrival Lloyd George broached the question of a joint Anglo-American guarantee to France. Wilson agreed to American participation, and that afternoon he and Lloyd George together proposed to Clemenceau their new solution of the security problem. They accepted a short-term Rhineland occupation, lasting only a few years, but rejected the other French demands of the separation of the Rhineland from Germany and its occupation by the allies for an unspecified period. In return Britain and the United

1 Kerr to Lloyd George, 18 Feb. 1919, Lloyd George papers, F/89/2/23.
2 Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, pp. 370-71.
3 Wilson had instructed House not to make any decision on the Rhineland, but to reserve the whole matter until he returned (Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 368, n. (10 March 1919)).
States would guarantee by treaty to defend France against
German aggression.

It was obviously a package deal; as Tardieu wrote later,
"they offered the military guarantee in lieu of occupation
and the independence of the left bank. It is to avoid the
latter which they do not wish, that they propose the former". 1
A guarantee to France would involve a departure from Britain's
traditional foreign policy, but however distasteful she might
find this new involvement in European affairs, such a pact
held several definite advantages for her. She would not be
obliged to do more than it would be in her interest to do in
any case, American participation in the enforcement of the
Peace Treaty would be ensured, and Germany would be left
intact. Lloyd George's proposal was a very shrewd move.

Clemenceau expressed his appreciation of the offer and
asked for time to consider it. During the next two days he
held three meetings with Tardieu, Pichon his foreign minister,
and Loucheur, the minister of industrial reconstruction. 2
Their dilemma was that no French government could afford to
lose such a guarantee which would in effect perpetuate the
wartime anti-German coalition and ensure that a German recovery
would not present such a great and immediate threat to France,
but nor could it remain satisfied with a treaty which, however
imposing and convincing it seemed, was no more than a moral
guarantee. France's territorial and demographic weakness
and the state of her public opinion required physical guaran-
tees as well. 3

1 The Truth about the Treaty, p. 177. Henry Wilson commented
in his diary that the president and the prime ministers "had
a long meeting this afternoon and did absolutely no business"
(Callwell, Henry Wilson, ii, p. 174 (14 March 1919)).
2 According to Tardieu the aspects of the problem were analysed
and discussed verbally and in three successive notes (The
Truth about the Treaty, p. 177), and Loucheur wrote that he,
Tardieu and Pichon were all sceptical about the proposal,
but that Clemenceau wished to give the Anglo-Franco-American
alliance a positive and definite form (Loucheur papers,
Stanford, California, quoted in Miquel, La Paix de Versailles
et l'Opinion Publique Francaise, pp. 348-49).
3 Not everyone was satisfied with the offer. When Clemenceau
went to the Elysee to tell the president the good news of
the proposed guarantee pact, Poincare expressed his lack
of interest by remaining utterly silent, and Clemenceau
was driven to exclaim "nous nous séparons sous cette forme
d'échange de pensée" (Histoire de la Troisième République,
Les Années d'Illusion, 1918-1931, p. 36).
After these discussions Tardieu drafted another memorandum which was handed over to the allies on 17 March. In it the French accepted gladly the offer of an Anglo-American guarantee treaty, but demanded that it be supplemented by additional securities which would go far beyond those offered by Lloyd George and Wilson: "before we can consider giving up the first guarantee (a material guarantee founded on space) it is essential that the second guarantee (founded on time, that is on the speedy aid of our Allies) lend itself to no uncertainty and that it be supplemented by some of the other safeguards contained in the first guarantee". France could not "give up a certain safeguard for the sake of expectations".

As well as the Anglo-American guarantee the note proposed: allied occupation of the left bank and the bridgeheads for thirty years; the demilitarization of the left bank and a 50km wide zone on the right bank; German disarmament; a permanent commission of inspection; provision for the re-occupation of the Rhineland if Germany violated the Treaty; and a return to the French frontiers of 1814. So while still posing demands which Lloyd George and Wilson were to find unacceptable, Clemenceau and Tardieu gave up their tenacious insistence on the separation of the Rhineland in return for the Anglo-American offer of a guarantee treaty. In view of what was to happen later, this quid pro quo aspect of the guarantee treaty agreement was of the utmost importance.

Lloyd George and Wilson rejected these demands, and the wearying round of negotiations was resumed once more. It was to continue for over a month, until 22 April, and according to Tardieu the French tried twice a day until then to win over their allies. But there was one important difference from the discussions which had taken place before Lloyd George's return from London and Wilson's from Washington - the idea of the guarantee treaty had replaced that of a separate Rhineland state as the central point in the French proposals, and by the end of March House was able to remark that the Anglo-American treaty was accepted as an essential part of the compromise.

2 France's policy in 1919 was similar to Russia's after 1945, but Stalin, stronger, more ruthless and less dependent on his allies than Clemenceau, succeeded in establishing a separate state in East Germany while the French failed to detach the Rhineland.
3 The Truth about the Treaty, p. 182.
4 Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 410 (27 March 1919).
The disagreements took place over lesser questions such as whether the Rhineland should still be occupied by allied troops, and if so, for how long, but they were still as sharp as those which had provoked Lloyd George's offer of 14 March. At one stage Wilson ordered the SS George Washington to be ready to take him back to America, and on 28 March the meeting broke up when Clemenceau called him pro-German.

It was mainly because of this continuing dispute over the security and Rhineland questions that Lloyd George decided to work out a programme for the whole Peace Conference, and set off for a working weekend in Fontainebleau. Before leaving he told Lord Riddell, the press representative, that he intended to put in the hardest two days' thinking he had ever done in his life. It is not clear exactly who accompanied the prime minister on this weekend seminar. Kerr, Hankey and Henry Wilson certainly went, and Smuts, Riddell, Cunliffe, the governor of the Bank of England, and even Keynes are also mentioned as having been there. His colleagues argued the French and German cases, and after these had been delivered, and after Lloyd George had outlined his own views, generally sympathetic towards Germany, Kerr drew up a memorandum in which he summed up the opinions held by the group as a whole. This is one of the fullest and most authoritative statements of British foreign policy in the post-war years, and it

1 Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 411.
2 Riddell, Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference and After, p. 36 (21 March 1919). Hankey, who was present, wrote later that "the main reason...for the Fontainebleau visit was a hitch in the very secret discussions he had been holding in camera with Clemenceau and Wilson about his own proposals for a joint guarantee by the United States and Britain to France, owing to the opposition of Tardieu and Foch, backed by the President, to some of his conditions" (The Supreme Control, p. 100).
3 Lloyd George mentions Smuts, Henry Wilson, Hankey and Kerr (The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, p. 403); Callwell adds Montagu and omits Kerr (Henry Wilson, ii, p. 175); Nelson includes Cunliffe and Keynes (Land and Power, p. 223); Riddell adds himself (Intimate Diary, p. 38 (24 March 1919)); and while it is generally held that Smuts was present, Hancock argues that he could not have been (Smuts, i, pp. 514-15). Certainly no-one from the Foreign Office went to Fontainebleau.
4 The text of the memorandum is given in Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, pp. 404-16, and in Cmd. 1674 (1922). For Kerr’s authorship, see Elcock, Portrait of a Decision; The Council of Four and the Treaty of Versailles, pp.166, 345, n.3.
summarizes not only the aims which Lloyd George tried to achieve during his remaining years in power, but also the general policy followed by his successors throughout the next two decades.

He sought a long-term peace, which he contrasted with the Treaty of Frankfurt in 1871, and he demanded that the 1919 settlement be drawn up as if the allies were impartial arbiters, that it be moderate and magnanimous rather than a Carthaginian peace. He stated near the beginning that "France itself has demonstrated that those who say that you can make Germany so feeble that she will never be able to hit back are utterly wrong... You may strip Germany of her colonies, reduce her armaments to a mere police force and her navy to that of a fifth-rate power; all the same in the end if she feels that she has been unjustly treated in the peace of 1919 she will find means of exacting retribution from her conquerors... injustice, arrogance, displayed in the hour of triumph, will never be forgotten or forgiven".

There was no direct reference to the Rhineland, and while the French need of a guarantee of her security was recognized fully, this was done in such terms that it gave no inkling to outsiders, particularly to the rest of the British and American delegations, that the allied leaders had already made a specific offer to that effect. Some of the Fontainebleau group were unaware of the guarantee pact's existence.

Lloyd George argued prophetically against the dangers of including large German minorities in the new, weak successor states, that the duration of reparation payments should end, if possible, with the generation which had made the war, and that "we cannot both cripple her and expect her to pay".

Many of his proposals for ensuring a long-lasting peace were unrealistic, if sensible, but his advocacy of restraint and magnanimity had a practical basis which he could hope would find some sympathy among his allies; he outlined the danger that Germany would come to terms with Russia and place "her resources, her brains, her vast organizing power" at the disposal of the Bolsheviks. He insisted that this was a real threat and not a mere fantasy, and argued that "if we are wise we will offer to Germany a peace which, while just, will be

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preferable for all sensible men to the alternative of Bolsh-
evism". 1

The Fontainebleau Memorandum was submitted to Clemenceau and Wilson, and within days it drew a biting rejoinder from the French. In this reply Clemenceau and Tardeieu declared:

"a certain number of total and definitive guarantees will be acquired by maritime nations which have not known invasion. The surrender of the German colonies would be total and definitive. The surrender of a large part of the German navy would be total and definitive. The exclusion of Germany from foreign markets would be total and would last for some time. On the other hand, partial and temporary solutions would be reserved for the continental countries; that is to say, those which have suffered most from the war". 2

The French note suggested that if Germany were to be satisfied, she should be offered colonial, naval or commercial concessions rather than territory in Europe, and it went on to criticize both the idea of reduced frontiers for Poland and Czechoslovakia and the temporary nature of the proposals for protecting the French frontier. 3

Lloyd George in turn sent Clemenceau a reply in which he refuted many of his allegations and implications. In particular he remarked sarcastically that the "large section of opinion in England who dislike entangling alliances" would be relieved to know that the French attached no importance to the pledge of British assistance in the event of German aggression, that he regretted his error in making the offer, and that he would be careful not to repeat it. 4 He told Wilson, however, that he thought it better not to take the French memorandum too seriously. 5

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1 In the British delegation there was concern lest the allies present Germany with terms which she would be forced to reject. The French had no such qualms. Early in the conference Lloyd George suggested to Clemenceau that the allies humour Germany to induce her to sign the treaty, and was told that "it is not for us in the presence of a defeated aggressor to ask pardon for our victory" (Tardeieu, The Truth about the Treaty, p. 446). Even if apocryphal, this story sums up neatly the difference in attitude between the two men.

2 Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, p. 419.

3 "If one is obliged, in giving to these young peoples frontiers without which they cannot live, to transfer to the sovereignty [sic] the sons of the very Germans who enslaved them, it is to be regretted and it must be done with moderation, but it cannot be avoided" (ibid., p. 418).

4 Ibid., pp. 421-22.

This exchange of notes illustrated the way in which Britain's attempts to reach what she saw as a sensible, rational solution to the problems of postwar readjustment, her willingness to placate Germany in the long-term interest of European recovery, were viewed by the French with uncomprehending resentment. They felt that Britain was prepared to sacrifice France's most vital interests, including her future security, to ensure an increase in her own prosperity, that greed would lead her to do a deal with Germany at her ally's expense.

Clemenceau secured the important concession that the guarantee treaty would remain in force, not for a few years as originally proposed, but until the three powers concerned agreed that the League of Nations provided France with adequate security. But the debate over his wish to obtain occupation of the Rhineland as well as the Anglo-American guarantee dragged on through most of April. The first break in the deadlock came when Clemenceau told Wilson that he was prepared to accept a Rhineland occupation of fifteen rather than thirty years, and much to Lloyd George's anger and scorn the president consented to this. Startled by this duration Lloyd George warned his allies not to expect that British troops would remain on the Rhine for as long as fifteen years, but he himself yielded only two days after Wilson. After yet further negotiations Clemenceau won another victory on 29 April. A clause was added to article 429 of the Peace Treaty stating that if the Anglo-American guarantee against unprovoked aggression gave France insufficient security, the

1 Ray Stannard Baker complained of Clemenceau's tactics at this time that "it seemed as if the old Tiger would rather see the world go smash then and there than give up any of the future "security" of his beloved France" (Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement, ii, p. 35).

2 From the other extreme Poincaré also objected to this compromise, and demanded that Clemenceau revert to his insistence on an occupation of thirty years (Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, pp. 427-32). Foch had earlier argued that the allies should control the left bank indefinitely, or "jusqu'à nouveau ordre, c'est-à-dire tant que l'Allemagne n'aura pas changé d'esprit" (Mantoux, Délibérations, i, p. 94 (31 March 1919)).

3 He gave way reluctantly, but made no objection to the proposal that occupation should last more than fifteen years if Germany failed to abide by her reparations obligations (ibid., pp. 318-19, (22 April 1919)).
evacuation of the left bank might be delayed beyond fifteen
years. This was theoretically or potentially important, but
in practice it was never used.¹

Between late March and early May the allies reached a
series of compromises over the subsidiary aspects of the
Rhineland and security questions, and the guarantee treaty
itself was altered in important respects, the British and
American guarantees being first separated and then rejoined.
Initially it had been assumed that Britain, France and the
United States would conclude a tripartite pact, but Wilson
had grave doubts about this, fearing that anti-British senti­
ment in the American Senate would lessen the chances of the
treaty's passage, and that it would be more acceptable if
only France and the United States were mentioned in the text.
When Henry White wrote to him on 16 April advising that the
American and British treaties be disconnected so as to lessen
this opposition, Wilson replied that he "never had in mind
the joint arrangement with Great Britain, but only a separate
treaty with France",² and the previous month at the Council
of Four he referred in passing to "the British military guar­
antee, and I hope the American" as if the two were quite
distinct, and the one less certain than the other.³ On 28
March the president gave Clemenceau a formal notice of "a
separate Treaty with the United States" which would contain
a pledge to come to France's assistance if Germany attacked
her without provocation. Lloyd George approved of this
formula.⁴

Four weeks later, at a meeting of the Big Three on 22
April Clemenceau handed around a draft "treaty between France
and the United States" which he and Wilson had approved two
days earlier.⁵ This confirmed the separation of the British

¹ Tardieu claimed that Clemenceau demanded this as reassur­
ance in case the American Senate should reject the treaty
(The Truth about the Treaty, pp. 211-12), but the allies
never accepted this interpretation and insisted that the
evacuation could be prolonged only if Germany refused to
pay reparations and not if France felt herself insecure.
² Wilson papers, VIII-A-37, quoted in Nelson, Lend and Power,
pp. 242-43, n.
³ Mantoux; Délibérations, i, p. 50 (27 March 1919).
⁴ Tardieu, The Truth about the Treaty, p. 205.
⁵ P.P.C., v, p. 774; Mantoux, Délibérations, i, p. 319. Until
then all the discussions about the Rhineland and the guar­
antee treaty had been held in private and no minutes had
been kept (Hankey, The Supreme Control, p. 144). Orlando
was not present on 22 April, so the others could talk freely.
and American guarantees. Wilson explained to Lloyd George that he felt it would be unwise to have a tripartite agreement, but that two separate treaties with France would be more palatable to American public opinion, and Lloyd George also accepted this, subject to Balfour's agreement. The result of all these moves was that the two treaties would now be independent of each other, and that Britain would be obliged to put hers into effect even if the pact were to be rejected by the United States. The British leaders must have realized this, and must also have been aware that several of the American delegates were most unhappy about the idea of a guarantee treaty and pessimistic about its chances of acceptance by the Senate. If this is so, it cannot but have influenced the next step, a far more significant one, in which the British and American treaties were once more made dependent on each other.

Two drafts of the guarantee treaty were submitted to the Council of Four on 6 May, one written by Balfour and the other by Tardieu. Wilson chose Balfour's version because, he said, the French proposal would make it seem that the United States would be obliged to send troops to help France if Germany maintained permanent facilities West of the Rhine. Tardieu offered to modify his draft so as to remove this clause, but Wilson stuck to his preference for the British draft, adding that Tardieu's gave the impression of a triple agreement and not of two separate treaties.

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1 On 20 March House wrote that he had "doubts as to the Senate accepting such a treaty, but that is to be seen", and added "meanwhile it satisfied Clemenceau and we can get on with the real business of the Conference" (Seymour, Intimate Papers, iv, p. 409). A week later he drew Wilson's attention to the "perils of such a treaty". After the idea had been mooted but before they knew that Wilson had agreed to it, Lansing, White and Bliss of the American delegation opposed the idea of a guarantee treaty (Lansing, The Peace Negotiations, p. 159). Miller told Lansing that in view of public opinion in America, the attempt to provide France with protection in return for the abandonment of her Rhineland claims "looked like trying to make two and two into five" (Diary, i, p. 190 (19 March 1919)). Even Jules Cambon told Pichon that he was sure the Senate would reject the treaty and that Clemenceau knew this. Pichon expressed his confidence that the Senate would ratify the treaty (Tabouis, Jules Cambon, p. 343 (13 April 1919)).

2 Orlando was still absent, sulking in Rome, so the meeting was effectively one of the Big Three.

3 P.P.C., v, pp. 474-75, 494-95; Mantoux, Délibérations, i, pp. 492-93.
The importance of this decision lay in the fact that Balfour's draft also stated that neither treaty would come into effect until the corresponding treaty had been ratified by the other country's legislature. This clause passed without comment by any of the leaders present, including Clemenceau and Tardieu, but its consequences were to ruin their whole security programme, destroy the compromise so laboriously reached, and warp Anglo-French relations for years to come.

For the Senate's rejection of the treaty was to result in the failure of the British as well as the American guarantee, and was to leave France without any form of security whatever, with no treaty of alliance, no separation of the left bank, with only a temporary occupation of the Rhineland which would end before Germany could again become a threat, and with a justifiable sense of grievance and a feeling that she had been not only outmanoeuvred but also deceived.

It is not absolutely certain who deserves the credit or the blame for inserting the interdependence clause which was to relieve Britain of her responsibility for guaranteeing France against a German attack, and whether he foresaw that the Senate would act as it did. The general consensus at the time and since is that Lloyd George was responsible, that it was a typically cunning and devious move on his part which outwitted Clemenceau and enabled Britain to escape from her unwelcome obligation. Wilson shared it. He is recorded as having remarked after the Council of Four meeting that "Lloyd George had slipped a paragraph into the British note about ratification and that he did not think Clemenceau had noticed it".1 Tardieu was later quoted as accepting the president's good faith, but as doubting Lloyd George's, for "otherwise why should he have made the assistance of Britain contingent upon the ratification of the pact by Washington?"2 But it is quite likely that much, perhaps even most, of the responsibility lies with Balfour.3

Lloyd George's final acceptance of the separation of the British and American guarantees, on 22 April, was conditional on Balfour's acquiescence; according to Hardinge, Lloyd George sent Balfour a copy of the guarantee treaty which he, Wilson

1 Miller, Diary, i, p. 294 (6 May 1919).
2 Bonsal, Suitors and Supplicants, p. 217.
3 Jordan (Great Britain, France and the German Problem, p. 38) credits Balfour with the responsibility.
and Clemenceau had already approved, asking him "to put the phraseology in proper shape";¹ a copy of the new revised treaty in which the interdependence clause is restored, and dated 5 May, is in Balfour's papers;² and at the meeting on 6 May, when the British and French drafts were submitted to the Big Three for their opinions, and when Wilson for quite different reasons chose the British version, it was always referred to as "Mr. Balfour's draft".

It would seem that while Balfour knew already that the French had been offered a guarantee treaty, at some stage after 22 April he was presented with the fact that for domestic American reasons the guarantees were not to form part of a tripartite treaty but were to be separate and thus independent of each other. He accepted this,³ but in the version which he later drafted and which was passed by the Big Three in preference to that written by Tardieu, he reinserted the interdependence clause. Amazingly, the French either failed to notice or else paid no attention. It is almost impossible to accept that men as experienced as Clemenceau and Tardieu would miss such an important amendment in a document which mattered so much to them, yet even if they did not really expect to obtain a British guarantee independent of that of the United States, it is equally astonishing that they should have made no comment or protest, if only for bargaining purposes. Contemporary documents and subsequent memoirs give no indication of why the French accepted the change.

The following day, 7 May, the peace terms were presented to the German delegation which had played no part whatever in the negotiations until then. Brockdorff-Rantzau, the German foreign minister, delivered a series of protests in the course of the next few weeks, attacking the proposals because of their departure from Wilson's Fourteen Points,⁴

¹ Old Diplomacy, p. 241. Hardinge's account is unconvincing in some details, and he gives the date of this incident as 6 May, which is quite impossible.
² F.O. 800/216, pp. 135-36.
³ Note by Hankey, P.P.C., v, p. 475.
⁴ The Germans had naively expected that the allied terms would resemble the Fourteen Points (Zimmermann, Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Ära der Weimarer Republik, p. 49; Schwaeb, Deutsche Revolution und Wilson-Frieden, pp. 346-50; Schüddekopf, German Foreign Policy, pp. 182-83, 189-94). In one of his bitterest passages, Nicolson claimed that only 4 of Wilson's total of 23 conditions were incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles (Peacemaking 1919, pp. 43-44).
and criticizing in particular the war-guilt clause, Germany's exclusion from the League of Nations, her territorial losses, and the severity of the reparations terms. Eventually the German government, including Brockdorff-Rantzau, resigned rather than accept the Treaty, although its successor was to do so under duress.

Allied reaction to the peace terms was mixed. Foch opposed them on the grounds of their leniency, and above all he attacked the provisions for the evacuation of the left bank of the Rhine, while the British delegation was alarmed by their severity. Nicolson, appalled, ascribed this harshness to the fact that each committee—Economic Affairs, Reparations, etc.—worked out its own demands without consulting the others, and they discovered too late that the total was far more drastic than anyone had expected or intended. Keynes was so embittered by his experience at the Conference that he resigned his Treasury post and promptly wrote his savage indictment of the Treaty. Both felt that if they were in the Germans' position they would refuse to sign.

These qualms were shared by the Imperial War Cabinet, and at three meetings on 30 May and 1 June it decided to rebel against the terms to which it had already given its agreement and which had already been proposed to the Germans. The two points which the cabinet found most objectionable were the German-Polish frontier and the allied occupation of the Rhineland. Lloyd George raised the question of the occupation and complained about its cost, Smuts was violently opposed to the maintenance of an allied force in Germany, and Chamberlain feared lest French provocation in the occupied zone might lead to German aggression and that the terms of the guarantee treaty would then oblige Britain to intervene on the side of France. He felt that the French "would almost certainly bring about revolt and insurrection. In that case the brunt of taking action must fall upon the British Empire and particularly upon the United Kingdom". Churchill was certain that France "would do all sorts of things to provoke aggression in her area of occupation, and that Britain would

1 Speech at the Plenary Session, 6 May 1919, P.P.C., iii, p. 386.
2 Peacemaking 1919, p. 112.
3 Keynes to his mother, 14 May 1919, quoted in Harrod, Keynes, p. 249; Nicolson to his wife, 28 May 1919, Peacemaking 1919, p. 350.
be called in to assist her". On the question of the German-Polish frontier Chamberlain told his colleagues that "he would not accept the German claim for revision of the territorial provisions outside Europe, but he would meet them as far as possible inside Europe". This last remark summed up a widespread attitude.

Pleading difficulties with his cabinet Lloyd George then tried to renege on some of the concessions which he had made between March and May, and to persuade Wilson and Clemenceau to moderate the peace terms. He told them that his colleagues had felt that "from the moment when a guarantee had been given to France...there should have been no question of occupation", and despite Clemenceau's plea that he desist, he went on to quote the cabinet's fear that the presence of a great French army in the Rhineland would be a real danger to the peace of Europe, and that Britain might be involved in the ensuing incidents. He admitted that he ought to have contested the point earlier, but claimed that he had been surprised by the vehemence of his colleagues' views on the matter. They had felt that "France ought to have been given the alternative between the occupation of the Rhine and the guarantee of her territory. He himself quite agreed in this", He held that Britain ought to have told France "'You are entitled to tell us whether you would prefer to occupy the Rhine or to have our guarantee'".

Clemenceau refused to consider such modifications, and when Lloyd George threatened to go home and put the whole matter before his parliament, he replied that he would do the same. In the end neither carried out his threat, and Lloyd George, his bluff called, backed down. Even though he received no support from Wilson, he continued for a further

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1 War cabinet conclusions, 1 June 1919, F.0.371/22, 34, p. 242.
2 Tardieu quotes him as saying that occupation was illogical "because it is only much later in fifty or sixty years that Germany will become dangerous" (The Truth about the Treaty, pp. 196-97). Smuts had already written to the prime minister that "France should not have have the double insurance of both the occupation and the guarantee" (Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, iii, p. 459).
3 P.P.C., vi, pp. 144-45 (2 June 1919).
4 Wilson wrote to Smuts that "though it is in many respects harsh I do not think that it is on the whole unjust in the circumstances, much as I should have liked to have certain features altered" (16 May 1919, quoted in Levin, Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, p. 159). Wilson thought Lloyd George's intervention had come too late.
two weeks to demand changes in the proposed treaty, and eventually he won an important concession - the fate of Upper Silesia, previously assigned to Poland, should be decided by plebiscite. But the security arrangements remained exactly as before.

The Peace Treaty was signed with great splendour in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles on the afternoon of 28 June 1919, five years to the day after the assassinations at Sarajevo. That morning, in a quiet meeting in President Wilson's house in the Place des Etats Unis, he, Lloyd George and Clemenceau signed the guarantee treaties intended to secure France against any future German aggression. These would come into effect only when ratified by both the British and American legislatures.

The guarantee treaties passed the British and French parliaments unanimously, but it soon became apparent that the United States Senate's hostility to the League of Nations would impair the guarantee pact's chances of ratification. The qualms expressed by House and other American delegates at the Peace Conference proved to have been well-founded; the pact was never reported on by the Committee on Foreign Relations, and was shelved when the Peace Treaty was finally rejected.

This did not occur until March 1920, but throughout the second half of 1919 politicians and diplomats in all three countries concerned became increasingly aware of the possibility that the guarantee treaties, the solution to the question of French security worked out so painfully at Paris, might still fall to the ground. In November the British cabinet considered it probable that the United States would not ratify the guarantee pact, in which case Britain's own

1 Mordacq says that as late as 25 June Lloyd George tried to bring about changes in the Treaty (Le Ministère Clemenceau, iii, p. 316).

2 After the event Senator Lodge, the leader of the opposition to the Covenant, wrote to Jules Cambon that but for hostility towards the League of Nations which rubbed off on the guarantee treaty, the latter might possibly have been accepted. "But the League and the opposition it encountered in the Senate caused the rejection of everything else" (Tabouis, Jules Cambon, p. 345). But Lodge was later to write that he did not think there was the slightest chance that the Senate would have voted to accept the pact, even if the Committee had recommended it (The Senate and the League of Nations, p. 156).
commitment "might have to be reconsidered". The same day Curzon wrote to Crowe, in Paris, that if the reservations to the Peace Treaty just passed by the Senate were to stand, ratification of the guarantee treaty was unlikely, and when he mentioned the pact in his reply Crowe favoured a show of goodwill towards France "at this moment when the possible defection of the United States may put her in a peculiarly embarrassing position". But there was still uncertainty about what would happen to the British guarantee. Hardinge, who had earlier minuted that if it were to be dropped there would be great jubilation in Germany, assumed as late as mid-December that it would come into force. Referring to the question of a British guarantee of the Belgian frontier, he wrote "I do not think that the Little Man wishes to be conciliatory on that subject as he fancies that by keeping the French on tenterhooks as to the guarantee of that portion of their frontier we may be able to secure concessions from them elsewhere, e.g. in Syria or Palestine." This remark is meaningless unless he assumed that Britain would still guarantee the French frontier with Germany.

The official British attitude was that Britain had fulfilled her obligations by signing and ratifying the pact, that she was now waiting on the American ratification necessary to bring the treaty into force, and that she would make no move in any direction which might influence or antagonize the American Senate.

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1 Cabinet conclusions, 18 Nov. 1919, Cab. 23/18, Cab. 9(19), App. 7.
2 Curzon to Crowe, 18 Nov. 1919, F.O. 371/3647, 152441/11763. These reservations consisted of the rejection of any obligation to preserve the independence and territorial integrity of any other country or to use the American army to this effect without Congressional authorization.
3 Crowe to Curzon, 19 Nov. 1919, F.O. 372/1290, T153810/106767.
4 Minute by Hardinge, 23 Nov. 1919, F.O. 371/3647, 145085/11763.
6 American indecision was used by the British government to excuse inaction in situations where it in turn did not want to make decisions. On 30 June 1920 the cabinet decided that military conversations with Belgium were particularly undesirable while the Anglo-American guarantee was "in a state of suspense and uncertainty" owing to American failure to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and the League Covenant (cabinet conclusions, Cab. 23/21, Cab. 38(20)1.)
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The war cabinet discussions in late May and early June had revealed the feeling that France had obtained enough security through her occupation of the Rhineland and that the guarantee pact was redundant as well as inconvenient, so there was some relief at seeing the treaty's prospects gradually diminish. The delay and uncertainty over the Senate's rejection suited the British government perfectly. France slowly became reconciled to the probability that America would not ratify the pact, and Britain was spared the necessity of doing anything until sufficient time had elapsed for her moral obligation to have become somewhat weakened.

At the beginning of December Foch told Crowe that the time had come for accepting America's temporary defection and for adopting a clear policy based on this new situation, but the French confined themselves to expressing concern and they made no attempt to renegotiate the guarantee treaty. A week after Foch's remark Derby, the ambassador in Paris, reported that the French were most disturbed by the effects which the probable American withdrawal from Europe would have on the pact, but although he was often asked about the matter, no official approach was made. He presumed that Britain would eventually guarantee French security on her own, but advised that she first obtain concessions from France. Some months later, in March 1920, he wrote that the French still wanted a formal, written guarantee, and that "they still cling almost like a drowning man to a straw to their wish that England single-handed, even if America won't agree, should sign some sort of pledge".

Yet even though the French saw the valued pact slipping away from them they made no move, they never suggested that Britain alone should guarantee France's security, independent of American support. There were several reasons for this. One was the fear that if Britain were asked what action she would take in the event of an American rejection of the treaty, and if this fact were to become known in the Senate


2 Derby to Curzon, 8 Dec. 1919, Curzon papers, F/6/2.

3 Derby to Curzon, 5 March 1920, Curzon papers, F/6/3. In this letter he warned prophetically that Britain could expect a series of quarrels with France on a variety of subjects.
their apprehensions might tend to become self-fulfilling. There was also the reinsurance of Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles, and Clemenceau, defending himself against attack in the Chamber, said he had ensured that if the pact were not voted in the American Senate, France would be free to make new arrangements in the Rhineland. But this was obviously no more than a second-best solution. Probably more important in deterring the French government from making the overtures which many in the Foreign Office expected were two developments which took place in December 1919, the virtual dismissal by Britain of the Belgian government's request for a guarantee treaty, and a conversation between Lloyd George and Clemenceau.

After her experience in 1914 Belgium was naturally reluctant to rely for her security on the treaty of 1839, and she tried to replace it by an Anglo-French guarantee pact similar to that which Britain and the United States had offered to France. She also wished to bring to an end the perpetual neutrality which the 1839 treaty imposed on her. (This had been recommended by a Foreign Office memorandum written during the war, and by a Peace Conference committee on Belgian affairs, among whose members were Crowe and Headlam-Morley.)

France was ready to give such a guarantee, but Britain showed herself reluctant and did nothing to ease the negotiations. When the Belgian ambassador made the first formal proposal on 9 September Curzon told him that British public and parliamentary opinion would be suspicious of any more territorial guarantees, and that, while the treaty with France had been accepted without difficulty, he felt that "any considerable extension of the area which we undertook to go to war in order to protect would be likely to meet in

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2 E.g., a memorandum written by E. Lehmann, a junior clerk, on 5 Dec. 1919, assumed that the French would make an approach concerning the guarantee treaty, and that until they did Britain had better make no move (F.O.374/3762, W17/159608/159606).
3 Nelson, Land and Power, pp. 8-14. This memorandum, written by Sir William Tyrrell and Sir Ralph Paget, had been approved, though cautiously, by Balfour.
4 Memorandum, 6 March 1919, F.O.374/21, pp. 282-86. This held that the 1839 imposition of neutrality of Belgium was "useless and burdensome".
some quarters with sharp criticism". (Hardinge was more sympathetic and remarked that parliament had "swallowed a far tougher mouthful in the Anglo-American-French Treaty".

Two months later Curzon circulated a memorandum to the cabinet advising that a guarantee to Belgium for an indefinite period would be unpopular and that the government should not be justified in taking "so heavy a responsibility". At a cabinet meeting on 18 November he outlined the various proposals made by France and Belgium and said that he favoured a guarantee lasting from three to five years - quite derisory as a guarantee of Belgian security - "peeling the provision of suitable guarantees by the League of Nations". The cabinet was reluctant to come to any decision until the question of the American guarantee to France should be solved one way or the other, and was afraid that if Britain agreed to guarantee Belgian neutrality for five years or so she might find it difficult to escape from her obligation at the end of that period.

The cabinet took an even stronger line against the Belgian guarantee than Curzon himself. On 1 December he advised that Britain grant the desired guarantee treaty, and dismissed the Belgians' repudiation of their neutrality as unimportant, presumably because the pact's brief duration would also make the guarantee itself unimportant; he did not think that "this legal point should be unduly pressed." At a cabinet meeting the next day it was emphasized that Britain had a long-standing interest in Belgian independence and would intervene to help her in case of invasion even if there were no treaty obligation to do so. But on the other hand it was pointed out that the Belgians wished to be

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1 Curzon to Gurney (Brussels), 9 Sept. 1919, describing a conversation with Moncheur. F.O.371/3646, 127515/127515/4. The War Office felt differently. Early in 1919 a War Office memorandum asserted that "it will be impossible to contemplate with satisfaction any settlement which leave Luxembourg, Belgium or Holland in a state of neutrality" (2 Feb. 1919, F.O.371/21, p. 36). Headlam-Morley minute on this on 16 December "it is universally agreed that Belgium and Luxembourg shall not return to their old condition".


3 Memorandum by Curzon, 10 Nov. 1919, Cab.24/93, C.P.117.

4 Cabinet conclusions, 18 Nov. 1919, Cab.23/18, Cab.9(19) App.

5 Memorandum by Curzon, 1 Dec. 1919, Cab.24/94, C.P.228.
relieved of their neutrality while at the same time they were to be guaranteed by Britain and France "without giving anything in return", and it was decided that a guarantee treaty would be acceptable for a short period only if Belgium retained the neutrality which she wished to discard.

This cabinet decision was diametrically opposed to the Foreign Office's views. The question of the Belgian guarantee is one of the few instances in the whole security problem in which the cabinet and the Foreign Office were divided by a difference over policy rather than by a mere difference in emphasis. Crowe protested against the decision. He assumed, wrongly, that the cabinet could not wish Belgium's neutrality to be of the same kind as that which had existed before the war, if only because, as a neutral power, she could not continue to occupy German territory. Twice he proposed formulae which would avoid the unacceptable reference to neutrality, but he and Curzon failed to reach agreement since the foreign secretary remained bound by the cabinet's verdict. Only a few days before this decision was taken Hardinge suggested that it must be to Britain's advantage that Belgium's perpetual neutrality be brought to an end, and that to facilitate this development she should be given an interim guarantee treaty. After it he commented sourly that "of course the fact must be faced that our attitude will probably throw Belgium into the arms of France, and we shall suffer commercially from the fact, but that is all".

The cabinet decision was intended to scare off the Belgians, and it succeeded. The question hung fire for a while, but in January 1920 they withdrew their request. By then even the Foreign Office was relieved. One official remarked

1 Cabinet conclusions, 2 Dec. 1919, Cab.23/37, Cab.13(19).
2 Crowe to Curzon, 4 Dec. 1919, F.0.371/3642, 158527/11763.
3 Crowe to Curzon, 11 & 18 Dec. 1919, F.0.371/3642, 161092 & 163001/11763.
4 Minute by Hardinge, 25 Nov. 1919, F.0.371/3642, 157333/11763.
5 Minute by Hardinge, 8 Dec. 1919, F.0.371/3642, 159428/11763.
6 As soon as Hymans, the Belgian foreign minister, informed the French ambassador in Brussels of this decision, the ambassador told him that its natural conclusion was a Franco-Belgian military alliance (memorandum by Hymans, 9 Jan. 1920 (Documents Diplomatiques Belges, 1920-1940 (D.D.B.), i, p. 94). Hardinge's comment of the previous day had been perfectly accurate, and the negotiations were begun after only a short delay. The Franco-Belgian treaty was signed on 7 Sept. 1920.
that "this settles the question satisfactorily. The Belgians
tried their best", and Hardinge, his views already somewhat
modified, concluded that "for us it is a satisfactory way out".¹

Britain was still unattached, and a conversation between
Lloyd George and Clemenceau on 11 December ensured that she
would remain so. At a cabinet discussion which prepared the
ground for the meeting Curzon suggested that Lloyd George
mention the hostile tone of the French press, and to Anglo-
French rivalry in Morocco. He went on: "a third point to
which the Prime Minister might refer was the question of the
guarantee of the integrity of French soil. This was our
strongest weapon, and should be kept in reserve. Parliament
had accepted the guarantee so long as the United States were
associated with us, but if we came in alone it was doubtful
whether it would be approved".²

Lloyd George went even further than advised by Curzon.
The next day, answering a question from the foreign secretary
about the discussions, he told the cabinet that the French
had not raised the question of the guarantee treaty, but that
nonetheless he had warned Clemenceau that there would be
substantial opposition in parliament if Britain gave a guar­
antee independently of the United States, and that everything
depended on the atmosphere in which these problems were
faced. (He also remarked that "the French and ourselves
were agreed on no subject", and that Clemenceau had concurred
"as to the desirability of re-establishing the fraternal
relations which had existed until a few months ago".³)

¹ Minutes by C. Howard Smith and Hardinge, 12 & 13 Jan. 1920,
F.0.371/3643, 169746/11763. At the end of 1920 Villiers
felt that there was "no prospect whatever of H.M.G. consent-
ing to a formal alliance or signed military convention with
Belgium; and renewed demands from the Belgian Govt. would
be embarrassing". Curzon confirmed this, remarking that
the Belgian foreign minister was very ill-informed if he
thought he could succeed where his predecessor had failed
(minutes, 22 Dec. 1920, F.0.371/5456, W3381/32/4).

² Cabinet conclusions, 10 Dec. 1919, Cab.23/35, p. 31. A few
days earlier Derby had reported that several Parisian
papers stated that negotiations were in progress in London
designed to make the British guarantee independent of the
American (to Curzon, 5 Dec. 1919, D.B.F.P., I, v, pp. 392-
95, 159606/159606/17). This was either wishful thinking
or kite-flying.

³ Cabinet conclusions, 11 Dec. 1919, Cab.23/35, p. 46.
Shortly afterwards Lloyd George told the Commons that if America did not ratify the treaty — and "we cannot contemplate that the United States of America would dishonour the signature of its great representative in Paris" — Britain would be free to reconsider her position. He further held that to guarantee France alone would be "a very serious obligation", a new departure in British politics.¹ And Clemenceau informed the Chamber that the question of military guarantees had not been discussed in London because Lloyd George wished to avoid raising the matter "for fear of disturbing American opinion and thereby bringing about a contrary result to that hoped for".²

Clemenceau may have accepted this explanation, but he cannot have believed it. The French had taken the hint, they realized that, having escaped from her legal obligation, Britain had no intention of being bound by any moral obligation, and that there was no point in hoping for any act of generosity from Lloyd George or in trying to renegotiate the treaty with the United States. They proceeded to follow their own path, to Britain's subsequent dismay, and in the bitter aftermath of the failure of the guarantee treaties the two countries' policies towards Germany became even more opposed to each other than they had been at the Peace Conference.

Perhaps even if she had had the reassurance of a British guarantee against German aggression France would still have acted as harshly and provocatively towards Germany as she did in the early 1920s. It is impossible to say. But the treaty would probably have been a restraining influence, and many in both the British cabinet and the Foreign Office were to regret losing whatever power of restraint it would have given them. Some even began to suspect that Britain had been too clever by half in outmanoeuvring France and leaving her with virtually no security, that the move had raised more problems than it had solved.

¹ Hansard, 5s., HC, 123, col. 762 (18 Dec. 1919). He said that the 1839 guarantee was a different matter, as Britain had been only one of three powers which had guaranteed Belgium's neutrality. "This will be the first time we shall be called upon to guarantee protection standing absolutely alone. All that will be taken into account when we come to consider what our final decision shall be".
Britain's easy escape from her commitment proved misleading. Even though the brief exchange between Lloyd George and Clemenceau in December 1919 was the only occasion in the two and a half years which followed the signature of the Treaty of Versailles when the guarantee pact was ever discussed between the two governments, for years to come the question of French security and of a British guarantee treaty were to bedevil British policy towards Europe.
Chapter 2. British Postwar Policy;

The broad outline of Britain's policy towards Europe in the early 1920s were simple and constant. They continued or applied the policy she had worked out at the Peace Conference, that of the Fontainebleau Memorandum, her efforts to impose a moderate peace on Germany, and her reluctance to become entangled in European affairs. The Treaty of Versailles had left her with some unavoidable commitments, particularly her share of the Rhineland occupation which Lloyd George had fought so hard to prevent, but she wished to limit these as much as possible and to be left in peace so that she could concentrate her energies on other more important or more immediate problems such as labour disturbances, rebellion in Ireland and unrest in Asia.

Philip Kerr expressed this view in its most extreme form when he advised Lloyd George that the European situation was unmanageable and that "Britain must deliberately draw in its horns in the matter of foreign policy"; there would develop rapidly a feeling that she had so many problems of her own that she should leave the Continent to itself, along with whatever assistance the League of Nations could provide.¹ Looking at the situation from a purely military point of view Henry Wilson remarked that all his efforts were devoted to getting troops out of Europe and Russia and concentrating British strength in future trouble spots, England herself, Ireland, Egypt and India.²

Politically Britain's attitude towards the Continental states was a negative one, for her main wish was to be left alone. No longer so concerned with maintaining the balance of power as in the pre-war years, she wanted a system in which as many as possible of the European powers were contented, and in which there would consequently be few grievances and quarrels in which she might become embroiled. Economically she desired a return of "stable conditions of industry

¹ Kerr to Lloyd George, 2 Feb. 1920, Lloyd George papers F/90/1/18. However even he admitted that the Treaty more or less bound Britain to continual intervention.
² Wilson to Admiral Cowan, ca. 11 April 1919, quoted in Callwell, Henry Wilson, ii, p. 182.
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and commerce, so as to bring back to us our old prosperity, and put an end to economic unrest. But this involved putting an end to political unrest as well, it was dependent on the European states leaving each other alone, and this in turn often necessitated British intervention. So despite Britain’s yearning for a quiet and uninvolved life, her influence and prestige were to be directed towards lessening the tensions between mutually hostile or suspicious states. Only by a readiness to intervene on the side of peace and harmony could she hope to recover her European markets and to avoid being damaged by her neighbours' quarrels.

Curzon renounced a policy of isolation. Britain's economic strength, he argued, marked her out to play a dominant political part in Europe, and the peace of the continent could be ensured only by the power which she alone was able to provide. To refrain from using this position "would be not merely to abdicate our leadership, but to lose the direction of events and the power of restraint which it gives."
The concept of restraint is important. Herself a satisfied nation with few ambitions or fears, she sought "to reconcile and mediate", to calm the ambitions and fears of others less fortunate than herself, largely because of the repercussions which they were likely to have on her own position. Churchill summed up this aspect of British policy when he told the Imperial Conference in 1921 that "the aim is to get an appeasement of the fearful hatred, the antagonisms which exist in Europe and to enable the world to settle down". With the exceptions of Lloyd George's involvement in the Greco-Turkish struggle and Churchill's desire for a crusade against Russia, interest in European affairs lessened with their distance from the Channel, and Central and Eastern Europe.

1 Memorandum by Crowe, 26 Dec. 1921, F.0.371/7000, W13420/G. He felt that this was the paramount British interest, "the danger of a big European war being eliminated".
2 Memorandum by Curzon, 17 April 1920, Cab.24/103, C.P.1093.
3 Imperial Conference minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p. 22. He also claimed that if Britain severed herself from European affairs she would soon sink to "the insignificance of Spain or the impotence of Portugal".
4 In his memorandum of 9 May 1922, Waterlow described this as the aim of British policy (F.0.371/7567, 06875/6200/18).
5 Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 2, p. 361.
remained on the whole of only marginal interest to Britain. Her main concern was with the hostility, the fear and the resentment which dominated relations between France and Germany.

Britain's short-term policy towards Germany operated within the framework of the Treaty of Versailles, but she interpreted the Treaty with flexibility and moderation, especially with regard to two of its principal features, reparations and disarmament. While France was to a considerable extent independent of international trade, Britain had a direct interest in Germany's economic well-being, and in political and administrative circles in London there was a near-unanimous belief that many of the reparations demands or expectations were unrealistically high. Lloyd George tried ceaselessly, but with only limited success, to win French agreement to the idea that the allies should try to obtain not what the Treaty obliged Germany to pay, but what financial experts thought she would be able to pay. He summed up the British attitude when he declared that there was nothing worse than for the allies to pursue exaggerated hopes, to seek something far beyond their reach, and through his personal summit diplomacy, in a long series of conferences, he succeeded in whittling down the French demands and bringing the reparations figures to a level which British opinion regarded as more realistic, though still excessive. Although it was often exasperated by French uncooperativeness or intransigence, the government felt that short of occupying the Ruhr or towns on the right bank of the Rhine there was no effective way of making the Germans pay, and that such measures were too drastic for all but the most flagrant evasions of reparations payments.

Even in the question of reparations, not all Britain's efforts were directed against Germany, and as at the Peace Conference, the British were anxious for gains at the expense of their allies as well. At one cabinet meeting Lloyd George

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1 See below, chapter 4.
2 Minutes of allied conference, Paris, 27 Jan. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xv, p. 60, I.C.P. 155. But when Lloyd George felt that Germany was deliberately evading her commitments, he took as forceful a line against her as did the French. This was perfectly clear at the third conference of London (2 March 1921), D.B.F.P., I, xv, pp. 250-53, I.C.P. 171.
declared "if we get our cash - that's all I'm out for, as against not Germany but France and Belgium".  

The German defaults tried Britain's patience and undermined her moderation, but at least in the first years after the Peace Treaty the second main aspect of its enforcement, the disarmament of Germany, presented less problems. Here too there was some suspicion of and hostility towards what was seen as the Reichswehr's procrastination, but in general it was felt that disarmament and demobilization were being carried out satisfactorily. Early in 1920 the general staff was even unhappy at the prospect of reducing the German army as quickly as was laid down by the Treaty, and in late 1921, after expressing its suspicions of German expansionist aims in the future, it concluded that the Berlin government was trying sincerely to carry out the Treaty's terms. There was no possibility of any serious military opposition to the allies' supremacy, and the extent of German disarmament did not become a serious problem until late 1924.

Britain's long-term policy towards Germany was more ambivalent. An awareness of the two countries' interdependence, and a consequent readiness to help her former enemy, mixed with or alternated with dislike and fear.

Germany's prosperity was important to Britain. Even though a German economic recovery would strengthen her chief commercial rival - and a possible future enemy - Britain was so dependent on export markets, so anxious to return to the pre-war trading pattern as quickly as possible, that the apparent advantages of building up the German economy seemed to outweigh the apparent risks, and to do so became one of her main objectives. The British government intended to be severe in ensuring that the military and security terms of the Treaty were complied with, but would "take a broad view of economic questions".

1 Jones, Whitehall Diary, I, p. 155 (30 April 1921).
3 General staff memorandum, 5 Oct. 1921, Cab. 4/7, 276-B.
4 Kilmarnock even claimed that if Britain reduced Germany to chaos, she would hurt herself as much as if not more than Germany (to Curzon, 20 Dec. 1920, D.B.F.P., I, x, p. 351, 014587/45/18).
5 D'Abernon summarized British policy thus, and records that Curzon agreed with him (Ambassador, i, p. 54 (diary, 25 June 1920)).
In the Fontainebleau Memorandum Lloyd George had urged that once Germany had accepted the peace terms, the allies should give her equal access to the world's raw materials and markets, and that they should do everything possible to enable her people to get on their feet again. All unnecessary hindrances to German recovery should be eliminated. Both during and after the Peace Conference he wanted the extent of Germany's reparations payments to be settled as quickly as possible so that the Damoclean sword of an undetermined debt would be removed and she could receive credits from abroad. He summed up general British policy when he argued that by postponing a settlement of Germany's reparations payments the allies were injuring their debtor, while "a debtor is a person that you ought to cherish". One of the fullest acknowledgements of the two countries' interdependence came from Churchill when he advised Lloyd George that the Germans must be provided generously with food and credits despite Britain's own difficulties - otherwise these difficulties would worsen.

This attitude remained unchanged. A year later Curzon told the Imperial Conference of 1921 that British policy was "frankly the re-establishment of Germany as a stable state in Europe... not entirely from an unselfish point of view, but because in her recovery is bound up the industrial future of ourselves as well as of other nations", and shortly afterwards Churchill was equally explicit: he said that he wished to see normal trading relations develop between the two countries and "to see Britain getting all the help and use she can get out of Germany in the difficult years that lie before us". These economic interests influenced not only Britain's reparations policy but also her whole attitude towards Germany and towards Franco-German relations.

Politically, too, Germany was to be treated leniently, her unity was to be maintained and her respectability

1 Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, i, p. 408.
2 There were also practical reasons for this; he explained "we must set Germany up before we can borrow on her credit".
4 Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, Lloyd George papers, F/9/2/20.
5 Imperial Conference minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p. 24
6 Ibid., 7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 2, p. 362.
restored. D'Abernon, the Germanophile ambassador in Berlin, was to complain that the allies had not kept their word about giving better terms to a republican than to a monarchist government,¹ but on the whole, as even he admitted, Britain appreciated the enormous problems facing the new German democracy and tried to help it consolidate its position.

The Weimar Republic was fragile and had to be handled with care. A Foreign Office memorandum on German intervention in the Baltic states feared the consequences of applying pressure on the Berlin government to secure the removal of the troops; by creating discontent in Germany they would weaken its position and risk a reactionary coup or a Spartacist rising.²

The new governments, shaky and inexperienced, showed little competence and inspired little confidence. Curzon described the leaders with whom he had to deal as "second-rate sort of people",³ Lloyd George complained that they were "devoid of authority, prestige, grasp of the situation or nerve to deal with it",⁴ and Churchill, who had told Bonar Law at the Peace Conference that the Germans would be traitors to their country if they signed the Treaty,⁵ had little respect for them either. But not only were they peaceable and harmless, they were also the only available bulwark against the rival threats of a Bolshevik rebellion or a military takeover. Lloyd George accused the French of having helped bring about the Kapp putsch by making and enforcing demands which had made the German government's position impossible,⁶ and his fears that the moderate governments would succumb to the Left were almost as great; they were deepened by his conviction that Teutonic efficiency would make a

¹ Ambassador, i, p. 160 (diary, 3 May 1921).
³ Imperial Conference Minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p. 23.
⁵ Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 85 (cabinet meeting, 14 April 1919). Such scorn can only have been increased by incidents such as the request by Köster, the German foreign minister, that the allies should intervene indirectly in the German elections of 1920, adding that Germany was not an independent nation and depended for her existence on the allies' favour (Kilmarnock to Curzon, 29 May 1920, describing a conversation with Köster, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 502, 200649/4232/18).
⁶ Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 177 (20-21 March 1920).
Communist Germany a much more formidable opponent than Lenin's Russia.¹

Particularly during Lloyd George's premiership Britain tended to see herself as the protector of Germany and of her new democracy, not only against French malevolence and Russian interference, but also against the consequences of her own folly in her handling of the reparations question.² D'Abernon's reports from Berlin indicated a Germany suitably friendly and respectful towards her mentor - his assurance that "our advice is eagerly sought and generally followed"³ is typical. In general they were complacently confident that, despite French insistence and Foreign Office suspicions to the contrary, the leopard had changed its spots and that Germany's moderate leaders represented the future as well as the present.⁴

The Weimar governments were also seen as the best guarantee of order and stability in Central Europe and as a barrier against Bolshevism - a view which had its counterpart in the dread of one power taking over and using the other. At the Peace Conference Lloyd George told the Council of Ten that "as long as order was maintained in Germany, a breakwater would exist between the countries of the Allies and the waters of Revolution beyond", but he dreaded the consequences if this breakwater were to be swept away.⁵ Several of his ministers had even stronger views and fears. Churchill, always the leading protagonist of a strong Germany which would shield the rest of Europe from Bolshevism, wrote to

¹ Assessing the dangers of a German collapse and a Bolshevik revolution he told the cabinet that "the Russians were among the most incompetent people in Europe while in some respects the Germans were the most competent. They would run their revolution in ways which would be much more attractive to our people whereas the Russian methods had revolted our people" (23 May 1922, Cab.25/30, Cab.29(22)2).
² Balfour, at least, was uncertain about how far Britain should go. Anticipating overtures from Germany he wrote to Curzon "how much we ought to allow ourselves to be made up to, and what degree of friendliness the Government will think desirable to encourage, I do not know" (Balfour papers, B.M., Add. MS 47834, pp. 172-73 (20 Feb. 1920)).
³ D'Abernon to Curzon, 30 Sept. 1921, FO.371/5976, C19107/416/18.
⁴ Lord Kilmarnock, the representative in Berlin in early 1920, was more sceptical, and doubted whether the Germans had learned the lesson which the war should have taught them (to Curzon, 10 Feb. 1920, D.B.F.F., I, ix, p. 57, Confid. Genl. 363/17).
⁵ Council of Ten Minutes, 8 March 1919, P.P.C., iv, p. 281.
him advocating a policy of "Peace with the German people. War on the Bolshevik tyranny", criticized the prime minister for not carrying out such a policy, suggested an early revision of the Treaty to ensure that Germany would become an equal partner in the rebuilding of Europe, and concluded that, if necessary, Britain should act independently. He informed Balfour that he agreed with the Scots saying, "do not beat two dogs at one time"; and he was in favour of beating the Russians.

But while the appearance of a new enemy made it wise to gloss over the sins of the old, and British politicians' hatred of Communism helped them to view Germany in a more favourable light, this was no more than a tactical move dictated by circumstances. The memories and hatreds of the war years could not easily be erased, and there was never any question of close cooperation with the defeated enemy as had been the case at the Congress of Vienna, still less of a reversal of allies. Despite all the differences with France, some of which will be discussed below, she remained Britain's only likely partner or ally. At the Peace Conference even Lloyd George postponed any re-shuffling of alliances for forty years, and however much he and his cabinet colleagues resented France's policy and actions in the years which followed there was never any possibility that Britain and Germany would presented a united front against her. Britain often defended Germany against the French, but the two allies went to great lengths to prevent the Germans becoming aware of the extent of their disagreements.

The Foreign Office remained considerably more Germanophobe than the cabinet or the Treasury, a difference of emphasis which foreshadowed the more serious disagreements of the 1930s.

1 Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, Lloyd George papers, F/9/2/20.
2 Churchill to Balfour, 23 Aug. 1919, Balfour papers. B.M., Add. MS 49694, p. 171. In this letter, which was written while the Baltic was still in a state of confusion, he asked Balfour whether an extension of German influence in the area was good or bad, whether an increase in German strength might not outweigh a decrease in the Russian threat. (From the wording it is obvious that he was looking for confirmation, not information.) During the Russo-Polish war he suggested that the allies might have to call on the Germans for help (Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 222, 22 July 1920).
3 War cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1919, Cab.23/15, Cab.541A.
Crowe was suspicious of any policy of appeasement towards Germany, and deplored what he regarded as "Treasury and other Downing Street tendencies towards the substitution of an Entente with Germany in the place of that with France", even though he dismissed them as illusory.¹

Lloyd George trusted the German government, at least some of the time, but most of his colleagues and officials were ready to help Germany and cooperate with her only because it was so obviously in Britain's own interest to do so. While Germany was not still referred to explicitly as "the enemy", she was still regarded as such; e.g., in a memorandum on the question of her admission to the League of Nations Balfour warned that the British government should not be "manoeuvred into the position of publicly ranging ourselves on the side of our ex-enemy against our present ally, however uncomfortable a bedfellow that ally may be".²

The two Conservative foreign secretaries of the early post-war years viewed Germany with particular distaste. Curzon regarded German politicians and her ambassador in London with a condescension amounting to contempt, and while German diplomacy was often ham-fisted, credit was rarely given where it was due. When Chancellor Cuno proposed a non-aggression pact in 1922 - a prototype of the Locarno Treaty - Curzon remarked simply that it was "a piece of impertinence",³ and the suggestion was consequently ignored. And after Stresemann repeated this proposal early in 1925, and by so doing took a crucial step in solving the security problem as well as providing the British government with a lifeline which saved it from an acute dilemma, Chamberlain concentrated on the Germans' "blundering" and "obtuse" tactics and virtually ignored the proposal's content.⁴ Similar attitudes were displayed on numerous other, less important occasions. Old prejudices and

² Memorandum by Balfour, 1 Aug. 1922, F.0.371/7569, C10998/6347/18.
³ Minute by Curzon, 5 Jan. 1923, F.0.371/8696, C186/178/18.
⁴ Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 9 Jan. & 3 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257.
stereotypes survived. Curzon summed up his views with a remarkable frankness when he said of the Germans, whom he described as having the most formidable and yet the most stupid mentality of any race in Europe and as being "absolute children in diplomacy", that "one never knows whether they are being really perfidious or merely perverse, whether they are actually dishonest or merely dull, whether they are friendly or whether they are hostile. You cannot like them, but you do not quite know whether your feelings are those of distrust or of positive dislike". Although extreme, Curzon's attitude towards Germany was more typical of cabinet and Foreign Office feeling than Lloyd George's and Churchill's willingness to forgive, and even the prime minister could declare that the Germans "fluctuate between abject, cringing appeals and a sort of unconsidered insolence". The general staff described the German nation as "combining the height of modern efficiency with the mentality and brutality of the middle ages". But what had been threatening in the years before the war became merely exasperating after the armistice, and Lloyd George cannot but have had some satisfaction in describing the heirs of the Kaiser and Ludendorff as "very moderate, even timid".

The General consensus was that in Britain's and Europe's interests Germany had to be allowed to recover, and that to

1 Imperial Conference minutes, 5 Oct. 1923, Cab.32/9(3), p. 26. It is only fair to add that Curzon, growing more crotchety with the years, distrusted and disliked most people, and he despised the French too, though for different reasons. He saw them as disloyal and dishonest - "what treacherous dogs they are!" was one comment, not untypical (to Hardinge, 15 June 1921, Hardinge papers 44) - and at one cabinet meeting he referred to "the inherent perfidy and insincerity of French policy" (conclusions, 1 Nov. 1922, Cab.23/32, Cab. 64(22), Annex iv). The Germans he regarded as stupid, clumsy and dangerous. Without naming either country he said that Britain was being thwarted by "the shortsightedness, sometimes by the treachery, of some of our neighbours, and by what appears to be the obstinacy or the stupidity of others" (Imperial Conference minutes, 5 Oct. 1923, Cab.32/9 (3), p. 27). Crowe even warned Headlam-Morley against debating the question of war-guilt with German historians - "German controversialists are not clean-handed", and they would be unlikely to follow the British example of acting honestly and fairly (minute, 29 June 1920, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 564, 205346/9019/39).

2 Jones, Whitehall Diary, I, p. 131 (7 March 1921).

3 War Office memorandum, 29 Jan. 1925, Cab.4/12, 562-B.

4 Cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.29(22)2.
treat her as an outcast would be, in Curzon's words, ridiculous and insane. She was necessary, economically and strategically, and to be of use and assistance she had first to be helped. But she need not be and was not liked; at best she remained the ex-enemy.

Dislike was reinforced by fear. Everyone was acutely aware that Germany's defeat was not definitive, that her weakness was not total, that some day, sooner or later, she would recover her strength and would almost certainly try to revise some of the Treaty clauses. The British and French governments feared that this new strength might be channelled into militarism, that the Versailles settlement might be challenged by force, and that "as time goes on no Power may be able to enforce the terms of the Treaty single-handed against a resuscitated Germany". To prevent this the British preached and even practiced appeasement, but they feared that French intransigence in interpreting and enforcing the Treaty would negative their efforts. Lloyd George condemned French folly in harrassing Germany - her powerlessness would not last and "a nation which is exasperated by repeated provocation will not reckon the cost" of its revenge, and the end result of such provocation might be a more complete destruction of France than anything she had endured until then.

This view was held almost universally, but the emphasis was often different, so that where Lloyd George saw Germany as a stunned giant which might be wakened and angered by the pinpricks of a weaker opponent, Curzon saw her as a patient schemer, biding her time and plotting her revenge, "a revenge which it requires small knowledge of the German

1 Imperial Conference minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.24.
2 Cabinet conclusions, 8 April 1920, Cab.23/21, Cab.18(20). Five years later a Foreign Office memorandum, written by Harold Nicolson but, according to a note by Chamberlain, reflecting Foreign Office opinion as a whole, held that Germany would move towards altering the position of Silesia and the Corridor, and that "if France were isolated and British neutrality to be assured, she might also endeavour to attack France" (20 Feb. 1925, F.0.371/10734, C2201/459/18)
3 Hansard, 5s., HC, 146, col. 1233 (16 Aug. 1921).
4 Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.46. Churchill too urged that the excessive French reparations demands would lead to "a tremendous economic disaster in Europe and to the concentration of all German thought and energy upon a war of revenge" (memorandum, 21 April 1921, Cab.24/122, C.P. 2885).
character to be sure that that country will systematically and relentlessly pursue as long as she sees any chance of success". Later he described her as "hopelessly defeated in the war, impotent, conscious of her impotence, but burning with an unslaked wrath and thinking of future revenge". At the Peace Conference even Churchill, the main advocate of appeasement, thought it likely that Germany would produce munitions quietly, and would come into the open only when the allies had begun to quarrel among themselves. The soldiers reinforced the pessimism of the cabinet and Foreign Office; the general staff included in its assessment of German aspirations the aim "presumably to recover, and possibly to increase, territory and possessions held in 1914", and the War Office assumed that in time the two countries would again go to war.

Except for the fact that they were projected too far into the future, estimates of Germany's future strength and objectives were impressively realistic, unclouded by illusions or wishful thinking. It was universally assumed that in a future conflict, which many expected and all saw as possible, she would again prove to be a most formidable opponent. Some years later, in 1925, Churchill even feared that without American or Russian support, England, France and Belgium would be "a combination which does not inspire much confidence" in a war with Germany on the Continent.

Yet ever since the Peace Conference he and others contemplated an even worse nightmare than that of the Western

2 Imperial Conference minutes, 5 Oct. 1923, Cab.32/9(3), p. 26. It is interesting to see how little difference there is between the tone of the speech and of the memorandum. More guardedly, Curzon told the German ambassador that "the growing population of Germany, which in another quarter century might double that of France, the vigour and spirit of her people and the sentiments of resentment and revenge which might be expected to animate the rising generation, would, in another twenty or thirty years, constitute a very real peril" (Curzon to Sir S. Head (Berlin), describing a conversation with Sthamer, 22 March 1923, F.0.371/8724, C5439/313/18).
3 War cabinet conclusions, 28 Feb. 1919, Cab.538A.
4 Memorandum, 5 Oct. 1921, Cab.4/7, 276-B.
5 Central Department memorandum, 8 July 1924, F.0.371/9818, C11164/2048/18.
6 Churchill to Chamberlain, 23 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257. This followed a reference to the possibility of a war, which, at worst, might be decades away.
democracies having to face, alone, a new German onslaught; that of a Russo-German combination which would dominate Europe. Not surprisingly, Lloyd George and Churchill, the two members of the cabinet most inclined to make concessions to Germany, were also the two who warned most often and most fervently against the dangers of such an alliance — an alliance which the concessions they advocated were designed to avert.

At an early stage in the Peace Conference Churchill, in a speech to the Council of Ten, argued that insufficient attention was being paid to the danger of a Russo-German rapprochement. Before 1914 Russia had been the decisive factor in the European balance of power, and since the armistice she had been replaced by the British and American armies. These were being demobilized or withdrawn. At that time Germany presented no threat, but after five or ten years, with a population twice that of France and with three times as many conscripts, her position might be very different. He drew a picture of Germany extending her influence in Russia and thus recovering the resources which she had lost through her defeat and the terms of the Peace Treaty. And he was probably the unnamed minister who told the cabinet some years later that even though many would be repelled by the idea of giving any assistance to Germany, the government must recognize that "Germany is to us much the most important country in Europe not only on account of our trade with her, but also because she is the key to the situation in Russia".

Lloyd George was afraid that Germany would adopt the role of France after 1871 and seek an ally in the East, however ideologically incompatible that ally might be, or as he told

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1 Council of Ten minutes, 15 Feb. 1919, P.P.C., iv, p. 15. The estimate of five to ten years for a German recovery was alarmist, and no-one would have taken it seriously. Shortly afterwards Churchill told the cabinet that he thought there was a serious possibility of a Russo-German rapprochement; "they were both in the pit of misery, which men in each country attributed to the folly shown in fighting each other" (war cabinet conclusions, 28 Feb. 1919, Cab.23/15, Cab.538A).

2 Cabinet conclusions, 10 Jan. 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.1(22).

3 Cabinet conclusions, 30 May 1921, Cab.23/25, Cab.43(21); D'Abernon, Ambassador, i, p. 135 (diary, 21 June 1921). He argued that a Russo-German alliance was the natural counterpart to a Franco-Polish alliance, and that hatred of the Poles would draw the two countries together (Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p. 46).
the House of Commons after the Treaty of Rapallo had revived these apprehensions, there was a community of misfortune and debasement between the two pariahs which might ripen into a fierce friendship. ¹ He forecast that "the development of Europe may be on the lines of two very formidable groups facing each other, or, if France persists in her attitude, she may find herself alone against the most formidable military combination that the world has ever seen". ²

These fears were not confined to Lloyd George and Churchill, and other members of the cabinet and Foreign Office voiced them from time to time, though not with the same insistence or degree of anxiety. The army was also perturbed by the prospect. In a memorandum written in August 1920, admittedly at a time when it seemed that Russia had triumphed over Poland, the general staff urged that Germany be given more hope for the future, that as long as she felt that she was being trampled under the "iron heel of French militarism", a Bolshevik alliance would offer her brighter prospects than that of continued subjection to the allies, and that the French policy of grinding her down might well end in disaster.³ A Foreign Office memorandum on British policy in Central Europe stated that if the result of the Genoa Conference were "to confirm France in her refusal to treat Germany and Russia other than as pariahs, then sooner or later, we feel, these two great populations will be cemented into a union of hostility to Western Europe". ⁴

The prospect of such a great Eastern bloc terrified Britain and France, and each new development in the relations between the two outcasts, even the steady alienation of France and Germany, caused considerable anxiety in London.

¹ Hansard, 5s., HC, 154, col. 1456 (25 May 1922).
² Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.46. The threat to France in this remark is revealing.
³ 6 Aug. 1920, Cab.24/110, C.P. 1782. Such an alliance, it was argued, would destroy the Treaty of Versailles and possibly Bolshevise the whole of Europe.
⁴ 9 May 1922, F.0.371/7567, C6875/6200/18. Many others wrote in a similar vein, but D'Abernon refused to take the idea seriously, assuming that "any military combination between the aristocratic imperialist military leaders and the Communist forces in Soviet Russia is unthinkable" (memorandum, 7 Jan. 1925, F.0.371/10726, C459/459/18). By this stage military cooperation between the two countries had been under way for over two years.
Germany was a possible defector from the ranks of the anti-Bolshevik democracies, she was not only positively a possible barrier to Russian and Communist expansion, but also, negatively, a possible spearhead of a Russo-German alliance. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact had been foreseen long in advance.

Similarly, the threat of a rapprochement between Russia and the Western allies at the Genoa Conference scared Germany into signing the Treaty of Rapallo as a pre-emptive move, and Russia fought hard to deter Germany from coming to terms with Britain and France in the months before Locarno. Each of the three powers, the Franco-British combination, Germany and Russia, was suspicious of an alliance between the other two, each feared that the shape of the triangular relationship would be changed and that the other two "angles" would draw closer together, leaving it at the apex in an exposed and vulnerable position.

There were two consoling features in Britain's forebodings of future German aggression, the likelihood that it would be directed against the East rather than against the West, and that, in any event, it would not occur for a considerable time. During the Peace Conference Balfour had written a memorandum arguing that if Germany were to revive her interest in world politics she would probably direct her attentions towards the East; that in the war her great successes had lain in that direction, and her great failures in the West; that the states to her West were stronger than they had been in 1914 and those to the East were weaker; and that it was there that "the storm will first break".

A mere fortnight after Balfour wrote this memorandum, Curzon reassured Cambon to the same effect: "was it not probable, and even certain, that the political and military ambitions of Germany, should they revive, would be directed to the East rather than to the West, and that the object of any future attack would not be her old enemy, but the congeries of small and feeble states, whom we were trying to conjure into existence between Germany and Russia, but in whose continued stability I did not feel any great confidence".

2 Curzon to Derby, 2 April 1919, describing a conversation with Cambon, F.O.608/124, 2016/448/2/4. Disputes and even wars in Eastern Europe were widely expected. D'Abernon wrote that it would be as wise or as unwise to protect all cats against all (continued)
France's fears of a German attack on her were seen as unrealistic, and her attempts to solidify the frontiers of her allies as dangerous. As Britain's constant attempts to benefit Germany in the Silesian question showed clearly, she was not averse to changes in Germany's favour in Eastern Europe.

Yet even though such a deflection of Germany's energies would be welcome, and even though it would not impinge directly on fundamental British interests such as the retention of the Channel ports in friendly hands, the possibility of a German attack on her Eastern neighbours posed serious problems. There was a general realization that however much British governments might try to divorce Eastern and Western European problems, a German attack on new states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia would have serious repercussions in the West, probably in the form of a Franco-German war, and that Britain would find it difficult to avoid being dragged into the conflict. The French policy of building up a system of alliances in Eastern Europe, and thereby linking the problems and the destinies of the two areas, met with no sympathy in London. In the same conversation with Cambon early in 1919 Curzon remarked: "long before France had to fight any further battle for Paris, might we not all be engaged in a war for the recovery or the security of Eastern Europe?" Britain's relief that Germany might strike at a region with which she was not concerned - summed up by Lloyd George when he told Briand that the people had little interest in what happened in Eastern Europe and would not be ready to become involved in quarrels over Poland, Danzig or Upper Silesia, and by Chamberlain's paraphrase of Bismarck, that the Polish Corridor was not worth the bones of a British dogs as to undertake to protect Poland against Russia and Germany (Ambassador, i, p. 232 (diary, 18 Dec. 1921)).

1 Wolfers makes the point that if British policy had been influenced by the threat of a war with Germany, she would need French assistance, and each new ally of France would be welcome. But Britain was not primarily interested in seeking assistance, rather in preventing any new attack on France's Eastern frontier, and if the French became involved in Eastern European conflicts, such an attack would be more likely. So Britain opposed these French commitments (Britain and France between the Wars, p. 240).

2 Curzon to Derby, 2 April 1919, F.O. 608, 2016/448/2/4.

grenadier was tempered by the fear that despite this lack of interest she might still have to become involved in protecting the new Eastern European states.

The possibility of a German attack against Poland was seen as a real danger, but it was felt universally that, at worst, this could not occur for decades to come. Curzon consoled himself with the thought that Germany, "though assuredly destined to recover, cannot for many years be a military danger to Europe, or even to France alone," and Chamberlain's calculations were "not for today or tomorrow but for some date like 1950 or 1960 when German strength will have returned and when the prospect of war will again cloud the horizon". Most of the other forecasts of another war were expressed in similar terms. The War Office expected the German menace to reappear earlier than most, in 1935 when the last Rhineland zone was to be evacuated and Germany could be expected to be "reconditioned and redisciplined and thirsting for revenge". But this alarmism carried little weight with either the cabinet or the Foreign Office and Chamberlain's timetable was more representative of official thought on the matter.

There was no lack of foresight on the part of the British authorities, no blindness to the possibility of a German war of revenge. The events of 1938-40 had been anticipated, at least in their general outline. (Interestingly, no-one

1 Chamberlain to Crewe, 14 Feb. 1925, Crewe papers C/8.
2 Such a prospect was particularly galling to Lloyd George who was virulently opposed to Polish policy in Eastern Europe.
5 Memorandum, 8 July 1924, F.0.371/9818, C11164/2048/18.
6 Headlam-Horley, at least, foresaw future developments in detail as well as in outline. In a memorandum written early in 1925 he asked "has anyone attempted to realise what would happen if there were to be a new partition of Poland, or if the Czechoslovak State were to be so curtailed and dismembered that in fact it disappeared from the map of Europe? Imagine, for instance, that under some improbable condition, Austria rejoined Germany; that Germany, using the discontented minority in Bohemia, demanded a new frontier far over the mountains, including Carlsbad and Pilsen, and at the same time, in alliance with Germany, the Hungarians recovered the Southern slope of the Carpathians. This would be catastrophic, and even if we neglected to interfere to prevent it happening, we should be driven to interfere, probably too late" (12 Feb. 1925, F.0.371/11064, W1252/9/98, p. 8).
forecast the pattern of 1941; that of a German war on two fronts as in 1914-17, and an Anglo-Russian alliance. In the early 1920s the Soviet government was beyond the pale.) Yet apart from an insistence that Germany fulfil her disarmament obligations, no action was taken to diminish her opportunities to wage war again. This was partly the result of short-term interests and necessities such as the need for a peaceful Europe and for the resumption of trade, and it is not surprising that the immediate advantages of rebuilding Germany's economic strength took precedence over a long-term danger that, after all, might never materialize. But there was an even more fundamental reason.

British policy towards Germany was based on an act of hope, hope that 1914 would not be repeated, that enough time would elapse before she could challenge the status quo for it to have solidified, and even that the Germans themselves might become resigned to it, that, as Austen Chamberlain put it, they would become prosperous, reconciled and unwilling to risk war. The government and the Foreign Office hoped that Germany's strength would be channelled into the right, i.e. peaceful and democratic direction, and they placated her, thinking that the greater her stake in the new Europe, the less likely would she be to undermine it.

But there was an almost total divorce between fear and hope, and the first emotion, while evident, had virtually no influence whatever on the policy based upon the second. Like so many others before and since, the British government displayed a feminine ability to compartmentalize different aspects of a situation without letting one impinge on the other, and to be herself influenced by them alternately, not simultaneously. It gave no serious consideration to what would be the consequences if the French were right, if German development were to follow aggressive, militaristic lines in the not too distant future. Only when the growth of Germany's air power in the 1930s ended Britain's long invulnerability and reduced her position to one comparable with that of France did her relative detachment come to an end.

Whatever Britain's long-term policy might be, in the short run Paris was more important to her than Berlin, and one of

the fixed points in her policy towards Europe after the Treaty of Versailles was the continuation of her special relationship with France. Despite their numerous quarrels, France remained a partner if not always a friend, a recent ally who would find it hard to lose all the sympathy she enjoyed in Britain, both in political circles and among the general public, and a neighbour whose enmity in war was inconceivable.

Curzon listed the principles of his foreign policy as being the protection of British interests, the preservation of peace and the continuation of allied cooperation. This last point meant in effect remaining on good terms with France. He wanted "as far as possible to ignore her bad tempers and humours and insults: to stick loyally to the main principles of the Entente, to check her vagaries wherever possible, and never to do or say anything here which would impair or make matters worse". The Foreign Office found this a congenial policy, even though its leading officials, like Curzon himself, were often so exasperated by French actions that they

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1 Curzon found it difficult to sympathize with "the mentality of the French race,...the French practice of subordinating even the most trivial issues to general considerations of expediency, based on far-reaching plans for the relentless promotion of French prestige and the gratifications of private, generally monetary and often sordid interests or ambitions, only too frequently pursued with a disregard of ordinary rules of straightforward and loyal dealing which is repugnant and offensive to normal British instincts". However, in mitigation, he conceded that they were "not really conscious of the extent of their shortcomings" (memorandum, 28 Dec. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, pp. 866-67). Harding, although a renowned Francophile, shared this attitude towards the Untermensch: advising Curzon to take a tough line with the French he told him "with Latin races it is essential to stand up to them, the only thing that really matters being the question of form" (12 Nov. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44). Amery's views were the most extreme. He told Baldwin that the European nations were one as bad as the other, "though on the whole I think the "Dago" tribes, viz. French and Italians etc., are probably worse than the others" (1 Oct. 1923, Baldwin papers, 128).

2 Curzon also complained that British public opinion, at least as reflected in the press, was so Francophile that "if a British Minister dared at any time to utter a word of remonstrance or warning to France, he is as likely to be rebuked by the British papers as he is certain to be abused by the French" (memorandum, 28 Dec. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, p. 863, W15355/12716/17).

3 Imperial Conference minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.22.

4 Curzon to Hardinge, 23 Oct. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44. He fondly imagined this to be the policy he actually pursued.
adopted a hectoring and bullying tone towards their ally; their belief that Britain's policy must be "to show an united front to the Boche, and to act as the closest ally of the French", ¹ and that "from the point of view of general foreign policy, the maintenance of the Entente is of supreme importance" ² was subordinated to their conviction that Britain must remain the senior partner in the relationship. Yet however far removed their practice of foreign policy might be from their principle of cooperation with France, this principle was held firmly and sincerely.

The Foreign Office was more Francophile than the cabinet, where Lloyd George and Churchill in particular sometimes gave the impression, at least to their enemies who were inclined to receive such impressions, of being more in sympathy with Germany than with France (and, in Lloyd George's case, more with Russia than with Poland). But even they regarded good relations with France as the natural basis of British foreign policy. Churchill warned the Imperial Conference of 1921 that to break away from France, suddenly and brutally, leaving her to fend for herself, would provoke a violent reaction of British public opinion, ³ and Lloyd George, after lamenting that the alliance which had won the war was falling to pieces, that the two countries could not agree on anything, that France wanted to adopt Bismarck's attitude which nearly brought on war in 1874 (sic), concluded that it was essential to come to a complete understanding with the French on all the important issues between them. There was a general feeling of benovolence towards France, that much might be forgiven her, and there was an awareness of a political interdependence between the two countries similar to Britain's economic interdependence with Germany.

France's Continental hegemony caused little concern.

Lord D'Abernon, who believed in the balance of power and

¹ Hardinge to Grahame (The Hague), 10 April 1920, Hardinge papers, 42.
² Minute by Crowe, 30 Nov. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, p. 828, n., C228/14/2740/18.
³ Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.48. However a few years later he told Chamberlain that "it should never be admitted...that England cannot, if the worst comes to the worst, stand alone. I decline to accept as an axiom that our fate is bound with that of France" (23 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O.800/257).
appreciated Germany's importance as a counterweight to the overwhelming strength of France,¹ was untypical, and so was Lloyd George himself, who held that "France was the danger to the peace of Europe".² More representative was Henry Wilson who rejoiced that France was so strong and that Britain had so powerful an ally.³ In fact, awareness of how dangerous an enemy France could be, and of how she could damage Britain far more effectively than Germany would be capable of doing in the foreseeable future, of her geographical position, her vast army and air force, her system of alliances in Eastern Europe, all entitled her to a specially privileged position. She was troublesome as a friend, but as an enemy she would have been impossible.⁴

In the early 1920s the C.I.D. displayed some anxiety at the full extent of French power. At one discussion on the French air force Churchill advocated that if relations with France deteriorated further, Britain should have to consider seriously the problems of defence against her.⁵ The committee concluded that if France were strong on land, sea and air, and Britain weak, the consequent dependence of the Empire on French goodwill would be intolerable,⁶ and Lloyd George felt it was necessary to take precautions against a war with France since, even if it were never to occur, fear

¹ D'Abernon, Ambassador, ii, pp. 186 & 238 (diary, 4 April & 20 Aug. 1923). In the latter entry he wrote that all the arguments which were valid against Germany in 1914 were then valid against France, and that the French position was even stronger than that of Germany before the war. This was "a powerful reason against still further increasing the disbalance of power".

² Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 178 (22 Nov. 1921). He made innumerable remarks of this nature.

³ C.I.D. minutes, 28 Nov. 1921, Cab.2/3/151.

⁴ As Crowe put it in his memorandum of 6 April 1920, "it may be true that we already suffer so much from French opposition and intrigues in every field that nothing worse can come of a definite breach. But there still remain a large number of important questions which cannot be settled at all except by some agreement between England and France and such agreement even under existing conditions of friction and want of confidence will be less difficult and less tardy than if we openly quarrel and defy each other" (D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 327, 189676/4252/18).

⁵ C.I.D. minutes, 31 Oct. 1921, Cab.2/3/147. At the same meeting, however, he deprecated the discussion of the possibility of war with France - if the fact of the discussions were known, it would worsen relations with her still further.

⁶ C.I.D. minutes, 23 Nov. 1921, Cab.2/3/150
of it would weaken British diplomacy and the knowledge of
t heir power would be a powerful weapon in the hands of French
statesmen — and one which they could be relied upon to use.\(^1\)
But such apprehensions were confined to a small minority, and
were felt even by them to be utterly remote, far less likely
to be realized than their fears of a Russo-German alliance.
British public and official opinion had become used to think-
ing within the framework of the Entente, and to regard France
as a possible future enemy, like Germany, required too great
an effort of imagination.

France was seen as a shield against the current instabil-
ity and the future menace of Germany, just as Germany in turn
was seen as a shield against the even greater turmoil and
uncertainty of Eastern Europe; Britain wished to erect a
series of barriers to protect herself from disturbances, and
France formed the inner ring of this system. Curzon was able
to refer in passing to "the eastern frontier of France, which
is also the external frontier of Britain",\(^2\) and in 1924 the
War Office view was summarized as follows: "France's security
is our security. In course of time Germany will again clash
with Great Britain. France and Great Britain are military
necessities to each other — France to us as a buffer between
ourselves and Germany, and we to France as covering her on all
fronts except the German one".\(^3\)

While French strength was so great that she could not be
regarded simply as a buffer state, many saw her imposing
military superiority for the unnatural and transient phenom-
enon it was — indeed if nothing else undermined confidence in
French power, her own inferiority complex and dread of a
German recovery should have been enough to do so. Her
anxiety to contain Germany by all possible means, by dismem-
berment, by reparations demands, by the recruitment of allies

\(^1\) C.I.D. minutes, 5 July 1922, Cab.2/3/158. In 1923 a sub-
committee reported, in terms of tons of bombs, the damage
which the French air force could do to London and remarked
that "the military consequences of such a situation are
sufficiently obvious. The diplomatic disadvantages, if
allowed to continue, must be very serious" (memorandum, 17
June 1923, Cab.24/160, C.P.270(23)).

\(^2\) Memorandum by Curzon, 28 Dec. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, p.865,
W13355/12716/17.

\(^3\) Central Department memorandum, 8 July 1924, F.0.371/9818,
C11164/2048/18.
in Eastern Europe - with Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania forming an inadequate substitute for the pre-war Russian alliance - lessened not only faith in her strength, but also anxiety about it. During the Peace Conference, even before the full extent of French insecurity had become apparent, Balfour argued that "no manipulation of the Rhine frontier is going to make France any more than a second-rate Power, trembling at the nod of its great neighbours on the East, and depending from day to day on the changes and chances of a shifting diplomacy and uncertain alliances".¹

Churchill told the Imperial Conference in 1921 that "no one can doubt the deep-rooted nature of the fear which this poor, mutilated, impoverished France has of this mighty Germany which is growing up on the other side of the Rhine",² and Crowe advised Curzon that "what is ultimately in the French mind... is the apprehension that within a measurable time there will arise on the other side of the French frontier a new Germany rapidly returning to a position approaching her former strength, whilst France, exhausted by the war and with a stationary population, will be powerless to meet the rivalry of a neighbour thirsting for revenge".³

Hardinge wrote from Paris that the guiding force behind French policy was fear of Germany, the certainty of her early recovery from her defeat, and the possibility of French isolation against her in the not-too-distant future.⁴

However Britain's policy towards France was as ambivalent as was that towards Germany. The reality of France's basic weakness and of her resulting sense of insecurity was recognized, as was the fact that in this insecurity lay the cause

¹ Memorandum, 18 March 1919, Balfour papers, B.M., Add. MS 49751, p. 233; Dugdale, Balfour, ii, p. 278.
² Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p. 361. The general staff estimated that France's population, 39½ million in 1924, would decline to 35 million by 1950 and 25 million by 1965; and that Germany's population, 61½ million in 1924, would be over 80 million in 1965 (memorandum, 29 Sept. 1924, Cab.4/11, 516-B, Appx.).
³ Crowe to Curzon, 12 Feb. 1921, F.0.371/5843, C3340/3340/62.
⁴ Hardinge to Curzon, 3 June 1921, F.0.371/6995, W6618/6298/17. The day before Hardinge wrote this Arnold Robertson reported from Koblenz that Barthou, the French minister for War, had told him France had a continual fear of the Entente breaking down and of having to face Germany alone (2 June 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, p. 684, C11564/416/18).
of many of the French measures in Central and Eastern Europe which Britain found so foolish and so destructive. It was accepted that if the government could do anything to mitigate these fears it would be in its interest to do so. Lord Robert Cecil remarked that unless Britain could meet French demands for security it was useless to expect her to cooperate in pacifying Europe, since this must involve in one way or another the restoration of Germany,1 and Churchill also appreciated that fear was "the explanation and to a certain extent the excuse for the intolerant and violent action which France is taking", and that if there were any means of reducing this fear it ought to be considered seriously.2

But this sympathy never progressed from expressions of concern and goodwill to positive action, it was emotional and platonic - a strange combination - not rational or productive. Britain herself feared a revived Germany, but this did not significantly influence her policy, and while appreciating that France's cause for alarm was greater than her own, she half-expected that the French too should take the matter calmly. The British government willed the end but not the means; France's anxiety about her future security met with consideration and sympathy, but her attempts to secure it provoked outraged resentment.

While many in the cabinet and Foreign Office seemed able to appreciate the French defensive mentality, few could accept its consequences or could realize that it was insecurity rather than ambition which drove her to extend her power and influence, to hold Germany down and build up counterweights in the East. Few were able to appreciate that for France, attack was the best method of defence, and in general British leaders seized on other explanations for her behaviour, usually ascribing it either to chauvinism or imperialism. Lloyd George was often incensed by French policy. Riddell recalls one conversation in which the prime minister began by asserting that there was no doubt that the French had military aspirations, that "they want to revive the Napoleonic ideal". Chamberlain defended them, claiming that they were

1 Cecil to H. A. Gwynne (of the Morning Post), 17 March 1921, Bonar Law papers, 106/6/10).
2 Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 2, p.361.
not acting out of malevolence but out of funk, but Lloyd George would not accept this. The British also presumed that France was motivated by territorial ambitions. Lloyd George thought that they were more anxious to obtain the left bank of the Rhine than their share of reparations, while Curzon agreed with Harding's verdict that France was still determined to get hold of the Rhineland. Her military links with Czechoslovakia, Poland and Romania were seen as another aspect of her imperialism rather than as another defensive measure.

Most of the Anglo-French disputes and misunderstandings were caused by reparations. From the beginning of 1920 onwards the British were exasperated by France's insistence that she get her full pound of reparations flesh no matter what the consequences of this might be, and conference after produced ever more deep-rooted antagonisms, so much so that Kerr was to write to the prime minister that French governments would have to choose between enforcing the Treaty by themselves, and abandoning about 50% of their expectations to secure the support of British public opinion. Balfour was driven to lament that it was Britain's misfortune to have an ally who "at one and the same time wanted a Germany rich enough to pay indemnities, and also a Germany that was ruined"; he and his colleagues could not appreciate that France's insistence on getting all the reparations which Germany was obliged to pay, rather than all that she was able

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1 Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 196 (15 May 1920). Six months later he said that France wished to resume her position as military dictator of Europe (ibid., p. 247 (13 Nov. 1920)). Lloyd George was obsessed by what he saw as the historical pattern of French racial hatred of Germany. On one occasion he described it as going back four hundred years, and on another he pushed it back to the time of Caesar (cabinet conclusions, 5 July 1922, Cab.23/36, S.52; minutes of a conversation with Giolitti at Lucerne, 22 Aug. 1922, D.B.F.P., I, viii, p. 759).

2 Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 131 (cabinet, 7 May 1921).


4 But the French position was entirely logical. As Wolfers put it, "the problem of holding Germany in her place was like that of besieging a fortress. Of what use would it be to stand guard on one exit only?" (Britain and France between the Wars, p. 98).

5 Kerr to Lloyd George, 2 Sept. 1920, Lloyd George papers, F/90/1/18.

6 Cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.29(22)2.
to pay, was only partly the result of greed, and that it was also the result of dread and procrastination, of a feeling that the longer Germany was kept prostrate, the longer breathing space France would have before she crawled to her feet and attacked again.

As the years went by and French military supremacy remained unchallenged while her concern for her security became even more pronounced, British governments began gradually to lose what little patience they had had. The most extreme reaction came from Balfour, who declared himself to be "so cross with the French", and thought "their obsession is so intolerably foolish....They are dreadfully afraid of being swallowed up by the tiger, but yet they spend their time poking it", and Curzon in reply remarked simply that "the tiger is not a tiger for the moment". Only Chamberlain continued to realize that the French people really were afraid, and that sooner or later the British government would have to remove some of the cause of this fear.

It would be an exaggeration to say that while Britain's attitude towards Germany was one of understanding without sympathy, that towards France was one of sympathy without understanding. But there is some truth in the over-simplification, and certainly she devoted far more time and thought to appeasing Germany than to appeasing France.

The British and French situations and their attitudes towards Germany might be compared to that of two weak adults watching a healthy and potentially menacing child growing up, facing the possibility that, sooner or later, it might turn on them and be a match for them both. Britain advocated kindness, hoping to sweeten the child's nature while it was still in its formative years. France urged infanticide before it was too late. Each negativized the other's efforts.

Apart from the long-festering dispute over reparations, Anglo-French relations in the early 1920s were marked by a series of bitter quarrels. At the end of 1921 Curzon compiled an impressive list of the disputes between the two countries:

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1 C.I.D. minutes, 13 Feb. 1925, Cab.24/172, Cab.105(5).
2 To quote Wolfers again: "French fears they considered exaggerated, while German resentment appeared justified" (Britain and France between the Wars, p. 244).
"in almost every quarter of the globe, whether it be Silesia or Bavaria or Hungary or the Balkans - Morocco or Egypt or Turkey or Mesopotamia - the representatives of France are actively pursuing a policy which is either unfriendly to British interests, or, if not that, is consecrated to the promotion of a French interest which is inconsistent with ours" (1). Some of the disputes, such as the conflicts over Tangier and Turkey and the unilateral French recognition of General Wrangel in Russia, had little to do with Germany and French security apart from their cumulative effect of heightening tension between the two countries. The questions of French submarines and the Ruhr occupation will be dealt with in later chapters. The other two outstanding problems were those of the Frankfurt occupation of 1920 and the partition of Silesia.

What was probably the bitterest clash between Britain and France since Fashoda took place in April 1920 in the confused aftermath of the Kapp putsch. When the miners in the Ruhr rebelled against the new military government in Berlin, and continued their revolt after its collapse, the restored democratic German government appealed to the allies on 17 March asking for permission to move troops into the demilitarized zone in order to crush the rising. The British were sympathetic and felt that the moderate Bauer administration should be supported by all possible means, but the French refused their consent unless they in turn were allowed to occupy Frankfurt and Darmstadt as guarantees of a speedy German withdrawal from the demilitarized zone. This was rejected by the German government and opposed strongly by Lloyd George and Curzon. Finally the French gave permission for the German troops to move in, Bauer announced this to the

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3 This provoked Lloyd George's complaint that the allies were neither sending troops of their own nor allowing the Germans to do so, and that as a result the Bolsheviks were establishing themselves in the Ruhr (minutes of allied conference, London, 18 March 1920, D.B.F.P., I, vii, p. 547, I.C.P. 78). Both the British representatives in Germany, Lord Kilmarnock and General Malcolm, approved of the German desire to use the army to crush the disturbances (Kilmarnock to Curzon, 20 March 1920, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 202, 186837/4232/18).
Reichstag, and Millerand, the French prime minister, under attack in Paris, promptly retreated and withdrew his consent. The German troops marched into the demilitarized zone anyway, without waiting for the allies to give their permission again, and France at once seized the German towns as hostages.

Britain had been consulted neither about Millerand's agreement that the Germans could crush the disturbances nor about the French retaliatory occupation of Frankfurt, and the cabinet was understandably indignant. Its members found themselves in the embarrassing position of having either to declare to the world that the unity of the alliance was broken, or to express approval of, and assume responsibility for, a policy which they held to be wrong and dangerous. Lloyd George feared that Britain might one day either be dragged into war through such an action by the French government, or else be forced to repudiate her ally. Even Chamberlain, the most Francophile member of the cabinet, found the French move intolerable. Cambon told Curzon that during the whole of his twenty-two years' service in England, this was the most painful and serious problem with which he had been faced.

The French showed themselves in the worst possible light in the Frankfurt incident - petty, legalistic, intransigent and dishonest. But Lloyd George's dismissal of their

2 Curzon complained to Cambon that within hours of giving Britain assurances that France did not intend isolated action, the French went ahead and occupied Frankfurt and Darmstadt (Curzon to Derby, 8 April 1920, describing a conversation with Cambon, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 340, 190858/4232/18).
3 Curzon to Derby, 6 April 1920, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 325, 190181/4232/18. Lloyd George declared himself anxious to publicize the quarrel with the French (Jones, Whitehall Diary, i. p. 111, cabinet, 8 April 1920).
4 Ibid., pp. 108-111. Lloyd George was as sympathetic towards the plight of the Germans as he was resentful at the French unilateral action. Jones describes him as saying "they have sent black troops to Frankfort. If the Germans sent niggers from German Africa to Newcastle? Frankfort is a proud city!" (Ibid., p. 108).
5 Curzon to Derby, 8 April 1920, describing a conversation with Cambon, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 342, 190858/4232/18.
reasons - that "these new men are weak and want to appear strong"\(^1\) - went only a short distance towards explaining it. The French over-reacted because they were afraid of appearing acquiescent, of encouraging the Germans to think that they could escape with any infringement of the Treaty of Versailles, however minute. Like Curzon's famous description of his own views on foreign policy two decades earlier,\(^2\) they would be as strong in small things as in big. The British government concentrated on the bad tactics of the French, on their rashness and secretiveness, and on the principle and practice of unilateral action. They quite failed to appreciate that behind these faulty tactics lay a sound, or at least a defensible strategy.

The dispute over Silesia also demonstrated the conflicting interests and the lack of mutual understanding between the two allies. France, wishing simultaneously to weaken her German foe and strengthen her Polish protegé, fought hard to ensure that as much as possible of the Silesian coalfields went to Poland in the plebiscite of March 1921 and in the long and complicated negotiations which followed it.\(^3\) Britain fought equally hard to make sure that as many of the coalfields as possible were awarded to Germany,\(^4\) with the dual aims of strengthening Germany's economic and political position, and of enabling her to pay more reparations. As Loucheur admitted in a discussion between the British and French leaders, while the British proposals for partitioning the province would give 11% of the German population to Poland and 65% of the Poles to Germany, the French plan would assign 23% of the Poles to Germany and 48% of the Germans to Poland.\(^5\)

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1 Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 108 (cabinet, 8 April 1920).
2 Curzon to Lord Selborne, 9 April 1900, quoted in Ronaldshay, Curzon, i, p. 254, and Nicolson, Curzon, The Last Phase, p. 37.
3 The result of the referendum was 707,000 votes in favour of union with Germany and 479,000 in favour of Poland. According to Hardinge, another reason why France wanted Poland to gain possession of the coalfields in Silesia was that if Germany kept them she would be saved from total dependence on the Ruhr, and would thus be more independent of French threats to occupy the Ruhr (Hardinge to Curzon, 24 Dec. 1920, D.B.F.P., I, xi, p. 142, 014725/1621/16).
4 When the results of the plebiscite were known Curzon favoured assigning the whole province to Germany (Curzon to Col. Percival (Oppeln), 22 March 1921, F.O. 371/5892, C6032/92/18).
the situation dramatically, and declared of the French "their policy is to destroy Germany and occupy the Ruhr themselves, and hand over the Silesian coalfields to Poland. When that is done you have practically taken the lungs of Germany away - her right and left lung - and it is only a poor anaemic thing left, and only kept alive with such oxygen as it gets from outside". The French in return declared that "the attitude of the British government, if adhered to, would lead directly to a Franco-British rupture". With Silesia in mind Smuts remarked that while nominally cooperating with France, Britain was almost fighting her. The allies were unable to agree on any basis of partition, and finally, in despair, they handed the whole question over to the League of Nations for solution. The result was a partition which favoured Poland and left Germany further embittered.

As with the Frankfurt occupation in 1920, the situation revealed a gap between the two countries' viewpoints. The twenty-two miles of the Channel and the scuttling of the German fleet enabled Britain to see Germany and Europe with the eyes of a businessman, while the French felt obliged to look with the eyes of a soldier. Britain resented what she interpreted as a French attempt to sabotage the economic recovery of Germany and hence of the whole continent, and France, as ever more concerned with security than with reparations, was prepared to diminish Germany's capacity to pay her debts as laid down by the Treaty if this also involved diminishing her future economic and military strength. Neither side could appreciate the other's long-term interests.

At the Imperial Conference in 1921 Lloyd George told the assembled British and Dominion leaders that the French policy of driving the Germans into "fierce but suppressed hatred" was "the greatest act of folly which any race had ever perpetrated", but that Britain could not afford to wash her hands of the situation and that her own interests and those of the world compelled her to curb the French government. He claimed that "far from being dragged further and further behind

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1 Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.46.
2 Briand to Curzon, quoted by Curzon, 28 July 1921, cabinet conclusions, Cab.23/26, Cab.64(21), Appx. iv.
3 Imperial Conference minutes, 24 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.37.
4 Loucheur expressed this the following year when he told the Chamber of Deputies "entre la situation de ne pas etre paye et la situation de ne pas etre en securite, je n'hésite pas; je veux etre en securite (Débats Parlementaires, Chambre, 7 Nov. 1922, §. 2980)."
France, we have undoubtedly exercised a very restraining influence upon her". Curzon also emphasized Britain's moderating role: "we go about arm in arm with her, but with one of our hands on her collar, and if we relax that control I myself should be very much alarmed at the consequences that would ensue".

One method of restraint and influence open to the British government was the abortive guarantee treaty of 1919. Since much of France's aggressiveness sprang from insecurity, it might be lessened by a firm commitment of British assistance whenever France should be in danger from Germany, and even though it would clearly be more difficult to pass a unilateral British guarantee through parliament than it had been to pass the Anglo-American pact of 1919 - for one thing, the Labour Party was no longer sympathetic - it remained nonetheless a serious possibility. It was seen as a way, sometimes as the only way, of stabilizing a dangerously erratic and destructive France, of appeasing her, of restoring her sanity along with her security, of ensuring that she would treat Germany with the desired moderation, and that economics would be able to resume their natural precedence over politics.

The government and the Foreign Office retained a guilty conscience about the way in which they had evaded implementing the guarantee pact. In a memorandum on British commitments abroad, Harold Nicolson argued that although Britain's obligations under the 1919 treaty were not legally binding since it had not been ratified by the United States, a definite moral responsibility remained and Britain "must expect France to exploit this moral responsibility to obtain, if not the full guarantee of the original Treaty, at least some alternative undertaking which may constitute for us a perfectly definite commitment for the future". Crowe felt that Britain

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1 Imperial Conference minutes, 27 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.46. He felt that Britain retained greater influence with France as an ally, and remarked that Briand was able to use the threat of a breach with England to help win a majority in the Chamber.

2 Imperial Conference minutes, 22 June 1921, Cab.32/2, 1, p.23. He went on to suggest that if Britain were to relax her position, the peace of Europe might not last another five years.

3 10 July 1920, F.0.371/4713, C948/948/62. Nicolson's memorandum provoked seven pages of minutes, but none queried this remark.
had practically acknowledged her duty to defend France when she signed the treaty,¹ and that because of the quid pro quo agreed upon by the Big Three in March 1919, Britain was morally indebted to France.² This view was widely held in the Foreign Office,³ and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in the cabinet as well.

An unnamed cabinet member expressed the view that Britain was under a moral obligation to defend France.⁴ Churchill felt that "our duty towards France in this matter is rather an obvious one because she gave up her claims, very illegitimate claims as we thought them...to take a strong strategic position along the Rhine...and this Anglo-American guarantee was intended to be a substitute to France". Further, he held that one would have thought France's need of Britain was even greater after America's defection, but instead the treaty was invalidated.⁵ At a meeting in late 1921 the cabinet decided that if the question of the Anglo-American guarantee were to be raised at the Washington Conference, the British delegation should be honour bound to encourage American ratification in every way.⁶ This was a safe instruction, as the United States Senate was most unlikely to do anything of the sort; all the same, it indicated yet again the government's uneasy conscience. Only Curzon showed himself touchy on the matter, unwilling to admit that Britain, however legally justified,

1 Crowe to Curzon, 12 Feb. 1921, F.0.371/5843, C3340/3340/62.
2 Memorandum by Crowe, 26 Dec. 1921, F.0.371/7000, W13420/G. This memorandum was used by Curzon as a basis for his own two days later, but he did not incorporate this section in his version.
3 E.g., Headlam-Morley wrote of the French that "they use the opportunity afforded by the failure to attain what is justified; to press measures, the ultimate object of which is really the separation of the left bank from Germany....It would seem as though the only effective means of countering these proposals is a frank recognition of their legitimate claims, and an arrangement based on this" (memorandum, 10 Aug. 1922, F.0.371/7521, C11429/336/18). Miles Lampson summed up the matter succinctly when he wrote in late 1924 that he had always felt that France was justified in thinking she had been let down: "she agreed to a compromise as regards the Rhineland in return for treaties of guarantee from ourselves and America. Those both miscarried and she got nothing in their place. She now wishes to do so. I sympathise with her feelings" (minute, 6 Sept. 1924, F.0.371/9819, C14055/2048/18).
4 Cabinet conclusions, 10 Jan. 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.1(22).
5 Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921 Cab.32/2, 2, p.361.
6 Cabinet conclusions, 1 Nov. 1921, Cab.23/27, Cab.83(21)1.
had a moral obligation to fulfil. He asked, if British conduct were open to reproach, "how came it that from 1919 to 1921 - i.e. for two years no French Minister ever mentioned the matter by way either of protest or complaint", adding that as a rule the French were not backward in these matters.¹

It was true that, as Curzon said, the French governments never raised the question of a British guarantee treaty during the two and a half years which followed the signature of the Peace Treaties. There are several possible explanations; resentment at the way in which they had been outmanoeuvred by Lloyd George and Balfour; pride; a determination that France would fend for herself, once her allies had proved themselves unreliable - leading to an assertive and truculent attitude throughout these years; perhaps an awareness that, if she did bring the matter up, she might meet with a rebuff, or be asked to pay too high a price; or, most likely, a mixture of all of these.

She had good reason to hesitate. When the two governments came finally to discuss the matter, at the Cannes Conference in January 1922, the talks broke down largely because Britain demanded too much in return (although France had also increased her requirements in the years since the Treaty of Versailles). But the frequent discussions of the guarantee on the British side, in both the cabinet and the Foreign Office, were the result both of a bad conscience and, more importantly, of the desire to use the guarantee treaty as a means of "regulating" relations with France.

In 1920 and 1921 there was a widespread and growing feeling that if Britain were to sign a guarantee treaty with France it should be with the intention of inducing her to modify her policy towards Germany which had so consistently thwarted British economic objectives; as Crowe put it, only if France were satisfied by receiving the alliance she desired would Britain be able to make "those more equitable arrangements with Germany as regards reparations which we consider necessary, because in the end inevitable".² But if Britain were to make

¹ Minute by Curzon, 29 April 1922, F.O.371/7567, C6200/6200/18. In speeches at the Imperial Conference of 1921 he, Lloyd George and Balfour all denied allegations or implications of bad faith in the matter (7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 2, pp. 333-34, 339, 355 & 357).
the concession of concluding a guarantee pact, France must be

genuinely appeased by it and modify her policy towards Germany

accordingly. It was not enough to wait and hope that the

French would do this—such a change should be demanded as

the price of a treaty. This was reasonable, if perhaps

unwise and unrealistic, but it was accompanied by a feeling

that other demands should be made as well. France's renun-

ciation of her Rhineland ambitions tended to be ignored or

forgotten, and the sense of obligation felt by Churchill and

Crowe in particular assumed a minor role in British calcula-

tions. It became steadily clearer that France would have to

pay doubly for a guarantee treaty, and that the concessions

which she had already made over the Rhineland would have to

be followed by further concessions in Turkey and elsewhere.

Curzon showed less enthusiasm for the pact than most of

his colleagues and officials, and when the occupation of

Frankfurt strained Anglo-French relations to an unprecedented

degree, he remarked with relief that this incident made a

guarantee "well nigh impossible". France had demonstrated

her independence of mind and the risks in being bound to

defend her by treaty, while what London wanted was the exact

opposite, a dependent France to which she was under no obliga-

tion whatever. The affair led to a general toughening of

British attitudes towards France. Crowe wrote in a memorandum

on 6 April 1920 that the French were much more dependent on

British cooperation than Britain on French cooperation and that

"the present incident should enable us to show in what quandary

they would be if the alliance came to an end now. We can very

well urge that if we, in spite of what has happened, are will-

ing to continue on the old footing, we must now insist on a

greater spirit of accommodation and readiness to meet our views

in important matters than we have hitherto received. Here we

could bring in Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Tangier and possibly

other points. In fact the continuance of our friendship should

be rewarded by greater friendliness on the part of France". (2)

This view had already been put forward by Churchill in a

private letter which he sent Lloyd George at an early stage in

the Frankfurt crisis. He advocated an alliance with France,


2 Memorandum by Crowe, 6 April 1920, D.B.F.P., I, ix, p. 327,

189676/4232/18. This was prefaced by Crowe's remark that

Britain "should take the opportunity of a frank and explicit

explanation concerning the error of their ways in their

dealing generally with us".
but only if she "loyally accepts a British policy of help and
friendship towards Germany". In almost all subsequent dis­
cussions of the question, both in the cabinet and in the Foreign
Office, the idea of demanding a price for any guarantee which
might be offered was to be an important aspect of everyone's
calculations. Even the fanatically Francophile Henry Wilson,
who urged an alliance with France as the foundation of British
policy, held that it should involve conditions concerning not
only Germany but "the Near East etc." as well. 2

The moment for Churchill's suggestion could hardly have
been less suitable and it had no immediate result, but some
months later, when enough time had elapsed for Britain's
ruffled feelings to have become somewhat smoothed, Chamberlain
revived the proposal. He presented the cabinet with a memo­
randum in which he argued in favour of holding staff talks
with the French and Belgian authorities to consider plans
for resisting an attack on Belgium. In it he pointed out that,
with or without such contacts, British interests were deeply
involved in France, Belgium and the Netherlands, and he urged
that "this vital object of British policy should be consec­
rated and defended by a public treaty". 4 There was a discus­

1 Churchill to Lloyd George, 24 March 1920, Lloyd George
papers, F/9/2/20. He saw the guarantee to France in German
rather than in French terms. It was one of the ways in
which France could be persuaded to moderate her treatment
of Germany. This reasoning was also applied to Belgium.
The cabinet decided that should a guarantee of Belgian
security become necessary, it should "only be given in
return for some great reciprocal stipulation" such as "a
reasonable attitude by France and Belgium towards the
revival of Germany" (conclusions, 30 June 1920, Cab.23/21,
Cab.38(20)1.

3 Memorandum, 28 June 1920, Cab.24/117, C.P.2301. The cabinet
meeting at which this proposal was discussed has been des­
cribed fully in Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, pp. 115-17 (30
June 1920), and except where otherwise stated, all quotations
from the meeting come from this account.

4 Such a treaty might "restrain any would-be aggressor, and
would win public support if continental intervention were to
be needed in the future".
with her". Churchill repeated the argument he had already used privately with Lloyd George. He told his colleagues that a guarantee of the French frontier was "a terrific thing to give and our one gift and we should not give it unless we get all the conditions we require to safeguard our co-operation from misuse". But because it should form part of a full settlement of European and colonial differences with France, it should not be entered into straight away, before a general settlement was reached. The chief aim was the banishment of French and Belgian fears by giving them a promise of assistance, but this should be done on the understanding that such an agreement would not impair Britain's good relations with Germany. He then outlined his grand design: "nothing would be impossible if we could bind France, Germany, and the U.K. together. We could then reconstruct Europe and Russia. The only great weapon we have with France is the power of this guarantee".

Balfour agreed in principle, but believed that there was no urgency in coming to a decision - "we may have to come to an arrangement of this sort because the coast is our interest but why rush into it now?....The military discussion of a German menace now is grotesque. There is no hurry". Bonar Law pointed out that there was no danger from Germany and Lloyd George, as usual, denounced France's ambitions, accusing her of wishing to "control, overwhelm and keep under Germany", and that this would be her motive in seeking a guarantee treaty. "It is only France who could give us trouble now". Much to Chamberlain's regret the cabinet decided against making any immediate offer to the French.

A brief exchange between Lloyd George and Curzon sums up neatly one aspect of British policy on the security question: "Curzon: 'Danger not serious and discussions premature' - is that my line? P.M.: Yes, that is the line."

Six months later the question was discussed again in the cabinet, and this time it was Churchill who advocated a defensive alliance with France and Belgium, on the grounds that this would encourage the French to adopt a more reason-

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1 The cabinet conclusions record one, anonymous, view not mentioned in Jones's account: the argument that the existence of military conversations would become known and would be represented in parliament as "the first step in a fresh entangling Alliance" (30 June 1920, Cab.23/21, Cab.38(20)1.)
able attitude towards Germany, and would perhaps eventually result in an understanding between the two countries. Chamberlain supported him warmly, but Lloyd George and Curzon opposed the idea on account of France's hostile activities all over the world. They carried the day.¹

The Foreign Office showed more concern than the cabinet, and Curzon received several dispatches and memoranda on the subject from his officials and ambassadors, but he kept them to himself. Despite this lack of interest on his part, the question of a guarantee pact was raised at several meetings of the cabinet in the first half of 1921. In April the threat of a French occupation of the Ruhr led one minister, as usual unnamed in the records, to remark that such an occupation was the only means of pressure on Germany which France possessed, and that Britain could hardly object to it unless she could offer some alternative proposal. He suggested that French indebtedness be used as a means of forcing France to abate her claims on Germany, and that Britain appease French fears by giving her a guarantee of her security. But "no conclusions were reached".²

Only a month later the cabinet recognized that relations with France had deteriorated to a serious extent, particularly because of the dispute over Silesia, and so the question of whether Britain should offer a guarantee treaty was mooted once again.³ Churchill accepted that French aggressiveness was the result of fear, blamed this fear on the failure of 1919 guarantee treaty, and held that if this were to be granted by Britain it would restrain the French and would put the relations of all three countries on a firm foundation.⁴ This would satisfy British public opinion in the event of the quarrels with France resulting in an open breach.

¹ Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, ii, p. 209 (diary, 31 Dec. 1920, describing a cabinet meeting on 30 Dec.)
² Cabinet conclusions, 27 April 1921, Cab.23/25, Cab.29(21)5. The idea of using French indebtedness to Britain as a means of putting pressure on her had been advocated by Vansittart during the Peace Conference. He wanted to obtain the French enclaves in India, where "there seems no reason for ...modesty. We ought to have the lot", and other such concessions. Hardinge sympathized, Balfour thought it desirable, but Lloyd George rejected the idea (11 March 1919, F.0.608/124, 4315/438/1/1).
³ Cabinet conclusions, 24 May 1921, Cab.23/25, Cab.40(21)4.
⁴ Germany was to be informed of the agreement and would be assured of just and fair treatment.
Once again it was found that the situation was not ripe for more than the most tentative and informal approaches. There was sympathy with the idea of a guarantee pact if it would result in a "steadier French policy", but it was felt that any offer would probably be misinterpreted if not actually resented, and also that parliament and the Dominions would be suspicious of such a move. The most important reason for postponing any action was the view that "there was not the slightest prospect that any such Agreement, if concluded, would modify the anti-British policy pursued by France whenever British and French interests impinged". And the cabinet consoled itself with the expectation that the French would hold back from the Ruhr once they realized that if they occupied it they would rupture the alliance. The full depth of government unimaginativeness was illustrated by the remark that "what hope of improvement there might be lay in the direction of a revival in France itself of an anti-Chauvinistic movement which had characterised France at various periods during the 19th Century".

Relations with France continued to worsen steadily and it was not long before the guarantee pact was once more seen as a possible long-term solution to the disputes between the two countries, but opinion was hardening and it became increasingly clear that France would have to pay heavily to obtain a British guarantee. Lloyd George wrote to Curzon that if Britain were "to make the plunge it ought to be in return for some definite assurance on the part of France as to her attitude on questions which concern us", ¹ and told D'Abernon that he would agree to a pact provided that there would be no French military hegemony and no danger of her provoking a German attack by her aggressive attitude. "It was a choice, in a way, between an English policy and a Polish policy". ²

This firm line was reinforced at the Imperial Conference. Curzon told the assembled British and Dominion leaders that he "advised the cabinet definitely against concluding any agreement at that time"; ³ "in the attitude of Frenchmen and

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¹ Lloyd George to Curzon, 14 June 1921, Lloyd George papers, F/13/2/31.
² D'Abernon, Ambassador, i, p. 185 (diary, 21 June 1921).
³ He quoted a letter from Hardinge which concluded "although I am a believer in the policy of a defensive agreement with France, I do not think the present moment propitious for committing ourselves to it".
in official French policy in almost every part of the world, we meet with criticism, antagonism and hostility, and it renders it very difficult for us, with the best will in the world, to help people at this moment who are doing so little to help us". He gave other reasons: the instability of French governments; the effect an agreement might have on Britain's relations with Germany; parliamentary opposition; the possibility that the French might feel encouraged to think they had been given a free hand; and unwillingness to take the initiative lest he be rebuffed. 1

Lloyd George professed himself ready to give France a guarantee treaty if it would steady her nerve - "the jerkiness of French opinion, its ultra-sensitiveness, its readiness to see danger where there is no danger, to exaggerate every little difficulty on the part of Germany in carrying out its obligations...is a source of danger in Europe". At one point he seemed ready to take the French standpoint seriously, and even to allow it a certain sympathy: he said that while French policy made life very difficult for the Foreign Office, it was easy for Britain to criticize; the French were unreasonable, "as people in that frame of mind will be", and "there it is". But his conclusion did not display any sympathy or understanding, it was a reversion to a more normal and unimaginative attitude. He did not believe that anyone in the cabinet, despite the widely varying views which its members held on the question of the guarantee treaty, would propose offering it to France without first finding out whether it would produce any result. The French would expect ulterior motives in any offer, and it would never occur to them that Britain wished only to give her support. 2 (If so, of course, the French were perfectly correct.)

He kept his options open, and said that if ever the government discovered that the whole atmosphere in France would be changed by such a proposal, he would of course support it. 3

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1 "I should be placed in a very mortifying and humiliating position if I said anything of the kind to the French Ambassador and he said: "We never asked for it, we do not want it" (Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921, Cab 32/2, 2, p.366.
2 Ibid., pp. 355-58.
3 Churchill also held that while it would be foolish to offer France a guarantee at that time, they should keep an open mind on the matter in case circumstances should change (ibid., p. 360). Within six months circumstances had changed.
But at least for the time being, the idea of a treaty with France was dead. Several ministers and Dominion leaders were unhappy with the consensus, but no-one spoke out in favour of a pact, and its advocates in the government either stayed silent, like Chamberlain, or drifted with the anti-French current.

The first post-war years were a period of summit diplomacy in which all the initiatives in British policy towards France and Germany were taken by the cabinet or by the prime minister himself, and generally without consulting the Foreign Office. Decisions were reached impulsively, as was the case with Lloyd George's offer of a guarantee pact to Clemenceau only a week after he had rejected the idea at a cabinet meeting, or, as with the reparations question, at the numerous allied conferences in which Lloyd George revelled and dominated.1 D'Abernon remarked that in foreign and especially in European policy the prime minister made up his own mind and acted upon it without much regard for his colleagues' opinions,2 but even though he was the most Francophile member of his cabinet his personal inclinations served generally to guide and reinforce rather than to overcome those of the other ministers (Chamberlain excepted) in their common policy towards France.

Decisions were reached at the top, they did not progress from the Foreign Office through the foreign secretary as sometimes in the pre-war days, and the decision not to open negotiations with France, reached at a series of cabinet meetings and finally at the Imperial Conference, was based more on the views of government ministers themselves than on Foreign Office memoranda.

Even though its importance had declined considerably since the war, and even though its support for guarantee treaties to France and Belgium in late 1919 had been to no avail, if the Foreign Office had been determined and consistent in its

1 He summed up his attitude when he told Millerand that whenever there were difficulties between their governments one of them "should run across to the capital of the other country" (Conference of San Remo minutes, 24 April 1920, D.B.F.P., I, viii, p. 154, I.C.P. 104B) and assured Riddell that "there is nothing like a heart-to-heart talk...I wish the French and ourselves never wrote letters to each other. Letters are the very devil. They ought to be abolished" (Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 206 (21 June 1920)).

2 D'Abernon, Ambassador, i, p. 140 (diary, 22 March 1921).
support of a pact it could at least have strengthened pro-French feeling in the cabinet. But in 1920 and 1921 it tended to differ from the government only in degree and in timing, and its dominant personality, Crowe, shared fully the cabinet's confused and often contradictory views on the question.

Crowe reacted sharply to the Frankfurt occupation, and thought that Britain should seize the opportunity of France's diplomatic blunder to extract concessions from her. Some months later, in August 1920, the general staff circulated a memorandum in which, obsessed by the Russo-Polish war and fearful of the possibility of a Russo-German rapprochement, it urged lenient treatment of Germany which would give her more strength for the present and more hope for the future. The main obstacle to peace was French and Belgian fear of having to face a German attack alone, and to prevent them from becoming unduly alarmed and from weakening Germany too much in consequence, an alliance should be concluded with them. This memorandum was received scathingly in the Foreign Office, Crowe attacked the military authorities for attempting to play the role of political advisers, and Curzon remarked that it was the sort of memorandum which attracted no attention in the cabinet. But it showed that even the military was prepared to recommend a guarantee to France so that she might be encouraged to moderate her actions in Central Europe.

Crowe had minuted on the War Office memorandum that "it advocates a formal alliance with France and Belgium, and I see no sign of the Cabinet contemplating the adoption of such a policy". Yet within four months he wrote a long memorandum for Curzon in which he urged that the cabinet do just this. In the interval Britain and France had continued to drift apart. Hardinge had reported from Paris that the French

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1 See above, p 75
3 It was remarked that even without such assistance to Germany Britain was on bad terms with France and Belgium, "mainly because they feel, though perhaps with little justification, that they are being deserted by their Allies, or at all events that their interests are not receiving sufficient consideration".
4 Minutes by Crowe and Curzon, 26 & 27 Sept. 1920, P.0.371/4741, C7032/45/18. To be fair, the circumstances which had prompted the memorandum had changed beyond all recognition by the time it was commented upon in the Foreign Office.
5 Ibid.
people were losing interest in an alliance and that the government was interested only in one in which Britain's role would be subservient, and the recent visit of Pilsudski to Paris, soon to be followed by a Franco-Polish alliance, indicated that France's links with the Eastern European states were being strengthened at the expense of those with Britain. The Silesian referendum was due shortly, and a major conflict between the two countries over reparations was expected before 1 May, the deadline by which, according to the Treaty of Versailles, the allies had to agree on the full amount of German indebtedness. The Foreign Office felt that something must be done, and in a note attached to his memorandum, which he described as the product of discussions with Hardinge, Tyrrell and Van-sittart, Crowe told the foreign secretary that "we are all in general agreement that it is important to fix upon some guiding principle of a foreign policy towards France, and that the key to the French position is the question of French security on the Rhine".

Crowe believed that, failing a general settlement of the German question which would satisfy French public opinion, there was a danger of Britain drifting into a definite breach with France, he listed the advantages of reinforcing Entente solidarity, and he tried to work out whether the two countries could come to an understanding over their quarrels. "The stabilizing effect of settling on a strong basis of common action and policy Anglo-French dealings with Germany cannot be overrated; it would probably settle the attitude of French Governments definitely for a long time to come". Disarmament

1 Hardinge to Curzon, 9 Dec. 1920, Hardinge papers, 44. He also remarked that the French preferred to enjoy "complete liberty of action", and in a letter of 3 Dec. he had condemned Derby's campaign for an alliance since the British public was not ready for such a step (ibid.).

2 Crowe to Curzon, 12 Feb. 1921, F.O.37175843, 03340/3340/62. Crowe hoped that Curzon would put this case to the cabinet, but there is no record of his having done so, and the memorandum was not even initialed by the foreign secretary. Crowe also hoped that if the prime minister and cabinet would agree to "the broad principle of a consistent and comprehensive foreign policy" as put forward in his memorandum, Curzon's hand would be strengthened at the forthcoming London Conference, but this too was not done.

3 Among them was the remark that "England has not been fortunate enough to gain, or retain, the effective goodwill of any of the European powers".
and reparations he dismissed as being only "a minor aspect of a larger problem", that of French fear of German aggression. He reminded Curzon that the French demands on the Rhineland had been given up only in exchange for the guarantee treaty, and he asked whether Britain should seek the solution to the problem in this proposal. If so, France, at present feeling unable to compromise, would probably show herself to be much more conciliatory and would be more ready to come to an equitable arrangement with Germany.¹

In this memorandum Crowe contented himself with expecting, with some confidence, that if the offer of 1919 were to be renewed France might adopt more moderate policies in Germany, in the Near East and perhaps elsewhere, but he soon reverted to the harsher tone which he himself had used in reacting to the Frankfurt occupation, and which most of the leading cabinet members had been using for some time.

In June 1921 Hardinge reported a change in the direction taken by France, that there was evidence in the press and in speeches of a new awareness that France needed an ally on whom she could lean for protection and support. Even Poincare, then in opposition, declared that the time had come for a new understanding with Britain. Hardinge suggested that, despite the dangers involved, Britain should ratify the 1919 agreement, although at a price.² In his minute on this dispatch Crowe agreed that the French would have to make concessions if they were to obtain the alliance, and complained that "when it comes to dropping anti-British policy in the rest of the world, France, true to her traditional practice, wants to sell her support in each field in return for separate rewards. In other words, she would claim our support against Germany as something to be given by us in any case, and for nothing. But French support for British policy in the East or elsewhere is a thing for which Britain must pay by special and valuable concessions".

¹ He also argued that France would be more likely to show herself amenable in areas of less direct interest like Greece.

² Hardinge to Curzon, 3 June 1921, F.O.371/6695, W6618/6298/17. He was confident that such an action would quell France's Restless spirit. But it would have to form part of "a comprehensive scheme of settlement of pending questions all over the world, in which the fact of H.M.G. having undertaken this obligation would be placed to their credit as a considerable asset for France, and that the existing local intrigues of French officials in foreign lands against British policy should immediately cease and give place to one of helpful co-operation". A month later, however, his views would seem to have changed; see above, p. 79, n. 3.
He concluded that, much as he favoured "a comprehensive understanding with France, to which Great Britain would contribute in the shape of an alliance against German unprovoked aggression, I should hesitate to recommend it on such terms". Curzon minuted "or at this time". The cabinet and the Foreign Office were united in their reluctance to take any serious measures towards solving the security question.

Throughout 1921 Britain had done little to improve relations with France, and at the end of the year Curzon was driven to remark that the two countries seemed to be "reverting to the old traditional divergence - amounting almost to antipathy". This was due to conflicting interests and to a mutual misunderstanding which both contributed to and was fed by these conflicting interests. One difference in attitude was fundamental. Curzon was able to write "it is difficult in the present transitional state of international relationships (for that they will be permanently crystallised in their present shape no one can believe) to anticipate by what enemies we may be threatened in the future or with whom we may find ourselves at war". The French had no such difficulty in anticipating by whom they might be threatened or with whom they might find themselves at war, and their fears and expectations of future German aggression were one of the most important if not the single most important determinants of their foreign policy.

This was accepted in Britain, but its logical consequences were seen only partially and intermittently. The reality of French apprehensions was generally acknowledged, and so was the likelihood that the best means of calming them would be to repeat Lloyd George's offer of a guarantee treaty. There was an awareness that the question of whether the danger to France was serious or not was of only secondary importance, and that what mattered was the fact that the French government thought it was serious and based its actions, many of them so distasteful to Britain, on this belief. Balfour

1 Minutes by Grove and Curzon, 14 & 15 June 1921, F.O.371/6995, W6298/6298/47. On the same day that he wrote this minute Curzon confirmed it in a private letter to Hardinge in which he remarked "this is not the time for an alliance" (Hardinge papers, 44).
2 Curzon to Hardinge, 10 Nov. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44.
described the French as being "psychologically upset" where their security was concerned."

On the other hand there was a feeling that France's fears were excessive, or were concerned with a problem so far in the future that to worry about them in the early 1920s was ridiculous. There was no urgency, Britain should cross her bridges as she came to them, and deal with the question of a German attack on France only when it seemed that Germany would be capable of making such an attack. When it came to the point of considering seriously giving to France the guarantee which would calm her, Britain was not content to accept as the important factor the French view of their needs and problems, but insisted on viewing the matter objectively. In other words, she allowed no interpretation but her own.

A further reason for procrastination was the feeling that the time was always unsuitable because of some particular dispute between the two countries or because of France's generally unsatisfactory attitude. This managed to coexist with the awareness that France's general attitude and her stand in particular controversies were conditioned by the fear which, it was held, would be lessened and perhaps even ended by the signature of a guarantee treaty. It was a vicious circle - France could not be given a guarantee of her security until she changed her attitude, and she could only change her attitude after she had been given the guarantee.

As was the case in Britain's policy towards Germany, the different aspects of the problem were compartmentalized and had little influence on one another. In her relations with both countries Britain displayed a remarkable ability to think at two levels.

Perhaps even more important was the use of the pact as a method of blackmail: unless France adopted a policy acceptable

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1 C.I.D. minutes, 13 Feb. 1925, Cab.24/172, Cab.105(25).
2 As the cabinet concluded on 30 June 1920: "the danger was not serious or imminent, and the proposed military conversations would be premature at the present time" (Cab.23/21, Cab.30(20)1).
3 Curzon remarked of the various cabinet discussions on putting relations with France on a more permanent basis, "on each occasion we have come to the conclusion that there was something in the circumstances of the hour that rendered such advances on our side undesirable" (Imperial Conference minutes, 7 July 1921, Cab.32/2, 2, p. 333).
to Britain, even in areas where her fear of Germany had no
influence whatever on her policy (here the Turkish question
was of particular importance) she would not get a guarantee
treaty. France was to be brought to heel, to be made sacrif-
ce some of her independence in return for protection.
Hankey described the case of those who advocated a pact as
being that France would accept Britain's solution of all the
outstanding differences between them, and that afterwards
Britain would be in a better position to restrain French
excesses.¹

Yet another restraining factor was the realization that
this policy might not work, that Britain might give France a
guarantee pact and not receive the desired concessions in
return; worse, that the cure might even aggravate the disease
and that France, once she felt secure, might pursue even more
avidly her imperialistic aims, and might continue to exercise
her independence to Britain's detriment, as she had done in
the Frankfurt occupation and the Franklin-Bouillon Treaty with
Turkey.² Britain might obtain an inadequate return on her
investment.

British policy between June 1919 and December 1921 was
characterized by caution. The only opponents of a pact were
Hankey and the Labour Party - an odd combination - but apart
from Chamberlain its advocates were either lukewarm, or over-
calculating, or hesitant about whether the risks involved
were too great. Churchill's policy of an Anglo-Franco-German
combination were broad-minded, even visionary. He wanted:
"to secure the confidence of France, and armed with that to
bring about a tripartite understanding between England, France
and Germany for mutual help and security, thus making it plain
to Germany that she had great hopes and a bright future with
England and France".³ But even he failed to give France:

¹ Hankey to Lloyd George, 25 June 1921, Lloyd George papers,
F/25/1/48. Hankey opposed such a pact and so was giving a
point of view he rejected, but his description is a fair one.
² In the same letter Hankey pointed out that France was no more
tractable in the months after June 1919, when it still seemed
that the pact would be ratified, and that "it is doubtful if
France could be bought, and even if she were bought, it is
doubtful if she would stay bought".
³ Churchill to Curzon, 26 April 1922, quoted in Churchill, The
Aftermath, pp. 414-15. He continued that Germany "would lose
these prospects by exclusive dealings with the Soviets", so
his grand alliance was in effect an aspect of his anti-
Commutist crusade.
the same sympathy and understanding as he gave Germany, and it was the more short-sighted quest for immediate gains, the policy of Lloyd George and Curzon, which triumphed.

Britain's caution was understandable. It was perhaps expecting too much that her policy towards Germany, based on an act of hope, should be complemented by a policy towards France based on an act of faith, that of guaranteeing France's security and then waiting for her to prove herself suitably appeased and conciliatory. Britain was not prepared to make concessions without being sure of the results, and the cabinet felt that it was simpler and more reliable to state the price in advance and to allow the French to take the initiative.

The government combined awareness of the problem and concern about it with inaction, and never progressed from talking about offering a pact to France to actually offering it. In his December 1921 memorandum Curzon wrote as follows: "it is the fear of a resuscitated and revengeful Germany that is the cause of all the recurrent disputes about reparations, of all the talk about the Ruhr, the military sanctions and the occupied areas, of the anxieties about Poland, and, indeed, of the chronic unsettlement in the Central European situation, which is so ruinous to trade, so fatal to the exchanges and such an irritating poison in the relations between France and our own country. What nation and what Government would not be willing to pay a heavy price to exorcise such a spectre and to return to the only conditions under which Europe can rebuild its shattered existence?"(1)

The answer was simple. In the two and a half years which had passed since the Peace Treaties the British nation and government, and Curzon himself in particular, were not prepared to pay the price of offering, alone, the guarantee treaty which had been offered jointly in 1919.

Britain had failed in the main objectives of her foreign policy - to promote stable and harmonious relations between European states, to retain the friendship of France, and to help build up a prosperous Germany. To a large extent this failure was a result of the measures France took to ease her feeling of insecurity; and this in turn was to a large extent the result of British policy on the question of the guarantee treaty.

Towards the end of 1921 several factors combined to make the idea of an Anglo-French pact more attractive to both sides.

In France Briand's government was particularly unstable, and his position was further weakened when his foreign policy, based on close friendship with Britain, underwent serious strains. The two countries disagreed violently over the reparations schedule and over the partition of Upper Silesia; Britain was suspicious of the Loucheur-Rathenau agreement at Wiesbaden; in October France deserted Britain and Greece in their crusade against Turkey - a sensible move which reflected the realities of the situation in the Near East, but which provoked outrage and resentment in Britain; and at the Washington Naval Conference the French government's refusal to contemplate land disarmament or the restriction of its submarine-building programme worsened relations with Britain yet further. The Entente, which Briand defended with great fervour and which he claimed was the essential precondition of French security, was almost lost from sight, buried under a weight of quarrels.

More were expected. The German financial crisis of late 1921 presented Briand with a difficult choice; either he could meet Britain's wishes and agree to a moratorium on reparations payments, a move which would be highly unpopular in France, or he could refuse and face the certainty of a new dispute with Britain, thus illustrating yet once more the failure of

1 He summed up this policy when he told the Chamber that France would not be able to decide to carry out the Treaty in accordance with her own interests; she needed constant discussion with her allies, and always needed to come to some agreement with them - else everything would fall to pieces (Débats Parlementaires, Chambre, 18 Oct. 1921, p. 3545).
2 This was an agreement reached on 6-7 Oct. 1921, according to which Germany would make payments in kind to help reconstruction in Northern France. Partly due to opposition from French industry, it had little practical result.
3 In April Italy had already gone over to the Turkish side, so France's defection left Britain and Greece alone. Lloyd George remained faithful to the Greeks, and they fell together.
4 Despite all the disagreements of 1921 Curzon could write at the end of the year that Briand was "as friendly and loyal a Minister" as Britain had known since 1914 (memorandum, 28 Dec. 1921, D.R.F.P., I, xvi, p. 864, W1355/12716/17).
his foreign policy. Reparations concessions, and indeed his whole Alsophile policy, would be more palatable to French public opinion if he could succeed in negotiating a guarantee treaty to replace that of 1919, and his mind began to move in this direction. In October he emphasized the necessity of a general settlement of Anglo-French disputes, and at the Washington Conference a month later he declared that while the Anglo-American friendship which France possessed was most precious, it was only a moral support and she would have to defend herself alone if attacked. But the situation would change if someone were to say to France "we see this danger as well as you: we appreciate it; and we are going to share it with you. We offer you every means of security that you can desire". In such circumstances she would be ready to disarm further. This was a broad hint that Britain's disarmament wishes could be satisfied in conjunction with France's security needs.

In Britain there was a corresponding feeling that however undesirable a pact with France might be - and she retained all her distaste for Continental commitments - it might be a lesser evil than the alternative. One of the main reasons for her increased readiness to look favourably on the idea of a guarantee treaty was her concern at Germany's deteriorating financial position and at its likely consequences. In November 1921 the rate of the mark to the pound fell from 5.77 to 1.020, and at the end of the month Rathenau went to London to seek a moratorium on the reparations payments due in January and February 1922. The British were afraid that the German economy might collapse altogether and they agreed to the principle of a moratorium, but they were aware that France would have to be placated, or even bribed, if she were to give her necessary consent. Basil Blackett, the Controller of Finance in the Treasury, suggested that Britain offer to

1 Hardinge to Curzon, 21 Oct. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44. But Hardinge doubted whether Briand would be in office long enough to give effect to such a scheme.
2 Suarez, Briand, v, p. 278; Onek, Britain's relations with France, pp. 305, 307.
3 According to Suarez, Lloyd George told Rathenau that if Britain gave France formal guarantees of her security she would be more conciliatory in her attitude to reparations (Briand, v, p. 340). Rathenau was then the German government's unofficial representative, but he was soon to become its unofficial foreign minister.
go to France's financial assistance in 1922 in the hopes that this would win her acceptance of a moratorium. Curzon warned the cabinet against having another quarrel with France on the reparations question, and he told its financial committee that every attempt should be made to win French cooperation in granting Germany a moratorium, if necessary by offering her compensation in other directions.

At the same meeting it was proposed that in order to purchase French assent Britain might forego some of the advantages which she had gained under the allied reparations agreement the previous August. There was a general readiness to make concessions to France if she would reciprocate in the required manner, and this was strengthened when the German government formally sought a moratorium on 14 December and so increased France's negative, blocking power.

Lloyd George's ambitions went further than the resolution of the latest crisis - he wanted to use the situation to achieve a lasting settlement of the whole reparations problem and to bring Europe's economic unrest to an end. 1921 had been a disastrous year for the British economy and one important reason was a sudden decline in the volume of her foreign trade, a decline of no less than 47% from the 1920 figures. He was convinced that Britain could recover her prosperity and end her unemployment only through a general trade revival, and he hoped to organize a world economic conference which would help reopen the markets of Central and Eastern Europe. France would gain least from such a development, and if Germany benefited from it France's relative position would actually be weakened, so here, too, she would be likely to sabotage Britain's policy unless she would receive compensating advantages.

Churchill held similar views, and the specific concession which he had in mind was the negotiation of a guarantee pact. He told Lloyd George that British willingness to keep her

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2 Curzon to Hardinge, 1 Dec. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44.
3 Finance committee minutes, 1 Dec. 1921, Cab.24/131, C.P. 3557. It was also argued that Britain ought to maintain a firm hold on France's debt to her.
4 Economist, 18 Feb. 1922, p. 290, quoted in Mowat, Britain between the Wars, p. 125.
promise of guaranteeing the French frontier against attack should be the basis of Anglo-French and also of Anglo-German relations, that Britain should work for an Anglo-Franco-German understanding concerning the economic revival of Eastern Europe, and that all these questions needed to be treated together.¹

A second British objective was the removal of the threat posed by the construction of French submarines. Briand's intransigence in refusing to consider land disarmament at the Washington Conference had exasperated Britain,² but there was considerably greater unease at the development of the French submarine construction programme which, it was felt, could only be directed against Britain. Crowe warned the C.I.D. of the threat which a submarine fleet could present to the Empire, and it was speculated that Briand might have shown himself inflexible at Washington in the hope that the United States might make good the guarantee of 1919 and thus allow France to reduce her forces without impairing her security. It was also suggested that Britain could afford to pay a big price for the abolition of submarines.³ The submarine scare was transient, and six months later Lloyd George told D'Abernon that Briand's declaration on the subject "had touched the English mentality in a vital spot", while the threat of French air power, because new, was not so frightening.⁴ Nonetheless, while the scare lasted Britain was more willing to guarantee France's security in order to make her submarine programme redundant.

Two further questions, Turkey and Tangier, were perennial subjects of dispute, and Britain could hope to use French goodwill and gratitude in bringing both to a more satisfactory solution.

¹ To Lloyd George, 28 Nov. 1921, Lloyd George papers F/10/1/48.
² It had provoked Lloyd George to declare, as so often before, that France was the danger to the peace of Europe (Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 178 (22 Nov. 1921); Curzon to Hardinge, 28 Nov. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44).
³ C.I.D. minutes, 23 Nov. 1921, Cab.2/3, 150. The king hoped that Britain would insist on the abolition of submarines and that France also be made reduce her navy and air force (minute, 23 Nov. 1921, quoted in Roskill, Naval Policy between the Wars, i, p. 306, n.)
⁴ D'Abernon's diary, 12 June 1922, D'Abernon papers, B.M., Add. MS 48957. Britain's emphasis was soon to shift to the threat presented by French air power.
At the Cannes Conference Lloyd George told the Italian delegation that Britain had always felt it was a point of honour on her part to stand by the guarantee treaty of 1919; "the undertaking which it contained influe ced French policy in certain important respects during the negotiation of the Treaty of Versailles: and Great Britain therefore considers herself bound in honour to renew her pledge". However it is unlikely that this featured prominently among the reasons for Britain's changing attitude, all the more since it had not predisposed Lloyd George himself in favour of the guarantee treaty in 1920 or 1921.

One factor which inhibited Britain from negotiating a pact was the shakiness of Briand's internal position. Hardinge warned that he was certain to fall and that it would be a mistake "to handle these people gently for the sake of dealing with him", and when the French did propose a guarantee treaty Curzon suspected that it might be a move by Briand to re-establish his prestige.

Another complication was awareness that the French system of alliances, itself in part a reaction against the failure of the 1919 pact, caused France to feel defensive on her protégés' behalf as well as on her own, while Britain's determination not to involve herself in Eastern European affairs remained as strong as ever. Here was a potential clash of interests.

At the end of 1921 the British government was still cautious and wary, and was still far from enthusiastic at the prospect of negotiating a new pact with France, but it had recently acquired several good reasons for viewing the matter more favourably than it had done throughout the previous two years. Britain had much to demand in return for guaranteeing French security.

1 Memorandum to the Italian delegation, 11 Jan. 1922, Cab.24/132, C.P.3629.
2 Hardinge to Curzon, 12 Nov. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44. At the British cabinet meeting on 16 Dec. it was thought that he would fall if he returned empty-handed from his forthcoming meeting with Lloyd George. It was even suggested that it might be easier to reach an agreement with Poincaré, but this was an extreme and untypical view (conclusions, Cab.23/29, Cab.93(21)2).
The issue was brought to the surface during a conversation between Curzon and St. Aulaire on 5 December 1921. Briand had recently come back from Washington, and the day before he had written to St. Aulaire that he would like to avail of Curzon's forthcoming visit to Paris to have a general discussion with him. According to St. Aulaire, when he passed on this message Curzon asked him whether Briand had in mind the idea of liquidating Anglo-French differences such as the Tangier dispute, or a more general conversation dealing with the question of an Anglo-French alliance. He assured Curzon that such a treaty must wait until the disagreements between the two countries had been settled, and making it clear that he could not speak for Briand, he went on to attack the 1919 guarantee, which he described as "humiliating in form, useless and even dangerous in substance". Then, to let Curzon know that he was not altogether opposed to the principle of a guarantee pact, he gave his personal views on what form it should take, stressing the importance of equality and reciprocity, and the necessity of dealing with indirect German aggression in Eastern Europe.

Curzon's account of the conversation gives quite a different impression. While he referred to the "private, unofficial and confidential" nature of the discussion, he emphasized St. Aulaire's advocacy of a pact, of a precise and definite agreement which would cover Eastern Europe as well as France, and he described his own attempts to find out whether the ambassador was speaking in a personal capacity or on his government's behalf. He remarked that he could not imagine that the idea came from St. Aulaire alone. Curzon was highly dubious about the proposal and made several objections to it, referring in particular to Britain's reluctance to assume any new responsibilities on the Continent and to her opposition to recent French policy.

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1 Briand to St. Aulaire, 4 Dec. 1921, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents relatifs aux négociations concernant les garanties de sécurité contre une agression de l'Allemagne (D.D.F.), p. 90.
2 St. Aulaire to Briand, 14 Dec. 1921, D.D.F., pp. 90-93. He said that he told Curzon a pact on the 1919 model would cover France against a new Sedan, but not against a new Sadowa in Poland which would pave the way for a new Sedan.
He instructed Hardinge to ask Briand about the matter, and when Briand was told of St. Aulaire's suggestions to Curzon he "opened his eyes with astonishment" and declared that the ambassador had acted without his authorization. Nonetheless he approved of the idea.¹ Crowe suspected that St. Aulaire was acting on his government's behalf and was not convinced by this disavowal,² but it is quite likely that the initiative did in fact come from St. Aulaire himself. When he returned to Paris Briand discussed Hardinge's report with him, and St. Aulaire was indignant that Briand had been informed of his conversation with Curzon. He wrote to Chamberlain telling him that he had mentioned to Curzon the ideas which he had already broached to Chamberlain at their last meeting, and complaining that even though he had made it clear that these views were personal and confidential, the foreign secretary had passed them on to Hardinge who in turn had told Briand.³ He also protested to Crowe about this breach of confidence.⁴

Yet however independent the ambassador's action may have been it harmonized with Briand's own views, and when Briand visited London shortly afterwards he made a formal proposal

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1 Hardinge to Curzon, 7 Dec. 1921, F.0.371/7000, C12728/12716/17; Hardinge, Old Diplomacy, pp. 263-64.
2 Minute, 8 Dec. 1921, F.0.371/7000, C12728/12716/17. He commented that Briand "no doubt realizes how difficult it would be to get public opinion in this country to look with favour on such an entanglement as the proposed alliance would involve".
3 St. Aulaire to Chamberlain, 9 Dec. 1921, Chamberlain papers, 24/3/91. This letter is an argument in favour of Curzon's version of the conversation as against St. Aulaire's. It is quite likely that, as the ambassador told Chamberlain, Curzon attached more importance to his views than he did himself, but if he had already mentioned them to Chamberlain, it is probable that he was engaged in flying a kite. A further argument is the date of the two memoranda. Curzon's was written on 5 Dec., St. Aulaire's on 14 Dec., i.e., nine days after the conversation and five after he had found out that Hardinge had told Briand about it. Yet his account takes the form of a letter to Briand. It was obviously written for the record, and glosses over the extent of his responsibility for the renewed interest in a pact. Furthermore St. Aulaire was a supporter of Poincaré's and thus an opponent of Briand's. If Briand wished to raise the question of a guarantee pact in an informal and tentative fashion, he is more likely to have done so through Hardinge.
4 Memorandum by Crowe, 30 Dec. 1921, describing a conver­sation with St. Aulaire, F.0.371/8249, W50/50/17.
of an alliance to Lloyd George. Lloyd George had receded to some extent from his negative attitude of the past two years, but he was still reluctant to go beyond the 1919 pact, and he demurred at Briand's suggestions of a broad alliance in which the two countries would guarantee each other's interests all over the world. He said that Britain was not ready for such an undertaking, and that while it would be quite possible to guarantee France's Eastern frontier against invasion, public opinion was not interested in what happened on Germany's Eastern borders where the peoples were "unstable and excitable". Briand wanted more than this. He was prepared to consider an arrangement including other countries, even Germany, though he insisted that Britain and France should remain the nucleus of any such larger grouping. If they "were firmly united to maintain peace and order... Germany would find it to her advantage to join them", and an Anglo-French understanding would deter her from militaristic designs against countries such as Poland and Russia. Lloyd George welcomed the idea of bringing Germany into the arrangement, and he expressed his old anxiety that recent allied policy would force her to seek an alliance with Russia, as France herself had done after 1870. The two prime ministers had already arranged to discuss reparations and the German request for a moratorium at a conference in Cannes early in the New Year, and they agreed to deal with the security question at a private meeting before the conference convened. When Briand visited Curzon he proposed an Anglo-French alliance to him as well.

In Britain everyone agreed that concessions must be extracted from France in return for any guarantee pact, but there were considerable differences of opinion about how extensive these concessions should be.

In a long memorandum on the subject Crowe wrote that it could be assumed that France would be ready to pay for security from a German war of revenge and that it ought be possible to

2 Even this, he said, would be opposed by a stronger minority than had been the case two years earlier.
3 Germany's participation would be accompanied by "certain reservations and guarantees".
4 In writing to Hardinge Curzon seemed to find it noteworthy, almost objectionable, that Briand looked at the matter from a purely French point of view (24 Dec. 1921, Curzon papers, F/4/5).
impose conditions on her, but that France was not in the position of a suitor asking for gratuitous favours and that Britain could not demand any price she liked. Her debt of honour remained, and France was entitled to take it into account. He saw Britain's main interest as being to secure favourable economic conditions for the development of her industry and commerce. France was able to block her capacity to trade with Germany, and she could also render useless the effect of any British loans and credits. Since her uncooperativeness was due largely to her desire to hold down Germany, an obstructive policy would no longer be in her interests if her fear of Germany were overcome through an alliance with Britain. Crowe argued that it was "a genuine British interest to buy off French opposition or better still, to enlist her active support and cooperation. This would be a proper condition to make when offering a British alliance and one which in the circumstances France might be expected to concede". He mentioned the Eastern Question and felt that a satisfactory settlement of the Tangier dispute ought to be insisted upon, but his main interest lay in removing French opposition to Central European recovery. He took a positive and optimistic view of Briand's proposal.

But on the whole the British attitude was a harsh one, and Curzon in particular was anxious to use his advantageous position to the full. He wanted an end to all disagreements between the two countries, especially in Turkey and Tangier, and it was obvious that he expected this to take the form of a French surrender. He complained that "you cannot pledge yourself to go to the assistance of a man with all your resources, in the event of his being attacked, if in the interval he is always delivering stealthy and surreptitious attacks upon you". He warned of a fear that a treaty of guarantee with France might drag Britain into a war in which direct British interests were not involved and which might have been averted if France had not been encouraged to take an unbending attitude by knowledge that British support in war was assured. He felt that at that stage it would be sufficient for Britain to

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2 His objections extended even to "the nightly ridicule and vituperation of the cafés chantants of the capital".
confine herself to a 1919-style guarantee of the French frontier. This would end the recurring disputes about reparations and the unsettlement in Central Europe which has proved so damaging to trade. He hoped that it would not be proposed to give the guarantee for nothing, and his memorandum concluded "no concession should be made by us until we are sure of the return".

Balfour, in Washington, complained that from the documents which had been sent to him it was clear that France would receive much from Britain, but that it was not clear what she would give in exchange.

Hardinge was prepared to make concessions to France in the spheres of disarmament and German reparations as well as by giving her a security pact, but in return France must yield to Britain's wishes concerning submarines and on the Turkish and Tangier questions. And as long as France went ahead with her submarine-construction programme - which he regarded, probably with justice, as a method of blackmailing Britain into giving a guarantee - Britain should demand full repayment of the £550 millions owed to her. Villiers commented resentfully that France would like Britain to guarantee her security while she remained free to pursue an anti-British policy.

(It is true that while Britain was unwilling to appease France, the French kept putting obstacles in the way of such appeasement, to such an extent that it would have been an act of genuine statesmanship to pursue this policy. Statesmanship was conspicuously lacking throughout the 1921-22 negotiations.)

1 "From the European standpoint...the policy proposed may fairly be regarded as a British as well as a French interest" but he felt that in the rest of the world a pact would bring no such obvious benefits to Britain. St. Aulaire and Briand could suggest "no part of the British Empire where French military assistance was more likely to be useful than on the North-West frontiers of India; and there I was offered by them only the tenuous consolation of abundant swarms of black troops let loose from the sands or swamps of Africa".

2 Memorandum, 28 Dec. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xvi, pp. 860-70, W13355/127/16/17. Much of this memorandum was based on Crowe's, written two days earlier.

3 Balfour to Lloyd George, 11 Jan. 1922, F.0.371/8249, W388/50/17.

4 Hardinge to Curzon, 3 Jan. 1922, Hardinge papers, 45.

5 Minute, 10 Jan. 1922, F.0.371/8248, W193/50/17.
St. Aulaire reported to Briand that the Foreign Office was particularly anxious to eliminate the conflicts over disarmament (i.e., submarines) and Tangier, while Lloyd George was concerned with reconstruction. This difference of emphasis was to persist throughout the pact discussions.

In France, too, opinion was divided, and the idea of negotiating a solution of the security and reparations questions at the Cannes Conference provoked widespread suspicion and even opposition. The German ambassador in Paris informed his government that the French right was afraid that other countries would agree among themselves over France's head and would ignore her interests, and that it felt Lloyd George had already reached agreement with Germany. The French press attacked Lloyd George for proposing a tripartite pact in which Germany would be included. Harding warned of apprehensions that Britain would demand too high a price and that, as an ally, she would try to dominate France and deny her any freedom of action; the French would enter into an alliance only if they could omit the promise "to obey".

President Millerand and several members of the cabinet represented an influential section of French public opinion in

1 St. Aulaire to Briand, 31 Dec. 1921, D.D.F., p. 93. He put it somewhat differently, saying that Lloyd George's object was to rally the people behind the government and that holding out the prospect of peace and reconstruction was his method of doing this. He did not like Lloyd George.
3 Owen, From Versailles to London, pp. 172-173. Le Temps of 23 Dec. 1921 complained that "il serait immoral, parce que sous l'autorité d'une Angleterre érigée et arbitre, il ferait peser une même suspicion sur la France qui a été envahie et sur l'Allemagne qui l'a envahie". St. Aulaire wrote that Lloyd George's lack of understanding of French psychology was so great that he was capable of proposing a guarantee pact which would cover Germany against French aggression as well as France against German aggression (Confession d'un Vieux Diplomate, pp. 585-586). This, for St. Aulaire the ultimate enormity, was what France had to accept at Locarno. In view of the French outrage at Lloyd George making such a proposal, it is interesting that both the British and the French accounts of the conversation of 19 Dec. confirm that the suggestion of including Germany first came from Briand.
4 To Curzon, 5 Jan. 1922, F.0.371/8248, W195/50/17. Yet, more than anyone else in Britain, Hardinge was determined to wring concessions from France.
their concern that Briand might make excessive concessions to Britain and Germany, in particular that he might compromise France's right to take action in the event of a German reparations default. They were also afraid that he might yield to Lloyd George's pressures and establish contact with the Russians, thereby implying official recognition of the Bolshevik government.

Briand's position was so shaky that, to survive, he had to win some kind of success at Cannes, and this could only take the form of obtaining a guarantee pact. But parliament and the cabinet were increasingly hostile to the concessions which he would have to make in order to obtain it.

The two prime ministers resumed their talks on security at Cannes on 4 January 1922, before the official opening of the conference, and Lloyd George presented Briand with a memorandum outlining the British attitude. He wanted a general, overall settlement and not a piecemeal treatment of individual problems — as he told Briand in a conversation the same day, "all questions should be cleared away which may be capable of dividing the sentiment of the two countries and marring their accord". He argued that Britain's trade had suffered from the war as much as the soil of France had done, and that she could not accept the postponement of economic reconstruction in Europe while meeting France's desires with regard to her security. Britain needed peace and reconstruction, France needed security and reparations. Here was the basis of a quid pro quo.

But whatever the details of such an arrangement might be, Lloyd George remained anxious to limit Britain's commitments as much as possible. He assured Briand that a guarantee pact on the 1919 pattern would be more popular in Britain than an offensive-defensive alliance, and would therefore be of greater value to France. He made it clear, when Briand referred to French anxiety about Germany's designs in Eastern Europe, that there would be strong public opposition to any involvement with Poland, and reminded him that in 1920 even the Tories were appalled at the possibility of intervention to help save the Poles from Russia. Only France could be covered by a guarantee treaty.

1 Laroche, Au Quai d'Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré, p. 153.
Briand was naturally anxious about the conditions which would be attached to a pact, and Lloyd George told him that the Entente which he envisaged would include settlement of the Eastern Question and the Tangier dispute. He also wanted an end to all naval competition - France's submarine-construction programme would affect British sentiment towards her, and Britain could not see a large French submarine fleet built without taking counter-measures. Briand was able to reassure him that the guarantee proposed by Lloyd George would relieve France of the necessity of continuing her submarine construction, and that she would be happy not to have to make the effort which this involved. Lloyd George continued to advocate his favourite causes. He urged that France should cooperate in summoning a conference to help the economic and financial reconstruction of Europe, a conference in which Russia would participate, and that France and Britain should reach an agreement which would form the basis of a wider scheme in which the division of Europe into two camps "should not be perpetuated by narrow fears on the part of the victor nations or secret projects of revenge on the part of the vanquished". Briand's vision was more specific: he wanted all the other signatories of the Treaty of Versailles to group themselves under the aegis of an Anglo-French alliance.¹

The same day Lloyd George told the Italian prime minister, Bonomi, that the forthcoming Genoa Conference must put Europe on her feet again, and assured him that France would be influenced by whatever Britain would do in the question of a guarantee treaty. And Britain would agree to the pact on the distinct condition that France would cooperate in the reconstruction of Central Europe and Russia.²

Lloyd George and Briand hoped that agreement on a pact would reconcile French public opinion to a major reconstruction programme involving Germany and Russia, perhaps even

² Minutes, 4 Jan. 1922, Cab. 29/94, I.C.P. 220B. Later, meeting the Italians' objections to the pact, he told them that "France was like a nervous beast full of fear", that a guarantee treaty ought to calm her, and that if this were given Britain should be able to restrain France if she wished to quarrel with Germany (10 Jan. 1922, Cab. 29/94, I.C.P. 229B).
to the extent of participating in it. The British delegation naturally went further than Briand, and it hoped that a pact would be sufficient compensation or distraction for the subordination of French interests to British in the other three main areas of dispute. But French opposition to the conference continued to grow, the press campaigned against the idea of making any concessions to Britain, and parliamentary groups passed votes of censure on Briand. Doumer, his finance minister, criticized publicly the suggestions for dealing with reparations and with the German request for a moratorium on which Briand and Lloyd George had agreed in London a few weeks earlier.¹

Briand's precarious situation probably influenced his reply to Lloyd George's memorandum. After several days of negotiations about reparations he handed over a statement of France's needs and demands in which he showed himself just as ready to make excessive conditions as Lloyd George had been. This memorandum stressed the importance which France attached to her security, and urged that a simple guarantee of her frontier would not carry sufficient weight against Germany; the Anglo-French agreement should display the willingness of both countries to act in complete agreement to maintain peace. The British government should bind itself to consider continued German disarmament, particularly the demilitarization of the Rhineland, as indispensable to French security, and any violation of the demilitarization and disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles (articles 42 to 44) should constitute as direct an aggression against France as an invasion of her territory.

Briand went further and asked that the two governments should agree to regulate the strength of their forces, that their general staffs should be in regular contact with each other, and that any pact should be mutual. However he recognized that British public opinion would object to any engagement risking military action on behalf of countries in which it had little interest.

Lloyd George was unresponsive. He complained that the French government proposed an offensive-defensive alliance, precisely the sort of engagement which British public opinion

¹ S.I.A., 1920-23, p. 162.
most disliked because it raised suspicions of hidden obligations, and that a general Entente between the two countries in their dealings in European affairs would mean that they guaranteed to keep the peace of Europe. This would risk complications in the East. Britain was appalled at the prospect of joining France in her self-imposed role of policeman of the world. But Briand insisted that the alliance which he proposed was a defensive one. He wanted in the first place an "Entente entre deux" followed by an "Entente général" in which all the powers attending the Genoa Conference would be included. Thus Germany and Russia would be eligible.

In his report to Paris Briand consoled himself and his cabinet that Lloyd George seemed aware of the need to put the two countries on an equal footing, and he felt that Lloyd George's submission of his draft guarantee treaty to the cabinet in London indicated that he saw the security question in a wider perspective than when he arrived in Cannes.

It was on this day that the two prime ministers played their famous game of golf, the game which caused such a furore in Paris and which illustrated — and increased — the extent of French opposition to any dealings with Lloyd George.

On 9 January Briand wrote to Millerand informing him for the first time of the state of the negotiations about a security pact. In his reply Millerand made no mention of this, and his letter consisted of an attack on the reparations discussions and on the invitation sent to Russia to attend the Genoa meeting. Hardinge reported that the press was hostile

2 Suarez, Briand, v, p. 384.
3 Photographs in the French press which showed Lloyd George coaching Briand were seen as yet another example of the master-pupil nature of their relationship. But the claims that it was this game which brought about Briand's downfall and Poincare's return to office are wildly exaggerated, and the game was only one cause among many. Laroche says that during the game Briand approached Grigg who was about to tee off, but Lloyd George pulled him back, pointing to his forehead and warning that if the ball hit him there, "Briand conic! et alors ... Poincaré". Everyone laughed (Au Quai d'Orsay, pp. 152-53). Nonetheless, within a week Poincaré was prime minister.
4 Suarez, Briand, v, p. 391. The decision to invite her had already been taken on the first day of the conference, and Millerand had promptly attacked it in a letter on 7 Jan. (Suarez, Briand, v, pp. 365-66).
to what was known of the pact, that public opinion was uneasy, and that Briand might be overthrown by the Chamber if he returned with an unsatisfactory treaty.¹

The two prime ministers had a further conversation on 10 January. Briand was afraid that a detailed list of the conditions which Britain would impose in return for concluding a guarantee treaty would make a bad impression in France, and he asked that they not be stated with such precision. He would prefer instead a general phrase indicating that both governments were using the occasion of their agreement on a guarantee treaty to settle minor disputes between them. Lloyd George agreed to omit any specific reference to Tangier, provided that Curzon gave his approval, but warned that British public opinion was most sensitive on the question of submarines and that the cabinet wanted the passage referring to it to be strengthened. When Briand said that certain phrases gave the impression that Britain was protecting France, Lloyd George also agreed that Britain should show that she realized French security was one of her own interests.²

The same day the British and French cabinets held meetings and reached very different conclusions. In London Lloyd George's colleagues made no significant objection to his conduct of the Cannes negotiations. They saw serious disadvantages in an Anglo-French bilateral pact as proposed by Briand, fearing that such an agreement would limit Britain's freedom of action while giving France a free hand with regard to Germany, and that under it France would try to persuade Britain to send larger forces to the Continent. It was stated that Britain's resources would not extend to going to the assistance of countries such as Poland. However the cabinet accepted Lloyd George's proposed treaty, which, it concluded, would not throw heavy obligations on Britain while yet remaining of great value to France.³

¹ Hardinge to Curzon, 10 Jan. 1922, F.O.371/8249, W305/50/17.
² Minutes, 10 Jan. 1922, Cab. 29/94, I.C.P. 229A.
³ Cabinet conclusions, 10 Jan. 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.1(22).

Unnamed members of the cabinet stated that: Britain was under a moral obligation to give France a guarantee treaty; that as things stood then, Britain exposed herself to the charge of deserting France if she helped Germany - as it was in her interest to do - but if France were an ally no such accusation could be made; and that Germany would welcome an Anglo-French guarantee treaty.
In Paris Briand's colleagues effectively sabotaged his negotiations. Millerand wrote to him that the cabinet ruled that Briand could not invite the Russians to participate in the Genoa Conference; that he must maintain fully France's right to use force if Germany failed to fulfil any of her reparations obligations; that he should not have allowed a postponement of German payments without sufficient reason and without having obtained enough securities; and that no further moratoria should be granted without receiving such securities. Millerand recognized that this decision would create difficulties for Briand in his negotiations for a pact, but he remarked that such arrangements would have to be discussed by the cabinet in any case, and that Lloyd George's conditions raised so many problems that an early solution seemed unlikely. The letter concluded by urging Briand to retain in full the traditional French policy on reparations.

Millerand and the cabinet were by no means opposed to a guarantee pact, but they were less inclined than Briand to make important concessions to obtain it. Some weeks later the president told the Belgian ambassador in Paris that it was essential for France to lure Britain into committing herself to a guarantee treaty, and that once she had been so committed, agreement of the details would follow naturally. Briand had no such illusions. He knew that agreement on the other questions would have to precede and not follow the conclusion of a pact, and that his cabinet's decisions meant that he would not be entitled to make them. His position, already difficult, had become untenable. An exchange of telegrams between Briand and Millerand only widened the area of disagreement between them, and on 11 January Briand returned to Paris to reassert his authority. Before he left Lloyd George presented him with the text of the British draft guarantee pact. According to this draft the pact's duration would be confined to ten years, a period which would be farcical as a

1 This was described as the abandonment of the policy reached by the cabinet, including Briand himself, before he left for Cannes.
2 Peretti della Rocca, on Millerand's behalf, to Briand, 10 Jan. 1922, quoted in Suarez, Briand, v, pp. 388-90.
4 Text in F.0.374/3879, C1445/2049/18. The draft was dated 12 Jan., but was actually handed over the previous day.
guarantee of French security and was presumably designed to give Britain some room for manoeuvre in later negotiations. 1

Briand seems to have expected to return to Cannes. He assured the conference before he left that he would be absent for only two days, and he left most of his luggage behind. However back in Paris, after winning the unanimous support of the cabinet which had so undermined his position at Cannes, 2 and achieving one of his many grand oratorical triumphs in the Chamber — a success which left everyone certain that his government would survive any vote of no-confidence — he astonished all his supporters and opponents by resigning. He had had enough. 3

There was only one possible successor, Poincaré, whose return to power had so long been dreaded in Britain and Germany. The change of government in Paris was a serious blow to the chances of concluding a guarantee pact; Poincaré would drive a harder bargain than Briand, and the British would be less inclined to bolster his internal position than they had been to help Briand stay in office.

As Laroche, the effective head of the Quai d'Orsay, left Cannes, he was accosted by Grigg, Lloyd George's private secretary. Grigg told him that it was vital to conclude the treaty negotiations, and that if agreement were not reached soon, he doubted if it ever would be. 4 The situation worsened quickly. The French press began a violent campaign against the treaty, attacking it as a British manoeuvre which would give France no security and would yet win her consent to the economic reconstruction of Europe, a moratorium for Germany, recognition of the Soviet government, and, in general, the

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1 As Wolfers points out, government policy was based on the Ten Year Rule, which assumed that there would be no war within the next decade (Britain and France between the Wars, p. 204). And Curzon remarked shortly afterwards "of course, if the duration of the Pact were confined to ten years, Britain's obligations would be practically nil" (memorandum, 17 Feb. 1922, Cab.24/133, C.P. 3760).

2 According to St. Aulaire, he promised the cabinet that he would obtain an extension of the pact's duration and would ensure that any German violation of the demilitarized zone would be regarded as an act of war (Confession, p. 592).

3 Henry Wilson's reaction to Briand's resignation was "so Lloyd George's fish-wife's bargaining has not succeeded" (Callwell, Henry Wilson, ii, p. 320 (11 Jan. 1922)).

4 Laroche, Au Quai d'Orsay, p. 155.
subordination of France's policy to Britain's. And on the
British side, too, doubts and hostility increased.

On his way back to London Lloyd George met Poincaré in
Paris on 14 January, and they discussed the question of a
guarantee pact even though the new French government had not
yet been formed. The meeting was not a success. Poincaré
agreed that any pact must be accompanied by a general liquidation
of the differences between the two countries, while
Lloyd George sympathised with the French request for reciprocity, expressed himself quite ready to discuss an extension
of the pact beyond ten years, and agreed to permanent contact
between the general staffs. But they disagreed violently over
another aspect of the negotiations. Poincaré attached far
more importance to obtaining a military convention than Briand
had done, complained that without one a guarantee treaty would
have little value, and told Lloyd George that he would rather
have a military convention without a treaty than vice-versa.
He repeated Briand's demand for a statement of the minimum
number of troops which Britain would send to France in the
event of a German invasion. Lloyd George explained that, as
in the 1914-18 war, the number of troops which Britain would
be able to provide in the course of a future conflict would
bear no relation to the strength of the British army at its
outset, and he told Poincaré that there would be no hope of
getting a treaty through parliament if he preferred a conven-
tion for military discussions to a pledge by the British
people and parliament. France must choose between the two.

Poincaré was unimpressed and told Lloyd George that to him,
personally, the treaty would be useless without a military

2 E.g., Hankey wrote to Lloyd George from Washington opposing
the treaty, telling him that if France were in possession
of a British guarantee she would be "more difficult and
domineering than ever" (13 Jan. 1922, Lloyd George papers,
F/62/3/13). He assured his wife that if he had been in
London he would certainly have blocked this new involvement
in European affairs (10 Jan. 1922, quoted in Roskill, Hankey,
ii, p. 259).
3 Harding to Curzon, 14 Jan. 1922, describing the meeting,
F.0.371/8249, W528/50/17; Poincaré to St. Aulaire, 23 Jan.
1922, D.D.F., pp. 113-14. The disagreement is mentioned
only in the fuller British account.
4 On his return to London Lloyd George attacked Poincaré's
folly in actually proposing a detailed military convention
(Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 349; Wilson (ed.), The Polit-
ical Diaries of C. P. Scott, p. 444 (18 Jan. 1922)).
convention and the guarantee which it would contain would be illusory. Lloyd George retorted that if Poincaré repeated these views after he had formed his government, there would be no more draft treaty to discuss, and Poincaré in turn replied that in that case France would know that under the treaty proposed by Britain she had no real military guarantees. Lloyd George protested that it seemed ridiculous to discuss military conventions to cope with a sudden German attack when Germany had been almost completely disarmed and could not secretly re-arm. He argued that a misunderstanding on this point would give the impression that France was unwilling to deal with realities, and that Poincaré's attitude must be derived from political considerations of some kind since "it could not be derived from military facts". To an extent he was right. Briand had been forced to resign on account of his readiness to make concessions to Britain; Poincaré would bargain for as much as he could, and would not let himself be accused of giving Lloyd George an easy victory. Confident of British support in a war with Germany, he wanted to make the extent of Britain's commitment as precise and watertight as he could.

This encounter hastened the process of British disenchantment with the guarantee pact, and subsequent reports from Paris were not encouraging. Poincaré made it clear that his main object would be to extract as much reparations from Germany as possible. Hardinge was not hopeful that the British government could come to terms with him in his present mood, but he assured Curzon that the British held the whip hand in the relationship since a pact was essential to French policy, and that if Poincaré failed to obtain it his government would fall. Hardinge rejoiced that "he has played into our hands" by stating that there could be no conclusion of

1 He told Gaiffier that to conclude a pact without a military convention would give Britain the opportunity to interfere in the French and Belgian war estimates and to reduce their military expenditure (Gaiffier to Jaspé, 21 Feb. 1922, describing a conversation with Poincaré, D.D.B., i, p. 478). It is unlikely that Poincaré could really have believed this.

2 Hardinge to Curzon, 20 Jan. 1922, F.O.371/8250, W614/50/17. However he was obliged to accept the summoning of the Genoa Conference and the moratorium which the Reparations Commission had already granted to Germany.
the pact until all the remaining disputes between the two countries had been settled.\(^1\)

The British cabinet was fully aware of the strength of its position. At a meeting shortly after Poincaré came to power it was suggested that it might be better to take no further steps at that time, and that the next move must come from France; after some weeks the French would begin to feel isolated, they would begin to realize that Britain did not regard the pact as a matter of supreme importance, and they would probably approach her in a more reasonable frame of mind. The cabinet agreed that no further action should be taken for the time being.\(^2\)

On 26 January St. Aulaire handed over a French draft treaty in reply to that which Lloyd George had given Briand at Cannes.\(^3\) There were several important differences between the two, and one which particularly aroused Curzon's hostility was a restatement of the French proposal that any German violation of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty would constitute an act of aggression against Britain and France.\(^4\) He complained that the French wanted to build a double alliance between the two countries which would claim "a sort of hegemony in Europe". St. Aulaire replied that such a scheme would lead to a consolidation of international relations and that other countries would group themselves around the two principal parties, but Curzon thought this was a nebulous idea and told St. Aulaire that it would be better

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1 Harding to Curzon, 20 Jan. 1922, Harding papers, 45. In his memoirs he describes himself as advising Curzon to let the matter drop "until the French should come on their knees and beg for it" (Old Diplomacy, p. 268). There is no record of this phrase in the correspondence, but it sums up his attitude quite fairly.
2 Cabinet conclusions, 18 Jan. 1922, Cab. 23/29, Cab. 2(22)2.
5 Kilmarnock later warned him that had a treaty including such a clause been effective in April 1920, Britain would have been obliged to regard the German government's suppression of the Ruhr disturbances as an act of aggression (to Curzon, 10 Feb. 1922, F.O. 371/8250, W1508/50/17.)
to confine the Anglo-French agreement to the precise terms already discussed. When he queried the reference to common Anglo-French action on all questions likely to jeopardize the peace, St. Aulaire explained that this phrase implied the "indirect guarantee for France" which had not featured in the British draft; it meant that if Germany attacked any of the Eastern European states Britain and France would at once consult together, and "if they were so agreed, would act in concert with the League of Nations in finding a pacific solution". Curzon criticized the ambiguity of this clause, and he also opposed a reference to concerted action between the two general staffs. ¹ He brusquely rejected St. Aulaire's proposal — which conflicted with all previous French declarations on the matter — that the pact be concluded before the Genoa Conference convened and before the two countries had reached agreement on the other questions. ² The ambassador added that the extent to which Poincaré's hopes would be fulfilled would probably have a great influence on his decision on whether or not he would attend the conference. This was effectively a threat to sabotage the meeting at Genoa — at last the French were beginning to fight back. Curzon was unmoved, and told St. Aulaire that it seemed utterly impossible to get the pact out of the way before the Genoa Conference convened in five weeks time.

After this conversation he remarked that the latest French suggestion indicated "the extreme importance which the French government attach to the conclusion of the Pact, upon which the existence of M. Poincaré's government may be said, in fact, to depend, and left me with the impression that while we hold it in suspense...we may find in it a powerful lever for

¹ On 23 Jan. Poincaré told the Belgian ambassador that a guarantee limited to ten years and without a military convention was illusory. It was in Britain's interest to come to the aid of France and Belgium in any case. Without a convention Britain could escape from her commitments by sending a few divisions, if her public opinion were unfavourable to any intervention. [11] But he had no illusions about Britain's reaction to this objective, and he told the ambassador "M. Lloyd George repoussa catégoriquement ma demande de ce sujet; son Parlement ne voulait en entendre parler". He also wanted the insertion in the proposed Belgian guarantee treaty referring to the defence of the left bank of the Rhine (Gaiffier to Jaspar, 23-24 Jan., 1922, describing a conversation with Poincaré, D.D.B., i, p. 479).

² This description follows Curzon's account. St. Aulaire barely mentions any disagreement.
securing a favourable settlement of the other issues". Doubt-
less this was the reason why Poincaré had changed his tactics. He had realized his mistake in agreeing to solve the other questions first and in choosing to dig in his heels over a technical detail such as the military convention. But it was too late for him to recover the ground which he had abandoned.

Some days later Curzon told St. Aulaire that he could hold out no hope that the cabinet would accept Poincaré's expansion of the pact as laid out in his draft of 26 January, and he deplored the unfortunate turn matters seemed to be taking since Poincare had returned to power. Britain thought that she was "doing the handsome thing by our great ally in assuming such a very serious burden", and he summed up neatly his own attitude towards the pact when he complained that Poincare was acting as if it were for the French to define the terms and for the British to accept the favour.

Poincaré, no more deterred by such condescension than he had been by Britain's exorbitant demands, wrote another long memorandum in which he further elaborated his views. He insisted on reciprocity, and argued that the treaty should cover "France" and not merely "the soil of France" - otherwise she would be bound to inaction until she had actually been invaded. More importantly, he clung to his belief that any violation of articles 42 to 44 should constitute an immediate cause of war, and to his demand for an arrangement between the general staffs. He wanted the pact to last for thirty years, pointing out that the 1919 guarantee treaty was of unlimited duration, and he "attached the utmost importance" to the clause which would "ensure a united policy between

2 Curzon to Hardinge, 31 Jan. 1922, Hardinge papers, 45.
4 He made it clear that France had in mind only an unambiguous violation.
5 He explained that this would not mean laying down definitely and rigidly the number and character of the units which would be available, but would determine the resources which would be available for common use.
6 One argument which the French used in favour of a duration longer than ten years was that the "naval holiday" agreed upon at the Washington Conference would come to an end in 1932, and that Britain would surely want to extend beyond this period an Entente which would effectively limit naval armaments.
the two countries whenever the general peace is endangered". 1

The British government was in no hurry to deal with the French memorandum. On 9 February Curzon told St. Aulaire that the cabinet had not yet discussed it and that the recent parliamentary debate had shown that one section of opinion was opposed to giving France any guarantee at all. A significant vote against a treaty would destroy "the graciousness of the gift" and weaken its value. He did not think that the cabinet would go beyond the 1919 treaty, and there was no chance that Britain would accept the French proposals concerning articles 42 to 44 - to do so "would be regarded by British public opinion as embarking upon a policy of military advantage and potential danger" - and he doubted whether any formula could be found to reconcile the two points of view. He warned St. Aulaire not to risk losing the pact by trying to improve it too much. 2 Hardinge was more convinced than ever that Poincaré was so desperately anxious to obtain the pact that he was at Britain's mercy, and that it would be a mistake for Curzon to sign it until all other problems had been settled. 3

Curzon and Hardinge were greedy, and wanted to receive as much as possible in exchange for a guarantee treaty. Lloyd George, Churchill and Crowe showed greater moderation and were prepared to demand a fairer price. They inclined towards linking the two related issues of security and reconstruction, and for them, for Lloyd George and Churchill in particular, the submarine scare and the Turkish and Tangier disputes were of secondary importance. 4

The change of government in Paris altered the situation. Anglo-French relations worsened, Poincaré soon showed himself determined to exact every pound of his reparations flesh from Germany and to thwart the plans for bringing Germany and Russia back into the European economic community, plans on which

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1 Some days later de Margerie, the French ambassador in Brussels, sought Belgian intervention to help persuade Britain to agree to this clause, which the French regarded as being especially important (Jaspar to Moncheur, 3 Feb. 1922, describing a conversation with de Margerie, D.D.B., i, pp. 490 & 492).
3 Hardinge to Curzon, 1 Feb. 1922, Hardinge papers, 45.
4 Lloyd George became utterly obsessed with the Eastern Question only when his European plans had collapsed at Genoa and Rapallo.
Lloyd George had set his heart. The prime minister might tell the Commons that Britain was morally indebted to France and that "the consideration having been paid by France, we are in honour bound", 1 and assure Poincaré that "Britain seeks no bargain in the pledge which she is prepared to give France", 2 but as Poincaré's influence made itself felt he became less inclined to reach an agreement. He told Derby that while he stood by his offer to France and had no intention that there should be bargaining over a pact, he recognized that there had been a change of public opinion in Britain. There were now many dissenters, and there was a feeling that France was opposed to the Genoa Conference from which an improvement in British trade could be expected. If it were to be thought in industrial circles that France was delaying reconstruction the resulting anger would make cooperation with her impossible. The opposition parties were hostile towards France, and there was a growing disenchantment among government supporters. 3 The resigned tone of these remarks is more significant than their content - Lloyd George no longer seemed to have much interest in overcoming the obstacles in the way of a pact.

His opinions were decisive. The Foreign Office's influence on the conduct of foreign policy was so slight that it did not even know that Lloyd George would offer a guarantee pact at the Cannes Conference, 4 and the cabinet as a whole exercised no more than a general restraining influence. 5 Policy-making was the prerogative of a small group consisting of Lloyd George, Chamberlain, Churchill, Balfour and Curzon, and the prime minister was always predominant. 6 When Lloyd George was interested in a problem or a situation he always dealt with it personally, and his frequent interventions and

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1 Hansard, 5s., HC, 150, col. 42 (7 Feb. 1922).
2 To Poincaré, 17 Jan. 1922, Lloyd George papers, F/51/3/12.
3 Record by Derby of a conversation with Lloyd George, 18 Feb. 1922, approved by Lloyd George; Lloyd George to Derby, 18 Feb. 1922, Lloyd George papers, F/14/5/39. The prime minister rejected the idea of including Poincaré's extra clauses in the treaty, even though he was prepared to consider embodying them in a covering letter.
4 Minute by Villiers, 2 July 1923, F.O.371/9535, W5292/1585/17.
5 The cabinet's only intervention in the Cannes negotiations was to stress the importance of an agreement on the submarine question, and Curzon effectively sabotaged a cabinet decision on concluding a pact with Belgium (see below, pp. 130-31).
6 On Lloyd George's tendency to make policy decisions himself, see also above, p. 81.
his usurpations of the foreign secretary's responsibilities drove Curzon time after time to contemplate and threaten his resignation, though never actually to offer it. It was he and not Curzon who negotiated with Briand in London and at Cannes, with Poincaré in Paris and later at Boulogne. When Curzon and the Foreign Office resumed their control of the security question, it meant that Lloyd George was losing his interest in it and that the question was losing its importance.

Curzon formulated his reactions to the French draft treaty in a memorandum which he wrote on 17 February. His main objection was to the references to the Rhineland and German disarmament. Britain would not accept that the Rhineland should be treated as if it were part of France, and while she might be prepared to intervene if it were to be occupied by German troops, she would not commit herself in advance to do so. He was afraid that a military alliance between Britain and France could result in rival, hostile combinations, perhaps even one between Germany and Russia, and he opposed even Poincaré's modified suggestion of an agreement between the general staffs on the ground that it would lead to the impression and to the demand that each country maintain a certain proportion of its forces to be utilized in a particular way. Poincaré's reference to Britain and France consulting together on matters likely to endanger the peace might take Britain further in the direction of a positive alliance than she was prepared to go.¹

¹ Lloyd George enjoyed humiliating the arrogant Curzon, and love of office led the foreign secretary to endure endless snubs and taunts rather than resign. When Bonar Law asked Jones did the prime minister hate Curzon, Jones answered "no; he laughs at Curzon" (Whitehall Diary, i, p. 220 (30 Oct. 1922) and Curzon later wrote of Lloyd George "what a malevolent little beast he is" (to Baldwin, 1 Sept. 1923, Baldwin papers, 114). Curzon was often driven to complain at Lloyd George's treatment; a typical protest was that Lloyd George "had more than once treated him with scant courtesy - almost with contumely - in the presence of his colleagues and attached little weight to his opinions on matters directly within the sphere of his departmental responsibility" (Chamberlain to Bonar Law, 6 Jan. 1921, describing a conversation with Curzon, Bonar Law papers, 160/1/18).

² After Lloyd George had met Briand Hardinge complained to Curzon that he was reluctant to meet the French premier since he would have to reveal his ignorance of what had happened at the meeting (23 Dec. 1921, Hardinge papers, 44).

³ "it could be taken to mean, and is probably intended by the French to mean, that a settlement of future European disputes is a matter primarily for Great Britain and France and that the rest of the world is to look on until our two Governments have made up their minds what they will do".
Once again he repeated his belief, assiduously fostered by Hardinge, that ultimately the life of Poincaré's government would depend upon the conclusion of a guarantee pact of some form, and that it would be unwise to abandon "the very powerful form of pressure which its non-ratification enables us to exercise". He would make it "the concluding rather than the opening or the middle stage in our negotiations, and would find excellent reasons for prolonging the discussion upon it until we are nearer a friendly solution of the many difficult problems by which we are still confronted". The only point on which he was willing to yield was his readiness to consider extending the duration of a treaty to fifteen or twenty years.¹

The same day St. Aulaire wrote to Poincaré that he had not raised the matter when he had met Curzon because at their last conversation, on 9 February, the foreign secretary had explained the reasons why the cabinet had not examined the French project - priority must be given to difficulties in Egypt and Ireland, and to the decision on whether a general election should be held.² Curzon's continued silence confirmed his impression that the British government was in no hurry to conclude a guarantee treaty, and he added that public opinion no longer seemed interested in the question.³

The British government's manner became even more offhand. When St. Aulaire complained that Britain had not yet replied to the French memoranda Curzon told him airily that since France had already published the notes, she would probably publish the reply as well. Lloyd George made a typical objection to pursuing the matter; if Britain sent a letter the French would answer it and the correspondence would go on endlessly.⁴

Indifference seemed to be contagious. Lloyd George met Poincaré at Boulogne on 25 February, and when, at the end of their discussion, Lloyd George raised the question of the

¹ Cab.24/132, C.P. 3760. Two days later he told Hardinge that he was strongly inclined to hold up the pact, and that if Poincaré continued along the same path he would so antagonize British public opinion that he would not get a pact at all (19 Feb. 1922, Hardinge papers, 45). The general staff was sympathetic to the French draft treaty and preferred it to the British version on a number of points (memorandum, 28 March 1922, F.O.371/8251, W2296/50/17).
⁴ Cabinet conclusions, 22 Feb. 1922, Cab.23736, S. 45.
guarantee pact, Poincaré told him that his train was due to leave and there was no time to discuss the matter.¹ But misled by Lloyd George's parting remark that the good atmosphere in which these talks had been held would make it easier to resolve the security question, he instructed the unfortunate St. Aulaire to discuss it with Curzon once again.² He suggested that the British government would have had time to examine his explanatory memorandum written a month earlier, and he showed himself ready to make serious concessions in his demands for a military convention—it need no longer be referred to as such, and he would be prepared to accept a less precise formula.

When St. Aulaire raised the matter Curzon told him that the cabinet had still not made up its mind—"no doubt at the right time the Cabinet would be quite prepared to come to a final decision on the subject, but that time had not yet arrived". Curzon believed that the principal members of the cabinet, Chamberlain, Balfour and Churchill, shared his views, and he remarked that while Poincaré might have changed his mind about the necessity of eliminating Anglo-French conflicts before reaching agreement on a treaty, his colleagues had not changed theirs. St. Aulaire protested that there was no proportion between the immense importance of a pact which would dominate the relations between the two countries and the limited importance of a problem such as Tangier, in which third parties were involved, and that the first should not be dependent on the second. Curzon was adamant: the Near East must first be settled; then would come the Genoa Conference, which would bring them well into the summer; after that they could deal with Tangier; and "when the whole of these matters had been concluded, then would be the time to resume the discussion". He added that since a large section of public opinion was opposed to a guarantee treaty it would be unwise to seek parliamentary approval for it until these differences had been eliminated. St. Aulaire was obliged to concede that the

¹ At this meeting Lloyd George made a crucial concession. He agreed that reparations and the peace treaties should not be discussed at the Genoa Conference, thus taking away much of its point. Poincaré may have feared that if the security question were to be discussed he might have to make corresponding concessions.

guarantee pact had lost ground, that it met with indifference among the general public and was opposed by Liberals, radicals and Labour. Internal political developments, especially the prospect of a general election, led to an abandonment of interest in foreign affairs. ¹

The following day, in the course of a discussion on Turkey, Curzon told the cabinet that the only hold which they had over Poincaré was that if he did not come to terms with Britain in the Near East he would risk losing the pact, and in this case his government would probably fall. Churchill doubted the wisdom of such a policy, and asked whether it was proposed to tell France that if she did not adopt the British line concerning the Genoa Conference no progress would be made in negotiating an Anglo-French pact. If so, he did not think that this was a fair threat. ² Curzon, unyielding, told him that at Cannes the French had been left in no doubt that the pact would not be signed until the other problems had been settled. Lloyd George was more flexible and reassured Churchill that it was not intended to use the threat as he suggested, but that it would be useful to reserve the pact in order to bring pressure on France concerning reparations and French treatment of Germany in general. ³

By this time the guarantee treaty had receded into the background and all interest was focused on the forthcoming conference in Genoa. ⁴ This was a vast gathering — 34 countries were represented and 16,000 people were present — and it lasted for over five weeks. It was an utter failure. The French

¹ Curzon to Hardingé, 19 March 1922, F.0.371/8251, W2248/50/17; St. Aulaire to Poincaré, 19 March 1922, D.D.F., pp. 139-41.
² By May Churchill seems to have changed his mind. He asked whether "the fear of losing the Pact with this country could not be used as a lever in dealing with France on the subject of reparations?" Lloyd George, bearing the conversation in Boulogne in mind, did not think that Poincaré put much emphasis on the pact (cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.29(22)3).
³ Cabinet conclusions, 28 March 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.21(22)3. Jones records Churchill as agreeing with Lloyd George's remarks (Whitehall Diary, i, p. 196 (28 March 1922)).
⁴ As Curzon informed the army council, negotiations on a pact were at a standstill "owing to the interposition of other matters" (R. H. Campbell, on Curzon's orders, to the secretary of the army council, 18 April 1922, F.0.371/8251, W2296/50/17).
were opposed to the whole project and Poincaré did his best to undermine the conference, the United States refused to participate, and Lloyd George's agreement that the peace treaties and reparations should not be discussed doomed it from the start. By achieving no result after raising such high hopes it succeeded only in worsening the general political and economic situation. Its main importance was that it provided the occasion for Germany and Russia to conclude the Treaty of Rapallo.

The signing of this treaty was a rushed and chaotic affair, but it was nonetheless the climax of a long and natural development. However mutually antagonistic the German and Russian political and social systems might be, the two countries were drawn together by the supreme bond of a common enemy. The Western allies had imposed a Carthaginian peace on Germany and had intervened in the Russian civil war to destroy the Bolsheviks, while France continued to squeeze as much from Germany as she could and had not abandoned hope of recovering at least some of her vast investment in Czarist Russia. In Berlin as in Moscow, Britain and France were viewed with resentment and apprehension, and Poland was viewed in even stronger terms. She was hated and scorned, and her very existence was regarded as an affront. Russia had come close to conquering her in the war of 1920, and at that time many Germans were prepared to join Russia in a new partition of Poland and a restoration of the frontiers of 1914. It is not surprising that Seeckt believed that Poland should be destroyed. It is surprising, and far more significant, that Chancellor Wirth, the Baden liberal, D'Abernon's hero and the symbol of the fulfilment policy, should have agreed with him: such attitudes were not confined to the military. Seeckt believed that Russia was

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1 For instance, he himself did not attend (Lenin, recovering from an illness, was the only other important head of government who did not go), and the French and Belgian delegations adopted a much tougher line on the question of nationalized property than Britain did (Carr, The Bolshevik Revolution, iii, p. 375).

2 This attitude survived the Russian defeat. Chicherin and Wirth discussed a return to the 1914 frontiers in April 1922 (Carsten, The Reichshehr and Politics, p. 139). The fourth partition of Poland in September 1939 had a long pre-history.

3 In September 1922 he wrote to Wirth that "Polens Existenz ist unerträglich" (Rabenau, Seeckt, ii, p. 316).

invincible, and that if Germany combined with Russia, she too would become invincible.¹ The Bolshevik government's anxiety to win international recognition and to divide the capitalist world was matched by Germany's desire to break out of her diplomatic isolation and establish friendly relations with a foreign power, even with Communist Russia.

There were several sources of dispute between the two countries. Germany demanded satisfaction for the murder of her ambassador in 1918 and compensation for property nationalized after the revolution, and she was bound to take into account the fact that the abortive Communist putsch of March 1921 had been supported by Zinoviev, even if not by the entire Politburo.² Russia had unsatisfied reparation claims, and naturally she sought the overthrow of the capitalist system, preferably beginning in Germany. But these differences were either unimportant or else long-term projects which could easily be postponed to facilitate short-term requirements. Neither country could harm the other in any serious way,³ while if they subordinated ideology to Realpolitik both could be of considerable use to the other.

The NEP, which began in 1921, made Russia a more attractive market for German industry, and in return for trading concessions the Germans gave Russia the benefit of their technology and expertise. A trade agreement was signed only two months after the programme began.⁴

The two outcasts also cooperated in military matters. Throughout 1921 representatives of the Reichswehr and heavy

¹ In July 1920 he wrote "Russland hat die Zukunft für sich. Es kann nicht untergehen....Und wenn Deutschland sich auf Russlands Seite stellt, so ist es selbst unbesieglich.... Auf der Seite der Entente kann es keine Zukunft finden" (memorandum, 26 July 1920, quoted in Gessler, Reichswehrpolitik in der Weimarer Zeit, pp. 186-87). This was written when he still expected Russia to conquer Poland, but his views did not change substantially. However he made it clear that he was thinking of the more distant and not the immediate future.


³ In his Antimemoirs Malraux refers to an interview which Stalin gave to William Randolph Hearst in 1933. Stalin had mentioned the possibility of a Russo-German war, and was asked how could Germany and Russia go to war when they had no common frontiers. He answered simply "they will have".

⁴ The agreement was signed the day after the allies presented Germany with the schedule of reparations payments.
industry negotiated with the Russians about the construction of German armaments factories on Russian soil. Members of the German government and foreign office were admitted to the discussions only at a late stage. The result of the agreement which they reached was that firms such as Krupp and Junkers helped rebuild the Russian armaments industry, and that Germany was able to circumvent the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles by manufacturing weapons and acquiring training facilities in Russia.

The two governments exchanged non-diplomatic representatives, the Germans returned the Russian embassy in Berlin, and led by Maltzan, the head of the Russian Department, a powerful group in the Wilhelmstrasse favoured a policy of friendship with Russia. The Bolsheviks were eager to open diplomatic relations.

But despite all the frustrations and disappointments which Germany experienced in her dealings with Britain and France—the reparations schedule of May 1921, the partition of Silesia, the conditions imposed in return for granting a moratorium on the 1922 payments, and many others—the predominant group in Berlin continued to look towards the West and to be dubious about the wisdom of establishing closer contacts with Russia. Ebert and the Social Democrats were suspicious of the Russians, and their apprehensions were shared by Rathenau who became foreign minister in January 1922. Rathenau sabotaged the attempts by Chicherin, Litvinov and Maltzan to reach agreement on a political treaty before the Genoa Conference convened.

2 Wirth had to be informed since only he could provide the necessary secret funds. He was careful not to let Ebert know of the talks, and according to Brockdorff-Rantzau, he almost fainted when Brockdorff-Rantzau threatened to inform the president of the military collaboration. This was nearly six months after Rapallo! (Rosenbaum, Community of Fate, p. 41). Rosen, foreign minister from May to October 1927, opposed any Russo-German rapprochement (Helbig, Die Träger der Rapallo Politik, p. 52).
3 By late 1922 German pilots and officers were training in Russia, and shell, tank and poison gas factories were in operation or under construction (Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics, p. 143; Carr, German-Soviet Relations, pp. 60-67).
As the Russian delegation passed through Berlin on its way to Genoa it renewed its pressure on the Germans to sign the agreement which Litvinov and Maltzan had already worked out, but the government, undecided, divided between Easterners and Westerners, reluctant to offend the allies by presenting them with such a fait accompli, and less confident than the army or heavy industry of the gains which could be won by adopting an Eastward-looking foreign policy, declined to do so.

The situation was ripe for the Russo-German rapprochement to be formalized, all that was needed was a further stimulus. This was provided by Lloyd George's mismanagement of the Genoa Conference.

The conference was the first occasion when Western, German and Bolshevik representatives came together, and it was only to be expected that each of the three sides should try to play off one of its opponents against the other. Since the French were not interested in meeting either Germans or Russians and did their best to sabotage the whole conference, Western diplomacy was carried on by Britain alone, in effect by Lloyd George alone. This was a game in which he should have excelled, but surprisingly he chose not to play it, and ignoring the Germans, and evading all their attempts to negotiate with him, he concentrated on private discussions with the Russian delegates. He did not meet the Germans until nine days after the conference had begun and three days after they had signed the Rapallo Treaty. Shortly after the opening of the conference he had read out a memorandum prepared by Anglo-French experts some weeks before, according to which Russia would be entitled to claim reparations from Germany. 1 As Lloyd George's private conversations with the Russians continued, accompanied by rumours that he was doing a deal with them at Germany's expense, the German delegation became more and more nervous. 2

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1 However the first clause of the memorandum stated that Russia must fulfil her obligation to repay Czarist debts.

2 Lloyd George's effort to reach an agreement with the Russians at Genoa met with hostility from some of his cabinet. Churchill was anxious lest Russia be granted credits or recognition without having to make further concessions to the West (to Chamberlain, 13 May 1922, Chamberlain papers, 23/6/38), and Curzon, ill in Hackwood, was afraid of what agreement Lloyd George might come to. He dreaded a breach with France over the Russian question (to Chamberlain, 13 May 1922, Chamberlain papers, 23/6/33; Nicolson, Curzon, the Last Phase, p. 245).
The Russians played on these fears, and the British did nothing to assuage them. Finally, at 1 o'clock on Easter Sunday morning Joffe, the former Bolshevik ambassador to Berlin, telephoned the Germans and threatened that if they did not come to an agreement with Russia at once, the allies would do so. He invited them to a secret meeting at nearby Rapallo. Wirth, Rathenau and Maltzan, all still dressed in their pyjamas, discussed what they should do, and despite Rathenau's reluctance they decided to go. Throughout the day the two groups negotiated over the details of the Berlin draft, and in the evening Chicherin and Rathenau signed the Treaty of Rapallo. By this treaty Germany and Russia agreed to resume full diplomatic relations, to give each other most favoured nation rights, and to renounce compensation for war damage and expropriation of property.

The Russians were delighted at their coup, and from then on they had little interest in the proceedings of the Genoa Conference. Reaction in Germany was mixed. Ebert and the Socialists were furious, Maltzan and the Easterners in the foreign office triumphant, Rathenau and the Westerners confused and even astonished by what they had done. Brockdorff-Rantzau welcomed the step but not the way in which it had been taken, remarking that the German delegation at Genoa had behaved "like the man who has been invited into the living-room and who spits on the carpet". 2 2 Seeckt approved of it.

The Rapallo Treaty was a panicky measure, a reaction to an unreal threat, for, as has often been pointed out, the allies would certainly not have agreed to Russia obtaining reparations from Germany since they realized that the actual total paid would not be increased and that the Russian share would be at their own expense and not at Germany's. But it brought to an end the isolation which Germany had endured since 1918. It had taken 24 years for France to find an ally after her defeat in 1870, but Germany, following her example and looking to Russia for salvation, accomplished a similar feat in less than four years. Because of the manner in which it was carried out and the reactions it provoked, Rapallo was a tactical defeat, but it was a strategic victory.

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1 Germany reserved the right to revive her claim for compensation for nationalized property if the claims of third powers were satisfied.
2 Rosenbaum, Community of Fate, p. 30.
Britain and France were profoundly shocked by the Rapallo Treaty. As Germany and Russia strengthened their diplomatic positions by their rapprochement the allies were correspondingly weakened, and the prospect of a Russo-German alliance against the West became more than a vague and distant nightmare. As Seeckt wrote, the Rapallo Treaty strengthened Germany's position in the world considerably because more was read into it than was actually there. It had no military or political clauses, but people believed that it might have. And he asked rhetorically whether it was in Germany's interest to shatter this favourable impression.

By strengthening Germany, the Rapallo Treaty made the security question even more crucial than before.

Lloyd George tried to make the best of a bad situation, and under his guidance the Genoa Conference staggered on for several more weeks, but at home there was a sharper reaction against the new alignment, combined with renewed discussion about an Anglo-French pact. On 26 April Churchill wrote to Curzon that the Rapallo Treaty confirmed his belief in the necessity of coming to an Anglo-Franco-German understanding, and that a guarantee treaty would give France enough confidence to enable both her and Britain to establish better relations with Germany. Tyrrell expressed his belief that Britain must provide France with security and that in return she would pursue a saner policy in Europe and the Near East. But Curzon, gloating at Lloyd George's setback, remained uninterested in a pact, and he ridiculed the idea that if France were to be granted one, all would be well; to reach agreement on a guarantee treaty before solving the other disputes would be putting the cart before the horse.

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1 D'Abernon wrote, with some justification, that he was confident there would have been no Rapallo Treaty if he had been at Genoa - "the deficiency of liaison between the English and German delegations would have been made good" (diary, 8 May 1922, D'Abernon papers, B.M., Add. MS 48957). It is likely that if he had been at Genoa there would have been no Rapallo. He could probably have removed the shock and the symbolism of the Russo-German rapprochement - but not the reality.

2 Seeckt to Hasse, 17 May 1922 (Rabenau, Seeckt, ii, p. 313).

3 26 April 1922 (Churchill, The Aftermath, pp. 414-15). Hardinge wanted the pact to be kept in reserve "since the conclusion of the Treaty of Rapallo has made the pact a still more vital question for France than it was before" (to Curzon, 22 April 1922, F.0.371/7427, 05922/458/62).

4 Minutes, 29 April 1922, F.0.371/7567, 06200/6200/18.
Poincaré felt that Rapallo confirmed his distrust of any dealings with Germany, and he dug in his heels yet further against making any more concessions to her. On 24 April, declaring that the Treaty of Versailles must be fulfilled in its entirety, he threatened that if the allies could not agree on its enforcement each of them would be entitled to take independent action. He was preparing himself, and the world, for the Ruhr occupation. Even though he was convinced that the danger from Germany lay in the East and not on the Rhine, his interest in a guarantee treaty also revived. Alarmed by the prospect of German-Russian military contacts, he believed that Britain and France must affirm their intention to remain united, and they could best do this by concluding a pact. On 2 May he instructed St. Aulaire to approach the British government once more and to point out that while France was ready to discuss the matter, Britain had not yet replied to his memorandum of 29 January. The next move lay with her. (The same day, unaware of this letter, Hardinge remarked to Curzon that Poincare "seems to have killed the pact: may that be so").

On 11 May Poincaré repeated that the time had come to resume negotiations, but St. Aulaire replied that Curzon was ill, and that nothing could be done. The rest of the ambassador's report was even more pessimistic: a press campaign was blaming France for the failure of the Genoa Conference and for English unemployment; the British cabinet was unlikely to want to transform the Entente into an alliance at that time; and even more brutal shocks than the Rapallo Treaty would be needed to create an atmosphere favourable to a pact.

1 Both Poincaré and St. Aulaire believed that this statement would incline Britain towards concluding the agreement (Poincaré to St. Aulaire, 2 May 1922, D.D.F., p. 142); in fact it had exactly the opposite effect.
3 Hardinge to Curzon, 2 May 1922, Hardinge papers, 45. He began his letter, which was concerned with Genoa and the Eastern Question, by remarking of Poincaré "what a treacherous creature he is". Shortly afterwards he described him as "a dirty dog" (to Curzon, 5 May 1922, Hardinge papers, 45) and they joined in wishing he were at the bottom of the sea (Hardinge to Curzon, 8 May, Curzon to Hardinge, 10 May 1922, Hardinge papers, 45).
4 Poincaré to St. Aulaire, 11 May 1922, St. Aulaire to Poincaré, 16 May 1922, D.D.F., pp. 143-44. Curzon's illness was genuine, not diplomatic, and he was incapacitated for several months in mid-1922.
Poincaré still wanted to resume the discussions, so St. Aulaire raised the matter with Balfour, who had taken over as acting foreign secretary. Balfour reacted coolly, and asked whether Poincaré had even mentioned the question in the course of his conversation with Lloyd George at Boulogne. St. Aulaire was obliged to admit that Poincaré had not done so, but he stressed that France was nonetheless most anxious to carry on the negotiations. Balfour's verdict was predictable: no defensive alliance should be concluded until economic reconstruction, Turkey and Tangier had been settled; there was little chance of an early agreement, largely owing to the attitude of the French government; and under the circumstances no useful purpose would be served by holding further conversations on the matter.

Poincaré's reaction was one of natural exasperation. Almost petulantly, he told Hardinge that he attached no value to the pact as it was presented to him, describing it as "a mystification without any real value". If the circumstances of 1914 were to be repeated, Britain would intervene yet again to protect her own interests. It was a matter of indifference to France whether or not agreement were reached on a pact, and he felt that it would be better to leave things as they were.

3 At a cabinet meeting shortly before, Lloyd George had remarked that he did not believe Poincaré attached much importance to the conclusion of a pact; he had had the opportunity to discuss it at their Boulogne meeting, but instead had insisted on talking about Russia and Genoa (conclusions, 23 May 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.29(22)3).
4 Balfour asked Crowe whether submarines should continue to feature on the British list of demands, and Crowe advised against it. He pointed out that submarines formed part of the larger disarmament question which could not be "settled" for a long time to come, and to insist on its solution would give the impression that Britain wished to kill the pact altogether (note by Crowe, 7 June 1922, F.O.371/8251, W4880/50/17). The submarine panic was short-lived.
5 Balfour to Hardinge, 13 June 1922, F.O.371/8251, W4880/50/17. In his memoirs St. Aulaire claims that, to satisfy a certain section of British public opinion, Balfour favoured a British guarantee to Germany against France as well as to France against Germany, although he assured the ambassador that "ce n'est qu'une fausse fenêtre pour la symétrie". And he quotes Balfour asking whether Poincaré was making the signature of the pact dependent on impossible conditions in order to reserve full freedom of action in applying sanctions against Germany (Confession, p. 626).
and to try to come to some friendly agreement on the Anglo-French disputes. He pointed out that during his talk with Lloyd George only Turkey and Tangier had been mentioned as conditions of a settlement, and now reconstruction had been added to the list. And he threatened that he would have to reconsider the concessions he had made in the Near East in order to meet British conditions for agreement on a pact, and that he might even withdraw them, if the pact were made to depend on the economic reconstruction of Europe.¹

This argument was repeated by St. Aulaire in a conversation he had with Balfour shortly afterwards; Britain would help France against a German attack in any case, Turkey and Tangier must be settled, but the economic reconstruction of Europe was too vague a condition.² Britain made no response, and this meeting marked the end of the wearisome round of conversations and memoranda on the matter. Serious discussions on a guarantee pact lapsed for two years.

Unlike most other French leaders in the 1920s Poincaré was concerned only with the reality of security, and since the guarantee pact was mainly a symbol and would not seriously improve France's position against Germany he did not attach much importance to it; however desirable it might be, it was not worth the high price which Britain demanded. Nonetheless he was prepared to modify his conditions, but Curzon and Balfour would not reciprocate.³

Even when dealing with Briand, who was personally popular and whose policy was markedly Anglophile, Britain tried to obtain too much, to solve all Anglo-French disputes and not simply the crucial security question with its consequence of French harshness towards Germany. In contrast with his attitude throughout 1920 and 1921, Lloyd George was inclined to make moderate demands, but he gradually lost interest in

¹ Hardinge to Balfour, 16 June 1922, F.0.371/8251, W4995/50/17. At the end of this account Hardinge wrote "although perfectly civil, his mood could hardly be described as very amicable".

² Balfour to Hardinge, 4 July 1922, F.0.371/8200, W5657/5657/50; St. Aulaire to Poincaré, 5 July 1922, D.D.F., pp. 146-48.

³ Nicolson accuses Poincaré of having had little interest in a guarantee pact and of imposing unacceptable terms (Curzon, the Lost Phase, p. 241), but this criticism can fairly be applied only to Britain. If Poincaré's strategy is to be faulted, it is in his underestimation of the importance of symbolism in national psychology.
the matter after Briand fell and Poincaré began defending French interests with a new vigour and insensitivity. As disagreements over Turkey and reparations increased and as Poincaré became an object of intense personal hatred in London, Curzon and Balfour resumed Foreign Office control of the pact discussions and effectively blocked any agreement by refusing to budge from their exorbitant demands.

There was intermittent discussion as to whether the two governments would make a deal, France yielding to Britain's interests in the Near East in return for acquiescence in Poincaré's hard line against Germany. At one stage Curzon advised the cabinet against replying to a "contentious and disagreeable" note on inter-allied debts and reparations because "our sole chance of success in the exceedingly difficult question which confronts us in the Near East appears to lie in our keeping France in line, and in my being able to come to some sort of agreement with Poincaré. At such a moment, to send him a polemical reply, however thoroughly justified, and perhaps in the long run necessary...would be unwise". Yet despite Poincaré's claim that he had modified France's policy towards Turkey in Britain's interests, there is no evidence that such an arrangement was ever discussed, let alone put into effect. The quarrels over Turkey reached their climax only a few days after Curzon advised the cabinet against resorting to polemics, when he and Poincaré had a dramatic confrontation in Paris, Poincaré "raved at the top of his voice 'like a

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1 As Paul Cambon wrote of him and Lloyd George, "entre ce Lorrain tetu et ce Celte imaginatif il n'y a pas de rapprochement possible; ils ne sont jamais accrochés et ne s'entendront jamais parce que ce sont des esprits repulsifs l'un à l'autre (to his son, 9 Sept. 1922, Correspondances, iii, p. 418). For a description of Poincaré's incompatibility with Curzon, see below, p. 128, n. 1.

2 Mayer warned the Wilhelmsstrasse of this possibility (to AA, 10 Nov. 1922, AA, Polit. Abt. II, Frankreich, Beziehungen zu England). In his memoirs St. Aulaire records that at the end of 1922 he offered to cooperate with Britain in the Turkish question in return for British good offices in dealing with reparations, but that Curzon refused indignantly, saying that to do so would be to engage in bazaar diplomacy worthy of Italy. St. Aulaire saw this reaction as an indication of the weakness of Curzon's position (Confession, p. 646).

demented schoolmaster screaming at a guilty schoolboy". 1 Curzon, in a state of collapse, had to be led from the room.

Lloyd George was reduced to consoling himself and the cabinet that an election was due in France in eighteen months, and that it would probably bring a new government to power. The intervening period would be a difficult one for Britain and Germany, but their policy should be to try to tide it over. 2

Hardinge was disastrously wrong in his repeated assurances that without a pact with Britain, Poincaré would fall. Poincaré had an alternative method of satisfying public opinion that he was defending France's security interests - he hammered Germany and ignored British remonstrations. His government was one of the longest-lasting of the whole Third Republic.

From January 1922 onwards relations between Britain and France worsened steadily, and the negotiations for a guarantee pact, which were to have ended by removing some or even all of the disputes between the two countries, were merely added to their number. Curzon's gloomy description of the state of Anglo-French relations at the end of 1921 3 could have been repeated a year later with some minor alterations and several additions.

There is a certain parallel between the fate of the British guarantee to France in 1919 and 1922. In both cases Britain was prepared to offer a pact in order to modify French policy, and in both cases, when circumstances changed, she availed readily of the chance to avoid doing so. A further similarity lies in her evasion of guaranteeing Belgian security.

1 Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, p. 210 (23 Sept. 1922). Hardinge's account is dramatic. He says that Curzon kept reproaching Poincaré with having deserted Britain until Poincaré "suddenly lost his temper and shouted and screamed at Curzon, really in the most insulting manner, pouring out torrents of abuse and making the wildest statements with a flow of language like Niagara, which completely bowled over Curzon, who collapsed entirely. Curzon kept on saying to me, 'what am I to do, hadn't I better go home to London, I cannot go on, something must be done!' I thereupon took upon myself to interrupt Poincaré, saying that Curzon was not feeling well and that the Conference must be adjourned. Poincaré accepted and Curzon left the room with the rest of us" (Old Diplomacy, p. 272). Hardinge relished Curzon's humiliation. Nicolson adds a few details: "he collapsed upon a scarlet settee. He grasped Lord Hardinge by the arm. 'Charley', he panted, 'I can't bear that horrid little man. I can't bear him. I can't bear him'. He wept" (Curzon, the Last Phase, p. 274).
2 Cabinet conclusions, 12 Aug. 1922, Cab. 23/36, S. Conf. 60.
3 See above, p. 68.
In the draft treaty which Lloyd George presented to Briand at Cannes, the second article stated that in the event of a German attack on Belgium, Britain and France would cooperate in measures to protect her. When Curzon informed Jaspar, the Belgian foreign minister, of this clause, Jaspar objected to the idea of Belgium playing such an incidental role, and he proposed instead that Britain conclude a treaty with Belgium similar to that which she had offered France. Curzon was reluctant to do this — such a request was something new, for which the British government was not prepared — and he suggested that Jaspar might prefer the Belgian clause to be left out altogether. Nonetheless, it was decided to give Belgium the direct guarantee which she desired, although Curzon warned that parliament thought in terms of an Anglo-French alliance and that the Belgian pact should be signed along with the French. Jaspar protested at this, he pointed out that Belgium was an independent nation, and he asked what would happen if the Anglo-French pact fell through. Curzon said that he would ask Lloyd George's opinion.

Back in London he told the cabinet that the question of concluding the Belgian pact independent of and prior to that with France depended "partly on arrangements to be made with the new French government...partly on considerations of policy which require careful thought". However the cabinet decided to conclude the treaty with Belgium, irrespective of what might happen with France.

So far things had gone smoothly, but the Belgian pact was soon drawn into the more complicated negotiations between Britain and France. Poincaré expressed the wish that the

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1 Cabinet conclusions, 9 Jan. 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.1(22), Appx.
4 Curzon to cabinet, 14 Jan. 1922, Cab.24/132, C.P.3615.
5 Cabinet conclusions, 18 Jan. 1922, Cab.23/29, Cab.2(22)3.

Curzon mentioned that the Belgian reaction was one of indifference and that it would be natural to link the two treaties, treating the whole frontier as one. But, on the other hand, to sign a pact with Belgium alone might bring France to a more favourable frame of mind, and the Commons would view more favourably a pact which included Belgium. It was also pointed out that a guarantee pact with Britain would help Belgium break away from France, and that her willingness to accept a pact without a military convention would be a means of applying pressure on France.
Belgian discussions with Britain be conducted only after Brussels and Paris had reached agreement on what the Belgian government would say to the British, and he feared that the conclusion of an Anglo-Belgian pact without any provision for a military guarantee would weaken France's bargaining power in London. Such suggestions were turned down by Jaspar, who felt that the Anglo-Belgian negotiations had advanced too far for Belgium to align her policy with that of France.  

Hardinge thought that since France was particularly anxious about her Belgian frontier and since a guarantee pact with Belgium would automatically increase French security, Britain might delay signature of the Belgian pact until negotiations with France were further advanced. As Crowe later put it, the two treaties formed part of one whole, and a pact with Belgium would in effect give France the benefits of a guarantee treaty without obliging her to come to an agreement with Britain, while Britain saw the pact as the crowning-point of a general Anglo-French understanding.  

The British soon began to disentangle themselves from their commitments. Curzon, never enthusiastic about the Belgian connection, resentful at the lack of enthusiasm for the pact which seemed to him to be "most imperfectly appreciated", and doubtless influenced by the difficulties encountered in the negotiations with France, decided that the Anglo-Belgian treaty would be concluded for the same period as that with France, i.e., for only ten years. There had been no mention of this at Cannes, but Curzon felt it had been "tacitly assumed". (In fact the Belgians had already informed Poincaré that their pact would be of unlimited duration.) When Jaspar retorted that he had heard Britain was ready to extend the time limit of the French treaty, and that Belgium could not accept a limit of ten years, Curzon promptly suggested a duration equal to whatever might be decided upon in the case of the Anglo-French
pact which was still under negotiation. 1 Jaspar was so anxious to obtain the maximum possible duration that he agreed to delay the Belgian pact until the discussions with France had been completed. 2

This decision was most welcome in London: Villiers commented that its result would be to delay the negotiations, and that this would not hurt Britain, and Curzon was "only too pleased". 3 Within a short time the Belgians began to doubt the wisdom of linking their treaty, hitherto secure, to the discussions with France. After Curzon had made it clear to Moncheur that further talks on the matter must be postponed until Britain's negotiations with France had reached a more advanced stage, 4 he remarked to Grahame that the Belgian government was very anxious to obtain the treaty, and that they were prepared to conclude it irrespective of what might be done in the case of France. 5 Not long afterwards Villiers wrote smugly that Jaspar was aware that, thanks to his own suggestions, the Belgian pact was dependent on the French, and there was no question of signing this at that time. 6

Soon the Belgians tried to escape from the trap which they themselves had prepared. Moncheur asked Crowe whether there was any way of advancing the matter without waiting until agreement had been reached with France, but was told that while Belgium stood in front of an open door, she must wait until France could pass through at the same time. And he pointed

2 Memorandum by Jaspar, 9 Feb. 1922, describing a conversation with Grahame, D.D.B., ii, p. 494; Grahame to F.O., 6 Feb. 1922, F.O.371/8239, W1245/432/4. According to Jaspar he protested that "nous ne pouvons pas admettre l'éventualité que notre pacte serait plus courte que le français. Or, cela arrivera si on ne nous donne que 20 ans et qu'ensuite le Gouvernement britannique soit amené à en accorder 30 aux Français".
4 Curzon to Grahame, 13 Feb. 1922, describing a conversation with Moncheur, F.O.371/8239, W1436/432/4; Moncheur to Jaspar, 14 Feb. 1922, D.D.B., ii, p. 498. Moncheur reported that Curzon obviously did not wish a final agreement with Belgium before the negotiations with France had been completed, "soit qu'elles réussissent, soit qu'elles échouent".
5 Curzon to Grahame, op. cit.
6 Minute, 9 March 1922, F.O.371/8239, W2263/432/4. Phipps referred to the dilemma in which Jaspar was placed by his anxiety lest he conclude a treaty less comprehensive than that which would be reached with France (to Curzon, 28 March 1922, F.O.371/8239, W2795/432/4). But he was already impaled.
out that Britain did not intend signing the French pact until disagreements between the two countries had been settled. ¹ From time to time after that the Belgian government raised the matter with the Foreign Office, but to no avail since, as Moncheur put it, the Belgian treaty was no more than an appendix to the French. ²

Jaspar, obviously no believer that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, had been remarkably foolish in giving Britain the opportunity to slip out of her commitment, and Curzon had been quick to grasp it. But it was the sort of deftness which Balfour had displayed at the Peace Conference, an expertise in evading commitments rather than in solving problems. These remained and worsened.

² Memorandum by Crowe, 14 June 1922, describing a conversation with Moncheur, F.O.371/8239/432/4.
Chapter 4. Alternatives to a Guarantee Pact:

The Ruhr Occupation and the League of Nations Treaties.

In late 1922 efforts to negotiate a guarantee pact were abandoned, and for the next two years, until mid-1924, attempts to solve the question of security branched out from their narrow concentration on an Anglo-French treaty. Four alternative solutions to the problem were attempted or considered.

The first of these was the Ruhr occupation of 1923. When the French moved into the Ruhr it was with the determination that Germany should be forced to pay more reparations, and they claimed that the security question was not involved. But ever since the Peace Conference security and reparations had become so interdependent that, however much individual Frenchmen might deny it or even disbelieve it, their desire for security was one of the reasons for the occupation. And not only was security one contributing factor to the Ruhr crisis, but the whole security question was changed profoundly by the events of 1923. The occupation of the Ruhr brought the conflicting French and British strategies towards Germany into head-on collision.

The second and third alternatives, the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee and the Geneva Protocol, were attempts to solve the problem by means of general non-aggression pacts organized by the League of Nations.

The final method was a series of five attempts by Germany to reach agreement with the allies on a mutual Western European pact in which she would be included, in place of an Anglo-French pact aimed against her such as those of 1919 and 1922.

Reparations and the Ruhr Occupation.

Reparations, security and the fear of Bolshevism were the three great problems which dominated Western European diplomacy in the early 1920s. Reparations were the most important of these. They affected the lives of the peoples of Europe, particularly those of Germany, to the greatest extent, and governments wasted far more time and energy in trying to cope with them than they devoted to the other two problems put together.

Reparations influenced French insecurity and the Bolshevik threat and were in turn influenced by them, but on the whole
their effect on security was important only in their general outlines and not in their details. In their general outlines they were very important indeed.¹ Britain's need of German products and markets was one of the main reasons for her lenience in enforcing the Treaty of Versailles and her readiness to compromise over German reparations payments — and thus for the major differences of opinion between her and France in European affairs. As Rathenau put it, France thought politically while Britain thought economically.² Such attitudes conditioned the policies of both countries towards security, but they reflected general, long-term economic interests and thus remained fairly constant. They were not much influenced by the day-to-day or month-to-month developments in the reparations question, or by the endless negotiations which took place between 1920 and 1922, or by the detailed implementation of the Dawes Plan in 1924-25. Reparations were a given factor and they tended to remain in the background when Britain tried to deal with the security question.

The Ruhr crisis was an exception. It was a disruptive and catastrophic occurrence which brought to a head the tensions of the post-war years and changed the nature of the relationship between France and Germany and, to a lesser extent, between both these countries and Britain. Such an explosion was a natural, predictable — and widely predicted — result of the aftermath of the war and the national psychology of the major powers, particularly of France. It was implicit in the peace settlement.

At the Peace Conference it was decided not to fix any definite sum for German reparations, but that a special Reparation Commission was to agree on a total figure by May 1921, and that in the meantime Germany was to pay 20 milliard gold marks.³ In 1921 this Commission settled on the sum of 132 milliard gold marks, of which 50 milliards were to be paid in the near future, and payment on the remainder was to commence only when the Commission was satisfied that Germany could pay more than the installments on the first 50 milliards.⁴

¹ See above, Chapter 2.
² D'Abernon, Ambassador, i, p. 257 (diary, 6 Feb. 1922), describing a conversation with Rathenau.
³ Reparations were usually calculated in gold marks, 20 of which equalled a pound.
⁴ Sally Marks argues that the real value of the first installments was actually lower than 50 milliards (Reparations Reconsidered, Central European History, ii (1969), p. 263).
In financial and political circles outside France this total figure was widely regarded as unreal, as a sop to public opinion which would find it hard to accustom itself to such a small payment as 50 milliards after having been fed for so long on promises of the vast reparations which would be extracted from Germany. Especially in Britain, financial experts and politicians were content to settle for a sum far less than 132 milliards, while using this figure to fool and satisfy the public. 26 of the effective 50 milliards were to go to France.¹

The Germans protested bitterly that these figures were ridiculously high, and accepted them only after having been presented with an ultimatum by the allies, although on two occasions during the 1921 negotiations they offered a sum equivalent to the "real" portion of the 132 milliards.² But they, too, were probably confused, perhaps even convinced, by the Commission's decision that 132 milliards was the sum which must eventually be paid, and they may not even have regarded their own proposals as feasible.

It is impossible to know whether Germany could have paid even the first 50 milliard gold marks. Certainly she experienced a disastrous financial decline in the two years before the Ruhr occupation, but much of the blame for this lies with her own governments' policies and not simply with the allies' reparations demands. There was constant irritation in Britain at Germany's low taxation rate and the governments' readiness to print more money whenever in difficulties — as Lloyd George complained, "she is letting herself go...she is allowing her mark to drop and drop and making no struggle".³ Yet there was a fear that if inflation were stopped the result would be social upheaval in Germany, and that such reparations payments as had been made until then would cease, that "Germany was an essential part of the economic organism of Europe and a

¹ The Spa Conference of July 1920 fixed the percentages which the allies would receive as follows: France 52; Britain 22; Italy 10; Belgium 8; the rest 8. These were modified at the London Conference of 1924.
² Lloyd George, The Truth about Reparations, p. 63; Sally Marks Reparations Reconsidered, p. 363.
disaster to her would be immediately and directly reflected in all countries".¹

German inflation began in the second half of 1921,² and even though it reached its crucial stage only in the second half of 1922, after Germany had effectively stopped reparations payments, and even though in 1923 it was the cost of maintaining passive resistance and the dislocation of the Ruhr production which brought about the utter collapse of the mark,³ reparations payments and the inflationary measures used by successive governments to avoid them, had by this stage seriously undermined the German currency. The disaster of 1923 had several causes and reparations were an important one, but the governments' inflationary policy, so zealously preached by Rathenau to the intense horror of the British, was probably as important. There was some truth in Poincare's complaint that the Germans were going bankrupt on purpose, and that while the German state was in crisis, the economy was prospering.⁴ Reparations cannot be isolated and so the extent of the damage which they did cannot be estimated with any accuracy. However there can be no doubt that it was considerable.

¹ Lloyd George, cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1922 (Cab. 23/30, Cab. 29(22)2). He told the cabinet that while he was anxious to press the Germans to pay, they should not in so doing produce a disaster which would shake Europe. David Felix argues further that a serious effort by Germany to pay reparations "would have required profound changes of structure as well as great sacrifices. It would have meant a revolution. .. The major economic, political and social groups would have resented the great sacrifices demanded of them... The government would have had to resort to repression. Only a police state could conceivably have given the Allies the quantities of German wealth they were demanding. The Allies, when they realized it, would find the price too high" (Rathenau, p. 32).

² Between Jan. 1920 and July 1921 the rate of the mark to the pound fell from 231 to 279. In Jan. 1922 it stood at 809, in July at 2,177 and in Dec. at 34,323 (Economist Reparations Supplement, 31 May 1924, quoted in S.I.A., 1920-23, p. 176). In 1923 the figures were farcical. In July the mark stood at 1,854,100 to the pound, and in December at 18,900,000,000 (S.I.A., 1924, p. 287).

³ Castellan points out that it cost the German government over 5½ milliard gold marks to subsidize the passive resistance in the Ruhr, more than twice the sum which Germany declared herself unable to pay annually in 1921 (L'Allemagne de Weimar, p. 155). But he ignores the appalling social cost of this payment.
France was little inclined to make concessions to German difficulties. Both she and Britain had their respective popular slogans, that the Germans be "squeezed till the pips squeak" and that "le Boche paieras". But while the English phrase summed up a short-lived emotion which had already lost its force by 1920, French public and parliamentary opinion retained a long-lasting determination that Germany should make full amends for the damage she had done during the war. Self-interest was reinforced by moral fervour:

"The enemy was not seen as an unfortunate opponent, but as a criminal. The idea of guilt was at the heart of the reparations problem, "Reparation" was sought, not only for destroyed property, but also for wounded honour." (1)

Public opinion was convinced of German wealth and dishonesty, and until after the Ruhr conflict had worn down France's national will as it had worn down that of Germany, no government could have survived making substantial concessions in its demands for reparations.

An added incentive for France to demand her pound of flesh was the fact that the 1914-18 governments had to a considerable extent financed the war on the expectation that its costs could be retrieved from Germany once she had been defeated. Even if the reparations figures were unrealistically high, France had no reason to modify them; she would probably receive just as much as if a lower sum had been demanded, and Germany would remain indefinitely in the position of a vanquished, indebted nation. A French cartoon showed Poincaré turning away Germans bringing him 132 milliards, exclaiming "anything you like, but not that!"; and while Poincaré was certainly determined to obtain as much reparations payments as possible, the cartoon did sum up one aspect of the French attitude.

1 Miquel, La Paix de Versailles et l'Opinion Publique Francaise, p. 479. There was another aspect to the allies' moral fervour. At a conference in London Lloyd George declared that German responsibility for the war was of fundamental importance for the allies, that it was "the basis upon which the structure of the treaty had been erected, if that acknowledgement is repudiated or abandoned, the treaty is destroyed" (3 March 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xv, p. 259, I.C.P. 172). Felix comments tartly, "Germany was not being punished by the Versailles Treaty because of war guilt; she had to be guilty because she was being punished" (Rathenau, p. 17).

2 Quoted in McFadyean, Reparations Reviewed, p. 7.
Reparations were linked closely with the national obsession that Germany would seek her "revanche" just as France had done after 1870. It was felt that the more Germany was forced to pay, the longer would the balance of power remain weighted in France's favour. There was a more down-to-earth and practical reason as well. The Treaty of Versailles laid down that the third occupation zone, the Mainz district, would be evacuated in 1935 only if Germany had paid all her reparations due by that date. The higher her obligations were, the greater France's excuse for remaining on the Rhine. If Germany could not pay them, so much the better; French occupying forces would be entitled to remain indefinitely.

Britain's reparations aims were more realistic, or at least more cautious and sceptical, and they were influenced by quite different political considerations (such as, for instance, the need for a strong Germany to provide a barrier against Russian infiltration of Eastern Europe). As early as February 1919 Lloyd George told the cabinet that he was more certain that the allies would be able to get something from Germany in the first ten years than in the second, and more in the second ten years than in the third. He was reluctant to accept reparations payments in the form of exports from Germany - "we do not mean to take their goods, because that would prejudice our trade" - and in general

1 Felix quotes Bradbury, the British representative on the Reparations Commission, as writing shortly before the Ruhr occupation that the total of 132 milliards was ridiculous, but that if the allies tried to collect 40 milliards they "should be passing from pure to applied lunacy" (Rathenau, p. 109). He gives as his source "Foreign Office 371, PRO 7486014819", but there is no trace of any such document in any combination of these figures.

2 Cabinet minutes, 25 Feb. 1919, Cab. 23/9, War Cab. 536. He believed that "there is nothing worse than to devote your life in chasing exaggerated hopes...I should be sorry to see the Allied nations making that mistake - not satisfied with what they can reasonably hope to get, devoting their energies and their thoughts to pursuing something which is far beyond their reach" (Paris Conference minutes, 27 Jan. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xv, p. 60, I.C.P. 155).

3 Riddell, Intimate Diary, p. 3 (30 Nov. 1918). At the end of 1921 Lloyd George told Briand that reparations could be obtained only by increasing German exports, and that the only method of achieving this was "to open up Eastern and Central Europe to German trade". He pointed out that before the war the bulk of German trade had been with this region, and suggested that half to two-thirds of the proceeds could be devoted to reparations (London Conference minutes, 19 Dec. 1921, D.B.F.P., I, xv, pp. 764-65, I.C.P. 209A). Considering Lloyd George's lack of interest in Eastern Europe it is hardly surprising that he was prepared to see it fall under German economic control.
there was far more anxiety about the possible unfavourable side effects of reparations payments in Britain than there was in France.

The Conservatives had initially favoured a stern reparations policy, and in April 1919 233 Coalition backbenchers had protested to Lloyd George "that the British delegation instead of formulating the complete financial claims of the Empire are merely considering what amount can be extracted from the enemy", but their fervour did not last. The Labour Party was, at its mildest, suspicious of the Treaty as a whole and was strongly opposed to reparations. Lloyd George probably had good reasons for his belief that the British working man was hostile to reparations, and the intelligentsia was won over to a certain sympathy for Germany and resentment at the treatment she received from the allies by Keynes's "Economic Consequences of the Peace." By the time the figure of 132 milliards was agreed upon, in May 1921, Britain's passion on the subject of reparations was spent. France treated the schedule of payments as a sacred law and stuck to it rigidly, but Britain preferred to use it merely as a guideline, emphasized that "reparation was not a question of right, but one of Germany's capacity to pay", and took a moderate view of this capacity.

Reparations were not so important for Britain as for France. Curzon might declare in his memorandum of 11 August 1923 that "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". Yet however much the war might have undermined Britain's economy or weakened her relative strength vis-à-vis the United States, the fact remained that the short-term, and therefore the politically significant, damage to the French economy was infinitely greater. Frenchmen were shocked far more by their ruined villages than Englishmen by their sunk ships and rotting cargoes. These ruined villages also made Frenchmen afraid, determined that such destruction should never be repeated, and that Germany

1 Lloyd George, Truth about the Treaties, i, p. 563.
2 Cabinet conclusions, 10 Aug. 1922, Cab. 23/30, Cab. 44(22).
3 Lloyd George to (Premier) Leygues, 27 Nov. 1920 (minutes of Anglo-French conference, D.R.F.P., I, viii, p. 825, I.C.P. 144G.
4 Memorandum, 11 Aug. 1923, F.0,371/8648, C13659/1/18.
should be punished. The more severely she was punished, the more secure France could feel that the experience of 1914-18 would not recur.

As time went on and disagreements over reparations worsened, the relationships between Britain and France and between the allies and Germany while the payments themselves remained unsatisfactory, the British government became increasingly inclined to write off its share of reparations altogether as part of a general abolition of international debt. In 1922 Britain was owed a total of £3.4 milliards, and in turn owed the United States a quarter of this sum, about £850 million. She had little expectation of ever receiving payment from her allies, and in 1920 the Treasury advised that Britain should remit her allied debtors all they owed her, irrespective of what the United States might choose to do. Britain would lose "practically nothing except vexatious claims for money which we shall not get", while such a move would eliminate anti-British feeling and give her the moral leadership of Europe. One problem mentioned by Curzon in proposing this to the cabinet was that "Parliament cannot be told that France and Italy are bankrupt in any case, so that we should only be writing off a bad debt". He warned that "the best that the taxpayer can hope is to get a quarter of the debt paid in a quarter of a century".

Later the cabinet was prepared to be even more generous, or practical, and to renounce its share of reparations payments as well, but such a remission would be dependent on a matching concession by the United States. Lloyd George told Rathenau that he wanted all international debts to be abolished, with the exception of German reparation to help restore the devastated districts in Northern France, and a fortnight later Horne, the chancellor of the exchequer, told the cabinet that Britain would cancel the debts due to her, including her share of reparations "except claims in respect of actual damage.

1 This consisted of £1.45 milliards owed by Germany in reparations, £650 million owed by Russia, and £1.3 milliards owed by the Western allies (Balfour Memorandum, 1 Aug. 1922, F.O.371/8294, W6402/2618/50). Most of Britain's debts to the United States were incurred on her allies' behalf.
2 Memorandum by Curzon, 17 April 1920, Cab. 24/103, C.P. 1093.
"sustained" - if America cancelled Europe's indebtedness. 1 The Balfour Memorandum made a formal offer to the allies to this effect. It specified that the amount of interest and repayment which would be sought "depends not so much on what France and other Allies owe to Great Britain as on what Great Britain has to pay America". 2 But the United States would not abandon its claims - an attitude summed up later by Coolidge's famous remark, "they hired the money, didn't they?" - and in consequence Britain was unwilling to write off what she was owed, however unlikely it might be that she would ever receive it, and risk having to pay America in full. 3 American withdrawal from Europe had helped create the security problem as it existed between 1919 and 1925. Similarly America's negative attitude towards inter-allied debts contributed largely to the prolongation of the crisis, although in the case of reparations she returned to Europe and her participation in the Dawes Plan helped resolve the problem. 4 At least in the early postwar years her role in Europe was mainly negative.

The Balfour Memorandum showed just how little interest Britain had in reparations. France and Germany took notice.

1 Cabinet conclusions, 16 Dec. 1921, Cab. 23/27, Cab. 93(21)2.
2 Balfour Memorandum, 1 Aug. 1922, F.0.371/8294, W6402/2618/50. In view of Britain's insistence throughout 1923 on the importance of assessing Germany's capacity to pay reparations as laid down by the 1921 schedule, it is significant that the allies' capacity to pay their debts to Britain was not taken into account. The Balfour Memorandum would mean that the less Germany paid France, the more France would have to pay Britain.
3 Felix goes so far as to claim that the allies owed America only slightly less than the 50 milliards which made up the serious part of reparations, and that they held on to their reparations rights in case they would ever have to pay America (Reparations with a Vengeance, Central European History, 4 (1971), p. 178). In the case of France this is too simple an explanation. Bonar Law's offer to remit French war debts to Britain in Jan. 1923 did not induce Poincare to modify his reparations demands on Germany. Perhaps is a general remission of inter-allied debts had been a serious possibility the French would have been more responsive. We do not know.
4 In 1919 Keynes had written "victorious France must pay her friends and allies more than four times the indemnity which in the defeat of 1870 she paid Germany. The hand of Bismarck was light compared with that of an Ally or of an associate". He went on: "the war has ended with everyone owing everyone else immense sums of money....We shall never be able to move again, unless we can free our limbs from these paper shackles. A general bonfire is so great a necessity that unless we can make of it an orderly and good-tempered affair it will, when it comes at last, grow into a conflagration that may destroy much else as well" (Economic Consequences, pp. 176-78).
The conflicting British and French interests, or degrees of interest, were fought out in a series of no less than thirteen international conferences on the reparations question held between January 1920 and January 1923.¹ Most of these meetings ended in rough-and-ready compromises in which Lloyd George succeeded in whitling down the demands of his French counterparts, but was never able to achieve the magnanimous concessions to Germany which he frequently sought. Their cumulative effect was to intensify suspicion and resentment between the allies, particularly on the side of France. As Lloyd George put it, "these meetings have developed into a sort of Dempsey-Carpentier engagement. I am always supposed to be getting the better or trying to get the better of the French champion for the time being. They have put up Clemenceau, Millerand, Leygues, Briand, etc., and it is always represented that I am getting in a knock-out blow".² Poincaré summed up the effects of French policy before the occupation of the Ruhr when he told the Chamber that "the disadvantage of measures taken in common...is that, since in the last resort they require allied unanimity, it is always, fatally, the weakest policy which is adopted".³

The allies were not always at loggerheads. Britain frequently shared France's dissatisfaction with Germany's reparations payments and was prepared to adopt a hard line towards her evasions and omissions. She acquiesced in the French occupation of Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Ruhrort in March 1921 when Germany did not comply with allied demands, and two months later agreed that if the Germans did not yield to further allied conditions, in particular to acceptance of the figure of 132 milliards gold marks as their total debt, the Ruhr would be occupied as well.⁴

² Riddell, Intimate Diary, pp. 307-08 (28 July 1921), Hardinge reported from Paris that the Chamber had a great distrust of conferences, believing that Lloyd George always bettered Briand (to Curzon, 30 May 1921, Hardinge Papers 44). Even Curzon, despite his bitter feelings towards Lloyd George whom he had just deserted, confirmed French resentment at Lloyd George's conference successes (cabinet conclusions, 1 Nov. 1922, Cab. 23/32, Cab. 64(22), Annex IV).
³ Débats Parlementaires, Chambre, 23 Nov. 1923, p. 3683.
⁴ Strangely, the first recorded reference to occupation of the Ruhr was from Lloyd George himself in a conversation with Foch on 1 Dec. 1918 (Cab. 28/5, I.C. 99, quoted by D.R. Watson in Waites (ed.) Troubled Neighbours, p. 74).
The Germans capitulated and the threat was not enforced. But between 1920 and 1923 French occupation of the Ruhr remained a constant possibility, a sword of Damocles hanging over Germany's economy and politics. As early as July 1920 D'Abernon wrote in his diary that the German people felt that France would occupy the Ruhr sooner or later, and that it would be better to be finished with the experience as soon as possible, and the Bavarian prime minister, agreeing that the occupation was bound to come, felt that its timing and occasion were matters of little importance. The following year Churchill was ready to agree to a French occupation because he too believed that it would happen in any case, and that Britain could do nothing to stop it. In November 1921 Rathenau expected that the Ruhr would be taken over by the French after Germany defaulted on reparations payments the following spring, and several months later, at the Genoa Conference, he still expected this to happen. The threat of a French occupation caused much unease and apprehension in Britain as well as in Germany, since after Lloyd George's concession in March 1921 the British government remained firmly opposed to any such step.

For a brief period Germany supplied the allies with reparations payments as laid down by the schedule of May 1921,
but throughout late 1921 and 1922 her financial position worsened steadily, and French impatience with inadequate deliveries and with requests for moratoria grew accordingly. At the end of 1921 Keynes noted with satisfaction that the Treaty was not being enforced. 1 The Wirth government (May 1921 to November 1922), which had made no effort to halt inflation but which had tried to pay reparations, abandoned this attempt and Wirth told his cabinet "we will have to cut down on the payments. We will give the collapse of the mark as our argument". 2 The British cabinet discussed the matter in May 1922. Chamberlain pointed out that Britain was not obtaining much money, and kept on demanding what she knew she would not get. He blamed the Germans' wasteful handling of their resources. Churchill was exasperated by Germany's inadequate payments, and "the tale of German woes left him cold. He wondered how far it might be Germany's policy deliberately to deprive [Britain] of what she could and ought to pay". Lloyd George shared this dissatisfaction, but was afraid that if the allies insisted on Germany stopping her inflation, the result would be a collapse. 3

Germany was granted an effective moratorium on payments for the last months of 1921, but as soon as the Cuno government took office in November it sought relief from all reparations payments, other than deliveries in kind, for a period of three to four years. The May 1921 agreement had laid down annuities of two milliards a year, plus a quarter of the value of German exports, which was estimated to be worth a further milliard. Yet between then and the end of 1922 Germany actually paid just under 2.75 milliard. 4 For the French, Cuno's request added insult to injury, their patience reached breaking-point, and Poincaré could hardly have remained in office had he not taken some drastic step to end Germany's evasions and postponements. 5 Seizure of the Ruhr and exploitation of its resources was the most obvious measure.

1 Revision of the Treaty, pp. 168, 172.
2 Cabinet minutes, 30 June 1922, BA, R43 I/29, quoted in Felix, Rathenau, p. 176.
3 Cabinet conclusions, 23 May 1922, Cab. 23/30, Cab. 29(22)2.
4 Reparations Commission, Statement of Germany's Obligations at Dec. 31 1922, quoted in S.I.A., 1920-23, pp. 201-02. According to Mantoux the figure was less than 2 milliards from 1919 to 1923 (Carthaginian Peace, pp. 142-43).
5 After Poincaré's much-dreaded return to power in Jan. 1922, British politicians and officials consoled themselves with the hope that he alone would be strong enough to control French public opinion. He proved either unable or unwilling to do so.
Lloyd George had fallen in October 1922, but although he had been more prepared for a breach with the French than Curzon, who remained at the Foreign Office, the change of government did not lead to any improvement in Anglo-French relations - in fact the differences between the two countries became even more pronounced. The Bonar Law government was dismayed at the probability that France would occupy the Ruhr in the near future and tried desperately to avert such a move. At a conference in Paris in early January 1923 the prime minister proposed a comprehensive solution: a moratorium for two to four years, during which the allies would have the right to occupy the Ruhr if Germany did not make a sufficient effort to reorganize her finances; a new schedule of payments with a minimum of 40 and a maximum of 50 milliard gold marks (after deduction of occupation costs these figures would be respectively 32 and 42 milliards); and, as an incentive to France, the cancellation of French war debts to Britain.

Poincaré was not interested. Too many concessions had been made to Britain and Germany in Lloyd George's day, and he was determined that France would not give way yet again, so on 11 January, using the pretext of an inadequate delivery of telegraph poles, French and Belgian troops moved into the Ruhr. The German government promptly stopped reparations.

1 They agreed in their strategy, but the difference in their tactics is well illustrated by their remarks at a cabinet meeting in August 1922. Curzon asked his colleagues "to strain every nerve to preserve the Entente, the rupture of which would be fraught with the most serious consequences for all concerned", that Britain might have to face a hostile France in the Near East, Egypt, Morocco and Tangier. Lloyd George agreed that they should try to come to terms with Poincare, but remained convinced that "any policy involving the handing over of Europe to the tender mercies of M. Poincare and the French militarists would be directly contrary to the traditional policy of Great Britain and would be fatal to the reconstruction of Europe and highly dangerous to the British Empire" (conclusions, 10 Aug. 1922, Cab. 23/30, Cab. 44(22)). A year later, with the Ruhr experience behind him, Curzon shared Lloyd George's attitude.


3 The pretext was denounced by Bradbury in splendid fashion: "since, in the tenth year of the war, Troy fell to the strategy of the wooden horse, history recorded no similar use of timber. The situation at present was somewhat different; it was the fifth year of the peace, and the city under attack was not Troy, but Essen" (S.I.A., 1920-23, pp. 191-92).
payments to the occupying powers, and within a few days a spontaneous campaign of passive resistance, supported and financed by Berlin, was under way. For the next eight months the two countries fought an economic war of attrition which brought about the collapse of Germany and seriously weakened the French economy. It was widely and accurately expected that the struggle would go on until one or both sides were exhausted.

Britain was appalled by the occupation, seeing it as illegal, irrational and destructive. She felt a certain sympathy for Germany, the unarmed and defenceless victim, but concerned as ever with preserving the Entente, she adopted an attitude of benevolent neutrality towards France and Belgium. This meant allowing them transit facilities through the British zone and refraining from hindering them in any serious way. The government realized that there was little it could do to stop the trial of strength, so adopting an attitude of resignation it stood aside and washed its hands of all responsibility for the consequences. The move must fail through its own folly and not through British opposition.

The strength of French public opinion on the Ruhr question was appreciated, and it was accepted that after three years of patchwork compromises which had steadily exasperated the French, no government in Paris could have afforded to take a

1 J.C.C. Davidson, Bonar Law's parliamentary private secretary, remarked that "the French are trying to cut beef steaks from the cow which they would like also to milk", and wondered whether Britain might have to unharness herself "from an ally whose outlook on international affairs is both parochial and highly cynical, whose methods are so little in harmony with our own" (to Baldwin, 6 Jan. 1923, Rhodes James, Memoirs of a Conservative, pp. 145-46).

2 As Warren Fisher put it,"the action of the Germans is precisely what we shd. have done under similar circumstances" (to Baldwin, 11 June 1923, Baldwin papers 125).

3 Curzon declared in the Lords "our guiding consideration throughout has been that the Entente between France and Great Britain and their Allies should not be broken" (Hansard, 5s., HL, 53, col. 788). The Central Department of the Foreign Office saw Bonar Law's assertion of continued friendship with France as a guiding factor in British policy (memorandum, 8 Jan. 1923, F.O.371/8768, 0595/593/18). Both the foreign secretary and the department meant what they said.
moderate line with Germany, that once the struggle had begun it would have to be followed through. There was a general feeling, shared even by the Germanophile D'Abernon, that once France had set out on this course she must be let try the experiment to the full. ¹ The previous August Lloyd George had told the cabinet that "there might be a great change in French public opinion if M. Poincaré...occupied the Ruhr at great expense and produced nothing for the French Exchequer except quantities of valueless paper";² during the course of the occupation Bradbury wrote to Baldwin that he did not believe a real settlement was possible "until there has been a complete change in the French temper, and I doubt whether this can be hoped for until there has been a general debacle in Germany and a financial crash in France";³ and Bonar Law summed up a common attitude when he quoted approvingly a Frenchman's remark that many who supported the Ruhr occupation did not believe France would get any money out of it, but public opinion would not accept the situation until this measure had been tried.⁴ France was seen as a patient whose illness would have to get considerably worse before he could improve. The disease, however contagious, must be left run its course.

The French government remained unyielding in its demands. These were simple: the reparations figures agreed upon by the allies in May 1921 and accepted by the Germans under pressure, must be maintained, and the Germans must pay fully; their ability to pay the sums laid down by this schedule was not a factor to be taken into account - as St. Aulaire told Curzon, "no consideration as to the capacity for repayment can...result in a reduction of the debt";⁵ and

¹ D'Abernon to Curzon, 23 Jan. 1923, F.O.371/8707, C1598/313/18. He added that nothing would compromise future negotiations as much as to attempt them prematurely.
² Cabinet conclusions, 10 Aug. 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.44(22). A week earlier it was suggested in the cabinet, when other drastic measures had been proposed by Poincaré, that France be allowed a free hand, and learn by experience (conclusions, 3 Aug. 1922, Cab.23/30, Cab.43(22)14).
³ Bradbury to Baldwin, 25 April 1923, Baldwin papers 125.
⁵ St. Aulaire to Curzon, 13 June 1923, F.O.371/8642, C11639/1/18. Later he described French policy as being "to cause such inconvenience that Germany would prefer the execution of the treaty to this inconvenience" (to Curzon, 30 July 1923, F.O.371/8645, C13105/1/18).
Germany would have to abandon passive resistance before any discussions could be held.¹

France sought a showdown in which the years of prevarication would come to an end, Germany would implement the Treaty, and the victor/vanquished relationship would be restored. Poincaré described his policy in June 1923 as follows: "the allies have never obtained anything from Germany except when, united, they have threatened to use force...it is essential that Germany feel...that she has really been defeated; it is essential that the pressure which we apply in the Ruhr achieve the intended result, which is to make Germany give way".² The object was to force Germany to yield, to win a new victory and so reaffirm that of 1918-19 which the French felt had been slipping away from them for some time.

In Germany, too, a rigid attitude prevailed, and in Berlin as in Paris the government was prevented from making serious concessions by a wave of patriotism. Poincaré's action had rallied public opinion behind the Cuno administration more effectively than anything else could have done. The government held consistently to its demand that the occupying troops must be withdrawn from the Ruhr before any discussions could take place. It hoped for a breach between Britain and France,³ though it did not really expect one, and it tried seriously to draw Britain into the conflict as an advisor, as an honest broker or as a moderating influence on France. These efforts were continued throughout the confrontation, and even after Germany had capitulated in September

¹ At least towards the end of the conflict, some prominent Frenchmen were sceptical about how far French reparations aims could be realized. According to Cecil, President Millerand pointed out that only 50 milliards were expected to result in rapid payment, and "he suggested that we might wipe out the odd eighty-two milliards", though Cecil added that he was not sure whether Millerand meant that they should be actually abandoned or merely ignored (to Baldwin, 4 Aug. 1923, Baldwin papers, 127).

² To St. Aulaire, 29 June 1923, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Documents relatifs aux notes allemandes des 2 mai et 5 juin sur les réparations (D.A.E., notes allemandes), p. 56).

³ Both German foreign ministers discussed this possibility at cabinet meetings, Rosenberg on 28 April (Akten der Reichskanzlei; das Kabinett Cuno, p. 453, R 43, I/1383) and Stresemann on 23 Aug. (BA, R 43, I/1387).
Sthaner still looked to Curzon for advice on what to do.1 Britain did not welcome such suggestions since she felt that to interfere in any way would be to risk entangling herself in European affairs, and she saw little chance of her intervention proving successful. Poincaré was firmly opposed to any third party mediation – as he later told Baldwin, he had declined Curzon's offer of intervention in Berlin because it would mean that Germany's capitulation would be a result of British demands and not of French pressure.2 France's victory must be clear and unambiguous, Germany's surrender must be total and final. Any British intervention would only confuse the issue and distract from the expected triumph. Crowe pointed out that Britain was not in a position to advocate a separate policy "since it is in France's power, by her mere opposition, to frustrate any separate arrangement that we could propose to Germany".3 Even before the French marched into the Ruhr he had appreciated their views on this matter and had told Sthaner that no-one speaking on Britain's behalf could afford to appear to advise the German government as to particular measures which it should adopt; if Germany were to act on British advice in making her proposals it would not only create problems with France and Belgium, but would also assure the failure of any plan suggested.4

Still less did Britain wish to intervene on the side of France. When St. Aulaire requested that the British government demand the abandonment of passive resistance, Curzon responded by presenting him with an elaborate questionnaire seeking explanations of so many of the points raised in the French note that no more was heard of the request.5

1 Curzon to D'Abernon, 27 Sept. 1923, describing a conversation with Sthaner, F.O.371/8656, C16799/1/18. But Sthaner was a pathetic creature, prone to ask advice from Britain on any occasion.
2 Memorandum by Baldwin, 19 Sept. 1923, describing his conversation with Poincaré, Baldwin papers, 108.
5 Curzon to St. Aulaire, 13 June 1923, F.O.371/8648, C13652/1/18.
The Ruhr crisis was not Britain's quarrel and the government preferred to remain aloof, as far above the battle as possible, making suggestions or giving warnings from time to time, but always speaking in its own interests, with its own voice, and not as Germany's mouthpiece. It would make no move until it found a suitable time to intervene, when it could do so "by general desire and with obvious advantage". It would "wait and see".

Public opinion did not react so mildly, it became increasingly anti-French and to some extent pulled the government along with it - or was one pressure among several encouraging the government to move more quickly in a direction which it was inclined to take in any case. Hoare, the Secretary of State for Air, wrote to Baldwin that with the approach of autumn and greater unemployment, public opinion "will inevitably believe that the origin of all our evils is the French occupation of the Ruhr and British inaction", and that there would be a dramatic increase in the public demand for action. For this reason, despite his personal preference for a policy of isolation, he was convinced that Britain must intervene in European affairs. Tyrrell felt that a policy of aloofness was the only course which Britain could follow at that time, but he wondered how long such an attitude could be maintained in the face of British public opinion.

Labour and the Liberals became sharper in their criticisms of what Asquith called the British government's "benevolent impotence". MacDonald argued that Britain should not wait, silently, until one or other side collapsed, that this silence helped no-one, it deprived Britain of credit and respect, and did nothing to protect her interests. Chamberlain, out of office, criticized a policy which antagonized France but did not restrain her, and encouraged Germany's resistance but was unable to help her. Amery described British policy in

1 Curzon to Head, 29 March 1923, describing a conversation with Sthaner, F.0.371/8725, 05906/313/18.
3 Hoare to Baldwin, 17 July 1923, Baldwin papers, 126.
4 Minute, 13 April 1923, F.0.371/8730, 08383/313/18.
5 Hansard, 5s., HC, 162, col. 599 (28 March 1923).
6 Hansard, 5s., HC, 162, cols. 605-06 (28 March 1923).
7 Hansard, 5s., HC, 167, col. 1788 (2 Aug. 1923).
Europe as a whole, and not simply in the Ruhr, as being like that of a timid old lady trying to interfere in a dog fight. They would have agreed with Curzon when he remarked to St. Aulaire in July that for the previous seven months the British government had "carried deference to France's point of view to the point of timidity, and, as some thought, of subservience".

Opposition to the government's moderation was more widespread. Smuts was the most virulent critic of the French occupation and of the British reaction to it. He assured Baldwin that France was aiming at dismembering Germany and becoming supreme on the Continent, and that as a result Britain might have to break with her and come out in active support of Germany. In July he repeated his warnings - French policy was driving Europe on the rocks, and if it remained unchanged, Britain should formally renounce the Entente. Keynes was the most prominent Englishman who was prepared to go as far as this. He advised that Britain "break the Entente, encourage Germany, and get busy to fix up new diplomatic combinations".

The government was probably less influenced by disgust at Britain's impotence or by weariness from constant criticism than by concern at the effects of the Ruhr conflict on the British economy. As these became clearer Britain's initial tolerance began to wear thin, and growing dismay at the possible consequences of the feud made her more ready to intervene.

In May Otto Niemeyer, the Controller of Finance in the Treasury, stressed the necessity of bringing the occupation of the Ruhr to an end as quickly as possible. At first it had stimulated certain British exports such as steel, but already

1 Quoted by Col. Wedgwood Benn, Hansard, 5s., H.C. 162, cols. 625-26 (28 March 1923). Wedgwood Benn was not positive in ascribing the remark to Amery.
2 Curzon to Crewe, 3 July 1923, describing a conversation with St. Aulaire, F.O.371/8642, C11639/1/18.
3 Smuts to Baldwin, 29 March 1923, Curzon papers, F.O.300/154.
4 Smuts to Baldwin, 7 July 1923, Cab.24/61, C.P.318(23). According to Jones's diary, "ever since Smuts' telegram of 7 July, the P.M. had been nervous of the attitude Smuts will take on the Ruhr business and I had him in mind in drafting parts of the P.M.'s speech" (for the Imperial Conference) (Whitehall Diary, I, p. 245 (1 Oct. 1923)).
the increased price of coal and the decreased demand for textiles had created serious problems, and he expected a serious check to British industry. Baldwin remarked that Britain, living as she did on her export trade, could not afford to let Europe go to pieces, and later told Poincaré that England wanted a quick settlement "because she attributed the greater part of her unemployment to the present disorganization of world trade". The cabinet instructed Curzon to emphasize, in a statement he was to make on reparations, "the depressing effect of the present impasse on British trade". A Board of Trade memorandum confirmed Niemeyer's view that the expansion in particular industries which had been caused by the Ruhr occupation was coming to an end, and that the consequences of the dislocation of European trade were becoming more damaging, particularly to banking, railways, shipping, iron, steel and textiles. The memorandum concluded that ultimately the settlement of political conditions in Europe should lead to a revival of British trade.

The classic exposition of British resentment at the economic effects of the Ruhr occupation was made somewhat later by Ramsay MacDonald in a letter to Poincaré in February 1924:

"Our economic existence has been gravely endangered, owing, not to the inability of Germany to pay a certain sum in reparation, but to the acute and persistent dislocation of the markets of Europe occasioned mainly by the uncertainty in the relations between France and Germany, the continued economic chaos in Germany shown so clearly by the violent fluctuations in the value of the currency and the ultimate uncertainty in the relations between France and ourselves. Thus it has come about that the people in this country regard with anxiety what appears to them to be the determination of France to ruin Germany and to dominate the Continent without consideration of our reasonable interests and future consequences to European settlement".

1 Niemeyer to Crowe, 4 May 1923, F.O.371/8634, C7984/1/18.
2 Jones, Whitehall Diary, i, pp. 237-38 (28 May 1923).
3 Memorandum by Baldwin, 19 Sept. 1923, describing his conversation with Poincaré, Baldwin papers, 108.
4 Cabinet conclusions, 9 July 1923, Cab.23/46, Cab.35(23)1.
5 B.O.T. memorandum, July 1923, Baldwin papers, 126. Even the initial increase in exports had its negative side - e.g., increased German demand for coal and steel raised prices and so reduced domestic consumption. The memorandum referred to consequences as indirect as the fact that German inability to buy as much from China as before would decrease Chinese purchases of British textiles.
6 MacDonald to Poincaré, 21 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9812, C2942/1288/18.
The Treasury was prepared for a breach with France. Warren Fisher, the influential permanent under-secretary, held that a rupture must come when Britain refused "any longer to be tied to the wheels of a chariot which is dashing towards a precipice," and Bradbury, agreeing that a break must come sooner or later, felt that the war had not been fought to substitute French hubris for German. In comparison with the Treasury, the Foreign Office was zealously Francophile.

There was some discussion in official circles about whether Britain could bring economic or financial pressure to bear on France. Crowe asked Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, how far it would be possible for Britain to be able to exert indirect pressure of this kind by discouraging the flow of British capital to France. He added that as far as he was aware there was no question of the government taking any official steps in this direction, but if the City were to cooperate by showing reluctance to meet French requests for capital, "the object of embarrassing French finance, so as to make French politicians alive to the necessity of conciliating the views and wishes of Great Britain, might be achieved". He also asked whether Britain would be able to demand repayment of France's debt to her "in such a manner as to create uneasiness in French financial and political circles". Norman was not able to give him much encouragement. He was sceptical about the extent of French dependence on Britain to finance her foreign enterprises and concessions; France was to a considerable degree economically independent; she would not repay her debt, so Britain could not influence her by this means; and interference with coal supplies would damage Britain's own interests. The only hope he was able to offer was that a well-timed demand for payment of interest on the French debt might accelerate the fall of the franc "which was, in any event, likely to progress on the downward path". But on the whole, as Crowe put it, "Mr. Norman was distinctly discouraging as regards the means open to us to inconvenience France by a systematic withholding of British capital".

1 Warren Fisher to Baldwin, 11 June 1923, Baldwin papers, 125.
2 Bradbury to Baldwin, 2 July 1923, Baldwin papers, 126.
3 Memorandum by Crowe, 31 May 1923, describing a conversation with Norman, Baldwin papers, 125; also mentioned in Middlemas & Barnes, Baldwin, p. 182 and in Jones, Whitehall Diary, 1, p. 240 (8 June 1923).
Crowe lamented that Britain was handicapped in her dealings with France over reparations by the fact that the French government seemed to feel itself free of any dependence on Britain "and that they were consequently without any hesitation in overriding the views and wishes of their British allies". He concluded that "we have not the means to carry out a policy of constraint, and, if we had, it is doubtful whether our public opinion would approve it."

Economic pressure was felt to be a clumsy weapon of dubious value, and the British were content to do no more than talk about using it, preferring to rely on what they saw as the logic of events to win France over to their opinions. Even after Germany had abandoned passive resistance British dissatisfaction with French policy in the Ruhr and Rhineland remained, and the Foreign Office and the Treasury continued to toy with the idea of putting economic pressure on France. Niemeyer wrote that Britain would be able to intimidate France with the threat of bringing about a fall in the value of the franc, and that the existence of short-term debts could be used to bring considerable weight to bear on her. This was written on New Year's Day 1924, only three weeks before the Labour government was due to take office, and Curzon complained angrily that the Treasury had taken so long in replying to a request for information on this point that he had no time left to make use of it. But the Foreign Office request had been sent only on 14 November. So until then ministers and civil servants had merely tinkered with the idea of taking active measures against France, but had never reached the stage of doing anything about it.

The actual moves which Britain took were far less drastic than those contemplated by Crowe and Niemeyer or advocated by Smuts, Keynes and Warren Fisher. In March the cabinet

1 Memorandum by Crowe, 31 July 1923, F.0.371/8648, C13559/1/18.
2 Memorandum by Niemeyer, 1 Jan. 1924, F.0.371/9682, C203/11/62.
3 Lampson saw no reason why the weapon should not be used, but Crowe regarded it as a problem which the incoming government must decide (minutes, 8 Jan. 1924, ibid.)
4 A month later, in a memorandum on British policy in the Rhineland, Bennett referred to the impossibility of bringing financial pressure to bear on France, but added that the matter had still to be explored! (5 Feb. 1924, F.0.371/9813, C2028/1346/18).
decided to encourage Germany to make overtures to France, and Curzon duly did so in a conversation with Sthamer shortly afterwards. He gave this advice publicly and more firmly in a speech in the Lords on 20 April, in which he called on the German government to make a definite offer which might break the deadlock.

This speech provoked considerable interest in Berlin. D'Abernon reported that the German government regarded it as a move which could influence the situation significantly, and the government and the Wilhelmsstrasse got to work preparing a set of proposals for submission to the allies. Rosenberg told the cabinet that the German note would make no mention of the fact that the government felt itself encouraged by England to make this step. The first, tentative British suggestion had had a dramatic effect.

The German plan of 2 May 1923 offered slightly less than Bonar Law had suggested in January. It proposed a total obligation of 30 milliards, foreign loans to Germany, and an impartial international tribunal which would examine her capacity to pay reparations. France and Belgium promptly rejected it, while Curzon described the proposals as inadequate and stupid, and told the unfortunate Sthamer that a more precise and serious contribution was needed.
Treasury was more sympathetic. Bradbury felt that the German note "probably came as near to offering a definite minimum as was possible in the circumstances," and Niemeyer welcomed its suggestion that the whole reparations question be forwarded to an impartial tribunal. Nonetheless, Britain's final verdict was unfavourable.

The Germans made a second, similar proposal on 7 June, and this met with more sympathy in Britain; Curzon suggested that the allies work out a joint reply and that they take up the German idea of an impartial investigating tribunal in which America would participate. Poincaré objected that the German note contained no promise to abandon passive resistance, offered no definite sum, proposed to replace the Reparations Commission with other groups, and offered only theoretical securities for payment. St. Aulaire rejected any fresh investigation of Germany's capacity to pay, telling Curzon that "it would be an act of the grossest imprudence to give judgement to-day, once for all, upon the capacity to pay of a country which has ruined itself of its own free will". No answer was sent to the German note, and after that she made no further proposals. Germany's acceptance of British advice had done her little good.

Britain and Germany were in full agreement that the 1921 figures no longer corresponded with the realities of the situation in 1923, and that the question of German capacity to pay should be made the subject of an impartial investigation. The idea had first received wide publicity when Hughes, the American secretary of state, told the American Historical Association in an address in December 1922 that "the first condition of a satisfactory settlement is that the question be taken out of politics" - a highly political recommendation, and one which was most welcome to the British

1 Memorandum by Bradbury, 8 June 1923, Baldwin papers, 125.
2 Niemeyer to Crowe, 4 May 1923, F.0.371/8634, C7984/1/18. He felt that this was the only way in which a decision could be reached, and that while France was most unwilling to consider any such step, it would be a great mistake for Britain not to express her readiness to accept such a solution.
3 Curzon to Stahmer, 13 May 1923, F.0.371/8635, C7984/1/18.
5 St. Aulaire to Curzon, 14 June 1923, F.0.371/8642, C11803/1/18; 30 July 1923, F.0.371/8645, C13105/1/18.
government—and that an impartial tribunal of experts should work out the amount which Germany should pay. ¹ Bonar Law made a proposal to this effect at the Paris Conference at the beginning of 1923, only to have it turned down by Poincaré. Rosenberg suggested it at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Reichstag on 27 March, and the following day both Asquith and MacDonald raised the matter in the Commons.² Sthamer had already advocated such an investigation to Crowe.³ But the idea was not taken up seriously in Britain until it was mentioned in the German note of 2 May; after that Curzon's intervention went beyond mere advice to Germany that she abandon passive resistance and open discussions with France, and the British government joined in the demand for an investigation by a committee of experts.

In July Curzon advocated a general settlement in which the abandonment of passive resistance and the establishment of an expert commission would be combined with the resumption of civil administration and the progressive evacuation of the Ruhr. He told the French and Belgian ambassadors that while military rule in the Ruhr might succeed in breaking Germany's power of resistance, it would be "at the price of that very recovery upon which the Allied policy depends for ultimate success".⁴ Again he was rebuffed by France.⁵

Finally on 11 August Curzon presented the allied ambassadors with a lengthy memorandum in which he outlined British policy with clarity and force.⁶ He dissected the financial details of previous French and Belgian notes, derided the French comparison between the indemnities of 1871 and 1921, and regretted the allies' lack of interest in an impartial investigation of Germany's capacity to pay. He summed up

¹ Speech of 29 Dec. 1922, S. I. A., 1924, p. 341. This view had already been put forward in the Foreign Office (Tyrrell to Crowe, 7 Dec. 1922, Crowe papers, F.0.800/243, 2). The German government had made a similar proposal on 23 March and 24 April 1921, but no notice had been taken at the time and the idea had been forgotten (Weill-Raynel, Les Réparations Allemandes, ii, p. 403, n. 1). Poincaré made no response to Hughes's proposal (ibid., p. 326).
² Hansard, 5s., HC, 162, cols. 598 & 609 (25 March 1923).
³ Mémorandum by Crowe, 10 March 1923, describing a conversation with Sthamer, F.0.371/8721, C4585/315/18.
⁴ Curzon to St. Aulaire and Moncheur, 20 July 1923, F.0.371/8644, C12540/1/18.
⁵ St. Aulaire to Curzon, 30 July 1923, F.0.371/8645, C13105/1/18.
⁶ Curzon to St. Aulaire and Moncheur, 11 Aug. 1923, F.0.371/8648, C13659/1/18.
much of Britain's policy towards Germany and towards the Treaty of Versailles in his remark that "an undertaking freely entered into, because acknowledged to be just and reasonable, stands, in practice, on a different footing, and offers better prospects of faithful execution, than an engagement subscribed under the compulsion of an ultimatum, and protested against at the very moment of signature as being beyond the signatory's powers to make good".

He quoted the French claim that entry into the Ruhr was intended to break Germany's resistance and create the will on her part to pay, and argued that the will was useless without the power, and that France and Belgium were destroying the power. Their method of seeking reparations was doomed to failure.

Poincare replied with an equally firm memorandum, and after this exchange Britain remained as unyielding as France or Germany. Curzon told St. Aulaire as late as 3 October that Britain had submitted her proposals in August and had no new ones or modifications to offer.

However Britain did not confine herself to considering methods of bringing pressure to bear on France and to proposing solutions to the reparations question. In order to tempt the French away from what she saw as a destructive course, she was prepared to dangle before them the bait of a guarantee treaty.

Throughout 1923 there was a widespread feeling in the British government and in the Foreign Office that security and not reparations was the real reason for the occupation of the Ruhr. Balfour saw reparations as a distraction from France's real fears, and he told St. Aulaire that she "stupified herself with astronomical figures - as Pascal studied mathematics - to escape from the obsession of the abyss which she saw gaping before her". Both D'Abernon and Phipps were convinced that France sought territorial, military and economic advantages rather than reparations.

If France's real interest was to obtain security, then here, if not in the matter of reparations, Britain would

1 Curzon to Crewe, 3 Oct. 1923, describing a conversation with St. Aulaire, Curzon papers, F/9/5.
2 Britain's interest in security and in a guarantee pact is described in more detail below, pp. 186–88.
3 St. Aulaire, Confession, p. 554.
4 D'Abernon, Ambassador, ii, p. 224 (diary, 27 July 1923); Phipps to Curzon, 2 April 1923, F.O.371/8726, C6110/313/18.
be able to offer her inducements to modify her policy, or else to camouflage her retreat if that proved necessary. Curzon made it clear to St. Aulaire that he was willing to discuss a guarantee pact with the French whenever they felt so inclined, but his offer was dismissed as having no connection with the occupation of the Ruhr.¹

Britain failed to understand French motivations in 1923. While she separated politics and economics and sought utterly different solutions to the security and reparations questions, France combined them and tried to solve both problems, simultaneously, by occupying the Ruhr. The British saw the occupation as economic madness, assumed that there must be other reasons for taking such a step, and misled by the ever-present French fear of Germany, by the influence which this fear had had on her policy, by France's genuine interest in the pacts of 1919 and 1922, by rumours in Paris and by the few references which Poincare made to the "pact" method of security during the Ruhr crisis,² they were prepared to offer a treaty of guarantee to ease France's dread of Germany. Nothing could have been less appropriate.

As Britain had appreciated all along, French postwar policy was guided by an emotion, by fear. Her violence in 1923 was to a large extent an emotional reaction against the frustrations of the post-war years when German obstructiveness and British indifference seemed to be whittling away the advantages won by the Treaty of Versailles. The French people and their governments were determined that there should be no more German evasions or British compromises, they would engage Germany in head-on conflict, would force her to respect the Treaty and thereby to acknowledge once again her own military defeat and French supremacy in Europe. Success would provide France with more reparations payments and would increase her security.³

Poincaré had sought a pact in his first few months in office, before Britain's demands had disillusioned him, and he would do so again in the last few months before his

¹ St. Aulaire to Curzon, 30 July 1923, F.0.371/8645, C13105/1/18.
² For example, on 16 July he complained about the failure of the guarantee pact in 1919 and the inadequacy of Lloyd George's proposal at Cannes - "nothing more than a dangerous and specious offer" (F.0.371/9535, W5744/1575/17).
³ In an untypical remark even Poincare himself admitted that the French troops in the Ruhr were guarding French security (Crewe to Curzon, 23 March 1923, F.0.371/9535, C6999/1/18).
electoral defeat, but in between, from late 1922 to late
1923, he concentrated on forcing Germany into submission,
and this main objective subsumed all others. The form
German submission would take was the resumption of full
reparations payments, in itself an aim dear to Frenchmen's
hearts. More than any other politician in France he took
for granted British support in a future war with Germany,
and as in the aftermath of the Cannes Conference, he was
not prepared to make concessions for something which he was
sure was almost as much in Britain's interests to give as
in France's to receive. At least until after the German
defeat in the Ruhr confrontation, he was psychologically
independent of Britain in a way in which Clemenceau, Mill-
erand and Briand had not been. As if to display this
independence he intensified the encirclement policy, granting
400 million francs to Poland to buy French munitions and
other equipment, 300 millions to Yugoslavia, and 100 millions
to Romania.¹ (Such largesse provoked indignation in Britain
where it was felt that France could spend the money far more
usefully in repaying her war debts.)

This period was an aberration from France's normal
policy in the 1920s. Exasperated with both Germany and
Britain she became brutally aggressive and self-assertive,
where before she had been timidly, blusteringly provocative.
Strong and desperate enough to seek German capitulation,
she saw no reason for a guarantee pact.²

Under Lloyd George Britain had always taken the lead in
Anglo-French relations, and she was to do so again under
MacDonald and Chamberlain. But in 1923, faced with a deter-
mained France whose policy she deplored but whose friendship
she was unwilling to renounce, Britain was at a loss for a
constructive policy, and the obvious but feeble course she
followed antagonized both sides. While it did no more than
alienate France, it was a contributing factor, however
small, to Germany's disaster. There is much truth in the

¹ Wheeler-Bennett and Langermann, Information on the Question
of Security, p. 65.
² Of course she would have been well-advised to seek one,
and would probably have acquired far better terms as a
confident and dangerous power than she was to do as a
friendly but anxious neighbour. However in 1923 little
thought was given to looking for such an insurance policy
in case France's new, preferred method of obtaining
security should prove a failure.
criticism that Curzon, and also the government as a whole, "should either have supported Germany with consistent sympathy and advice, or else have urged her to an earlier surrender. As it was, he encouraged her sufficiently to stimulate her resistance, but not sufficiently to avert her ruin". ¹

When Germany finally surrendered on 26 September 1923, the whole situation changed. Stresemann, the new chancellor, tried to open negotiations with France, but Poincaré made no response. Instead he preferred to make separate arrangements with prominent Ruhr industrialists such as Stinnes and Krupp concerning the resumption of reparations deliveries, over the chancellor's head and despite his opposition, and otherwise he left the whole situation unclear. Millerand, Foch, his cabinet colleagues and his ambassadors all urged him to impose terms on Germany, terms which would include security as well as reparations, but he rejected their advice and showed no interest in any general settlement.² The French troops remained in the Ruhr, Germany resumed small-scale payments to France, but no attempt was made to reimpose order on the chaos to which the German economy, reparations payments and Franco-German relations had been reduced. Poincaré hesitated, and promptly lost the initiative together with much of what he might have gained.³

¹ Nicolson, Curzon, The Last Phase, p. 374. The extent of Britain's influence is shown by the fact that the Baldwin-Poincaré communique, widely but wrongly interpreted as indicating an Anglo-French rapprochement, helped Stresemann to decide to abandon passive resistance (Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, p. 117).

² He would not even accept advice which coincided with his own views. When de Margerie, the ambassador in Berlin, urged him to deal at once with German industry, he ordered that the cost of the telegram be put on de Margerie's personal account (Bonnet, Le Quai d'Orsay, p. 74).

³ French historians have discussed the subject at length. Among them: Miquel, Poincaré, pp. 468-476; St. Aulaire, Confession, pp. 672-3; Persil, Millerand, pp. 151-54; Baumont in Rösler (ed.), Folgen von Versailles, pp. 130-31; Renouvin, Histoire Diplomatique, vii, pp. 253-55; Laroche, Au Quai d'Orsay, p. 180; Chastenet, Années d'Illusion, pp. 109-113; Bonnet, Le Quai d'Orsay, pp. 74, 76-77; Charles Reibel, Une grande occasion manquée, la première drame de la Ruhr in Ecrits de Paris, May 1949, quoted in Miquel, Bonnet, Persil and St. Aulaire. Miquel, who discusses the matter most fully, tries unconvincingly to blur over Poincaré's defeat.
The most likely reason for his extraordinary inactivity in this crucial phase is that he realized the appalling weakness of France's position after her famous victory, and he was reluctant to take steps which he knew must formalize the abandonment of what had just been won. Whatever chance Poincaré might have had of forcing Germany into submission, receiving full reparations payments, and emphasizing France's role as the leading power on the Continent, was destroyed by the campaign of passive resistance.

The war of attrition in the Ruhr had damaged France's economy as well as Germany's. Between January and October 1923 the value of the mark to the pound had fallen from a disastrous 81,200 to a totally ludicrous 13,900,000,000,¹ but the franc suffered as well and lost a quarter of its value in the course of the year.² This trend was to continue in 1924. In the first twenty months of the occupation (January 1923 to August 1924) French and Belgian receipts from the Ruhr were £25 million, in comparison with £62 million received in the last twenty months before the occupation.³ With the ruin of the German economy — even Poincaré admitted that a moratorium would be necessary before large-scale payments could be resumed — it would be difficult for France to meet the enormous liabilities which she had incurred in anticipation of receiving reparations payments. France needed a prosperous Germany if she were to benefit fully from reparations, while at the same time she was afraid of the threat which a prosperous Germany would present to her. Even to reduce Germany to poverty in the immediate future in order that, once she had recovered her strength and her wealth, she would pay all her reparations obligations to avoid a repetition of the experience — the essence of Poincaré's policy once the occupying forces met with opposition — placed too great a strain on France. The Ruhr conflict had

² The figures were 67.15 francs to the pound on 14 Jan. 1923, and 84.45 on 1 Jan. 1924 (S.L.A., 1924, p. 291).
³ D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 24 Jan. 1925, F.0.571/10752, C1251/1251/18, quoted in Moreton, Great Britain and the Locarno Treaties, p. 1. He added that the corresponding figures for Britain were a net receipt of £8.7 million before the occupation and £9.3 million after it. A supporting statistic is that in the first half of the period of occupation and passive resistance France received less coal and iron from the Ruhr than in the ten days before it began (Herzfeld, Die Weimarer Republik, pp. 84-85).
cost too much. As the newspaper *Populaire* put it, "many of the public will feel that two or three victories of this kind will lead the country to a state of utter ruin". ¹

The French people were tired of the long-drawn-out struggle and wanted to enjoy the fruits of their triumph, but Germany's passive resistance had made it impossible for Poincaré to win the quick results which he needed to prove that the occupation had been a success. ² The German resistance did not deprive France of her formal victory, but it left her too weak to make use of it, and it resulted in an effective stalemate which Britain and America were to use to Germany's advantage.

However it was some time before the full extent of France's predicament became apparent, and initially the reasons for Poincaré's refusal to open talks were misinterpreted. This refusal provoked intense anger in Britain. Baldwin protested bitterly that he had been led to believe that Poincaré would negotiate with the Germans once they had abandoned passive resistance,³ and Crowe told St. Aulaire that Britain would no longer be able to trust the French government. ⁴ Curzon saw France's attitude as proof of her imperialist ambitions, and complained that she sought to attain, and to some extent had already attained, the domination of the European Continent, that she was "determined to crush and effectively destroy all chances of recovery or resuscitation on the part of Germany within the time of the youngest child at the period when the War came to an end". ⁵

There were also suspicions concerning the terms which France might impose on Germany if Britain were not involved in the settlement. In a talk with St. Aulaire Curzon referred to

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¹ 29 Sept. 1923, quoted in Owen, *From Versailles to London*, p. 162.
² Another difficulty which Poincaré faced was the imminence of the French general election, due in May 1924. He knew that to impose a political settlement would delay the resumption of reparations payments, leaving him to face the electorate with empty hands.
³ Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, i, p. 249 (22 Oct. 1923). However a few days later he told C. P. Scott that he believed that Poincaré did not know what to do next, or, alternatively, that he was playing for time and trying to postpone a settlement until after the French elections (Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C. P. Scott*, p. 445 (26 Oct. 1923).
⁵ Speech at Imperial Conference, 5 Oct. 1923, Cab.32/9(3).
rumours of negotiations between German and French industrialists, and warned that if he heard that such discussions were being held or that such an agreement had been reached, he "should not feel disposed to lift a little finger to help Germany in any of her future troubles".¹

Britain remained confident that she would be able to dictate the terms of any settlement decided on purely economic and financial grounds, particularly if the United States, whose views and interests were almost identical with hers, could be persuaded to join in working out a solution. This was part of the reason for her annoyance and frustration when Poincare dithered for so long before agreeing to work out a permanent solution. Even in April Bradbury had written that if reparations were to be settled by the principal allied governments rather than by the (French-influenced) Reparations Commission, it would leave Germany substantially in British hands,² and the war of attrition between France and Germany had weakened both countries so much that Britain, as tertius gaudens, was more capable and willing than ever to step in and dictate the terms of an agreement. Cadogan, a first secretary in the Western Department, remarked that according to the Treasury, only foreign credits would be bring the European situation back to normal, and added smugly that if this were so, Britain would have the last word.³

Poincaré's insistence on German capitulation and Cuno's determination not to give in postponed by several months the second phase of the Ruhr crisis, that of picking up the pieces and working out a new solution to the reparations

¹ Curzon to D'Abernon, 27 Sept., 1923, describing a conversation with Sthamer, F.O.371/8656, C16799/1/18. (The date is significant - it was the day after Germany had abandoned passive resistance.) Weidfeldt claims that many F.O. officials supported British participation in the Ruhr occupation, believing that only thus could a connection between French and German heavy industry be avoided, and that to do so would avert too damaging a conflict in the Ruhr (Die Englandpolitik Gustav Stresemanns, p. 63); but his source is a report from Dufour on a conversation with Selby in 1928, and there is no evidence that these opinions were held in 1923.


³ Minute by Cadogan, 29 Sept. 1923, F.O.371/8656, C17256/1/18.
problem, and, indirectly, to working out a new relations between France and Germany. It was only in this phase that Britain would be able to use her economic and financial strength. But the delay, by further weakening Germany and France, made her predominance even more certain.

On 11 October the first step in breaking the deadlock was taken. President Coolidge, an unlikely Deus ex Machina, repeated Hughes's proposal of the previous December that an international committee of experts investigate Germany's capacity to pay reparations, and, delightedly, the Foreign Office enquired whether the United States would be prepared to participate in such an investigation. Before the Americans confirmed their intention to do so Curzon wrote to Crewe that "it may be that if they are at all forthcoming (which I do not anticipate) we may put Poincaré in a hole", and later told him that Britain's aim was "to bring and keep the Americans in, and to run risks in order to attain that object". When the American reply proved favourable Britain formally proposed such an investigation to her allies, and on 26 October, just a month after the German surrender, Poincaré accepted the idea of an advisory committee of experts on which America would be represented, appointed by the Reparation Commission but outside its control. This concession infuriated many of his supporters, and he soon resumed his insistence that there could be no question of reducing Germany's total debt. By early November the conditions which he imposed had driven America to renounce her participation, but finally, at the end of the month, he withdrew his veto once again and a committee of experts was appointed to examine the state of the German economy. In effect, after Germany had surrendered and abandoned passive resistance, Poincaré was prepared in turn to surrender to the British and American demands for a new investigation of what what Germany could pay. His defeat was camouflaged by the appointment of a second committee which would examine the amount of German capital abroad and the means of bringing

1 13 Oct. 1923, Crewe papers, C/12.
2 31 Oct. 1923, Crewe papers, C/12.
3 Crewe to F.O., 27 & 28 Oct. 1923, F.0.371/8656, 018541 & 018551/1/18. Eclair accused him of putting the clock back to the Cannes Conference.
4 De Montille (French chargé d'affaires) to Cadogan, 29 Oct. 1923, F.0.371/8656, 01854371/18.
it back to Germany. The important first committee, which would investigate the means of balancing the German budget and of stabilizing the currency, was chaired by Dawes, an American, and the second by McKenna, an Englishman. Economics were in the ascendant, and Poincaré's day was over. Britain had obtained precisely what she had sought throughout the dispute, and the extent of her success can be measured by Lampson's warning, seconded by Tyrrell and Curzon, that she should not force France into a corner.¹

As the French government realized how Pyrrhic its victory had been, how little the basic pattern of Anglo-Franco-German relations had been changed, it began to revive its interest in a security treaty. Shortly after declaring that a special Rhine covenant would not add anything to French security,² and after telling Baldwin that a pact was valueless since without military occupation France would be worse off than in 1914,³ Poincaré made it clear that France would continue to seek guarantees for her security and for the payment of reparations.⁴ (The same day Briand, in opposition, made the claim that security was more important than reparations.)⁵ Poincaré went further,

¹ Minutes, 6 Dec. 1923, F.O.371/8602, C21156/1/18. So confident was Britain of the outcome of an impartial tribunal that Curzon declared she would be ready to bind herself in advance to accept its decisions (to St. Aulaire and Moncheur, 11 Aug. 1923, F.O.371/8648, C13659/1/18.) Once Poincaré had accepted the principle of an investigating committee Bradbury expressed his confidence that it would almost certainly recommend a figure which would be a practicable burden on Germany (and as such, of course, a defeat for France) and would recommend a temporary moratorium almost at once (to Crowe, 26 Oct. 1923, F.O.371/8659, C18627/1/18). He was right. In March 1921 Kerr had forecast that no permanent solution could be reached then, and whatever was done would have to be revised in two years when America would "come in and make a kind of general clean-up, remitting Europe's debts to her, provided that Germany was released from the greater part of reparations" (D'Abernon, Ambassador, 1, p. 128 (diary, 3 March 1921.).) Kerr over-estimated America's generosity, but otherwise his prophecy was accurate.

² Crewe to Curzon, 17 Sept. 1923, F.O.371/8655, 016156/1/18.
³ Memorandum by Baldwin, 18 Sept. 1923, describing his conversation with Poincaré, Baldwin papers, 108.
⁴ Crewe to F.O., 7 Oct. 1923, F.O.371/8657, C17328/1/18.
⁵ Crewe to Curzon, 8 Oct. 1923, F.O.371/8657, C17506/1/18.
and, complaining that the guarantee promised in 1919 had not been given, he assured his audience that France’s claim for "permanent guarantees of security" would not be abandoned.\(^1\)

So, after Germany had surrendered to French military power, but before France in turn had completed her surrender to Anglo-American capital, Poincaré began seeking forms of security other than the Diktat he had intended imposing on Germany, and began to feel his way back towards the traditional French policy, temporarily abandoned in 1923.

This change was not seriously affected by the half-hearted support which France gave to the separatist movements which emerged in the Rhineland and in the Palatinate in the upheavals following Stresemann’s surrender. On 21 October a Rhineland Republic was proclaimed at Aachen, in the Belgian occupation area, and the movement soon spread to the French zone. There, it was alleged, the French troops gave considerable assistance to the separatists despite Poincaré’s declaration of his government’s neutrality in the matter. Britain made several complaints at what she saw as a further attempt by France to destroy German unity.

A much more serious attempt was made to set up an independent Palatinate state, centred on Speyer, and nearly 15% of the population were expelled on account of their disloyalty to the new government. This provoked Curzon to wage his last campaign against Poincaré.\(^2\) The British consul in Munich was sent to investigate conditions in the region, and on 21 January 1924 his report was read to the House of Commons.\(^3\) It argued convincingly that the great majority of the population in the district concerned was opposed to separation, and that the new governments were dependent on France for their creation and survival.

Curzon was overjoyed at the annoyance which this move gave to the French government and at the obvious failure of the new Rhineland states to consolidate their position, but

\(^1\) Crewe to F.O., 28 Oct. 1923, F.0.371/8658; C18542/1/18.
\(^2\) Curzon entered into the fight with relish, and his virul provoked Cecil, squeamish as ever, to complain to Baldwin about his harshness of tone (Cecil to Baldwin, 10 Jan. 1924, Baldwin papers, 114).
\(^3\) Hansard, 5s., HC, 169, cols. 485–86 (21 Jan. 1924).
his glee was misplaced. Poincare was fighting with only one hand. Already in October 1923 Crewe was reporting from Paris that there was no confidence in the separatist movement's viability, and it was felt that the declaration of independence could not have come at a worse time.\footnote{Crewe to Curzon, 25 Oct. 1923, F.0,371/8685, C18391/129/18.} Poincaré was reported to believe that the move was premature and that it had forced France to show her hand before she was ready to do so.\footnote{Col. Ryan (Koblenz) to Lampson, 4 Nov. 1923, quoting Jacques Bardoux, a journalist friend of Poincaré's, F.0,371/8687, C19196/129/18.} His support for the movement was lukewarm at best and as with his surrender to the idea of an experts' committee which would examine the reparations question, many of his supporters resented his lack of determination. But after the Ludendorff-Hitler putsch in Munich had failed, and after Stresemann's government had restored its control over the whole country except for the French-protected separatist states, Poincaré must have lost whatever hope he may have had in Germany's impending dissolution or in the embryo Rhineland republics' chances of survival. He realized that it was too late to divide Germany without using force and thereby permanently antagonizing Britain and America, of whose goodwill he was in particular need just at that time. Like Clemenceau when confronted with Rhineland separatism protected by the French army in 1919, he willed the end but not the means. He cannot have been surprised when the movement withered away early in 1924 - its popular support was minimal and its patronage by the French had been insufficiently ruthless. Another factor inhibiting the French government from supporting the rebels in Aachen and Speyer was awareness that the disintegration of the Reich would lessen significantly the amount of reparations which France would obtain, and this object was increasingly important as it became clear that the other aims of the Ruhr occupation would not be realized.

During the first few months of 1924 the whole reparations question was put into cold storage as the Dawes and McKenna committees carried out their investigations. The Dawes Report, published on 9 April, confirmed France's defeat. Adopting the standpoint of "business and not politics", it proposed...
the economic reunification of Germany and the restoration of her sovereignty, recommended that she be granted a moratorium on her reparations payments and foreign loans of 800 million gold marks to enable her to survive her immediate difficulties. If the plan were to be accepted and the Germans were flagrantly to fail to fulfil its terms, the creditors were jointly to decide on sanctions. - so France's occupation of the Ruhr could not be repeated. And it insisted that the report be accepted or rejected as a whole. ¹

Two days later the Reparation Commission accepted these recommendations, and it advised the governments concerned to do the same. Within a week the German government declared its approval, and although Poincaré made some objections, on 25 April he wrote to the Commission, approving the report in principle. The British and Belgian governments did likewise. Later Poincare accepted the report, as ratified by the Commission, without restrictions or reservations. ²

Herriot, who became prime minister on 1 June after the electoral triumph of the Cartel des Gauches, inherited a very different situation from that which had faced Poincaré on the German capitulation eight months before. Poincaré had effectively liquidated the Ruhr venture himself, his task eased by the accession to power of the Labour government and the tact with which MacDonald treated him, and he had accepted a solution which offered less than the Bonar Law plan of January 1923, ³ In effect the main change was not the new total fixed for Germany's debt, which remained close to the real 50 milliards of the May 1921 schedule, but the confidence in the

¹ Exchequer summary of the Experts' Report, 15 April 1924, Cab.24/166, C.P.257(24); S.L.A., 1924, pp. 351-55. Keynes wrote jubilantly that "Germany can hardly expect better terms than these", though later he modified his enthusiasm (Nation and Athenaeum, 12 April 1924, quoted in Mantoux, Carthaginian Peace, p. 145).
² Poincaré to MacDonald, 14 May 1924, F.0.371/9745; C7960/70/18
³ The Dawes Plan proposed annuities of 2½ milliards, Bonar Law's of between 2½ and 3½ milliards, both to be preceded by a moratorium. The 1921 schedule demanded 2 milliards plus a quarter of German exports, making a total of about 3 milliards. Both the Bonar Law and Dawes Plans had reduced drastically the 1921 total of 132 milliards. But the crucial difference made by the Dawes Plan was the availability to Germany of foreign loans.
in the German economy which was generated by the report, a confidence which took root and became self-perpetuating until the slump five years later. Like the German Rentenmark of November 1923, the new post-inflation currency based on the value of rye, it was an enormous confidence trick. The details of the Dawes Plan were worked out at the London Conference in July and August 1924, and there it was agreed that the French should evacuate the Ruhr in August 1925.

The Dawes Plan marked the beginning of the stable five years in inter-war history, years in which prosperity encouraged optimism and democracy, when the effects of the First World War seemed to have been overcome and there were as yet no signs that the Second was being prepared. The solution of reparations, soon to be followed at Locarno by the solution of the security question, changed the whole atmosphere in international relations.

The entire reparations experience had been disastrous for everyone concerned. In Germany it contributed to weak government, inflation, the collapse of a large section of the middle classes and the creation of a new proletariat, the rise of extreme right-wing movements, a savage conflict with France, and the near-disruption of the state.

France and Britain gained little—certainly far less than Germany lost. They received minimal payments until the Dawes Plan was put into effect, and while payments were made regularly from 1924 to 1930, Germany received more in loans from the allies to help her pay reparations than she actually paid them in return.

Perhaps, given the French determination to force Germany to observe the Treaty and pay full reparations no matter what the consequences might be, and Germany's determination to

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1 And according to D'Abernon, until 1922 the costs of the army of occupation ate up 70-80% of reparations received, while in 1923 the figure was higher (Ambassador, iii, p. 47 (diary, 7 Feb. 1924)).

2 22.89 milliards were paid in reparation between 1919 and 1930, while foreign investment for the years 1924-30 came to 25.5 milliards (Weill-Raynal, Les Réparations Allemandes, iii, p. 71; Layton Report submitted to the London Conference in 1931, quoted in D.B.F.P., II, ii, p. 486, and Felix, Rathenau, p. 184). Renouvin, dealing with the years 1924-29 alone, gives the German figures as 23 milliards incoming and 7 milliards outgoing (Histoire Diplomatique, vii, p. 257). Most of these unrepaid loans came from the United States.
 evade implementing the Treaty and to pay as little as possible
 even if she damaged herself by so doing, a confrontation
 between the two countries was the only way of shaking both
 national public opinions into acceptance of a compromise.
 Dawes said that it was the Ruhr conflict which made a solution
 of the reparations question possible,¹ and in a sense he was
 right. Public opinion in both France and Germany was so
 impassioned on the subject that its disillusionment was bound
 to be painful.

 The Dawes Report solved the reparations element in the
 Ruhr crisis, but the security question remained — and almost
 in isolation, since the Turkish and Tangier problems had been
 settled, and inter-allied debts and submarines had receded
 into the background. Security was thrown into sharper per­
spective, and its solution was therefore made even more
 essential than it had been before. But the Ruhr dispute had
 a profound effect on security in other ways as well.

 France's attempt to impose observation of the Treaty by
 force had failed. It is true, as Frenchmen reassured themselves
 at the time,² that Germany was forced to treat it with more
 respect, but it was also true that, in return, the Treaty had
 been modified in her favour. France was never to take such a
 drastic step again. It was as if the effort of occupying the
 Ruhr had not only displayed her economic weakness but had also
 exhausted her and left her with no enthusiasm or daring for
 independent action. In the following years she was more on
 the defensive, aware that her military enforcement of the
 Treaty had been, at best, a doubtful success, and that while
 she had won the battle she had lost the war.

 Germany had been so convulsed by the occupation and its
 consequences that she was anxious to avoid any repetition of
 them. Passive resistance had been a political success — and to
 an extent also an economic success — but it had been a social
 disaster. The policy of cutting off her nose to spite her
 face had won concessions, but it had been acutely painful.
 France had shown what she was capable of doing, and there was
 no guarantee that she would not repeat it if once more
 provoked. After 1923 Germany treated her with more respect.

 ¹ McFadyean, Reparations Reviewed, p. 86.
 ² And as French historians have repeated since then.
Britain was made more aware of her necessary involvement in European affairs. She emerged from the crucial year of 1923 considerably more Francophobe, yet aware, like Germany, of how necessary it would be to satisfy the French. Neither Germany nor Britain could be sure that France, if desperate enough, would not lash out once more.

Because of the interdependence of the three Western European powers on each other, so clearly demonstrated by the Ruhr conflict, because Germany became more aware of the need to placate France, France more aware that she had given Germany reason to fear her, and Britain more aware of the importance of her role in reconciling the two traditional enemies, a solution to the security question became more urgent, and the form which this solution was to take in 1925 became more natural.


Between July 1922 and July 1924 there were no serious discussions between Britain and France about a security pact. There were feelers, casual remarks and suggestions in plenty, and, on the British side, the inevitable minutes and memoranda, but effectively the idea of a pact underwent a hibernation phase similar to that of 1920-21. In so far as the Ruhr occupation was concerned with security, it was an attempt to solve the problem by force.

Yet throughout this period there were continuous attempts to reach a peaceful, negotiated solution to the problem, though in a manner and on a scale very different from the earlier discussions on an Anglo-French pact. Individuals and governments tried to solve the question of security by means of a multilateral guarantee involving as many states as possible, at first through the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee and later through the Geneva Protocol.

From 1920 onwards the League of Nations had tried to work out an effective system for limiting armaments. In July 1922, just when Poincare's exchange of letters and proposals with Curzon and Balfour was coming to an end, Lord Robert Cecil suggested that disarmament be approached from a political standpoint, that the League try first of all to bring about a general feeling of security and that governments would then
be able to view more favourably the idea of reducing their armies. Disarmament and security would go hand in hand and step by step together.

Two proposals, based on Cecil's idea, were debated at the League general assembly in September 1922. After lengthy negotiations in the course of the next year, and after many compromises had been made and after many modifications had been accepted, the assembly submitted a draft treaty to the League Council, and recommended that it be sent to the world's governments with a request for their observations.

Its main point was that in an effort to guarantee the security of any country which had weakened its military forces, all signatories were to agree to assist any of their number which was the victim of aggression. The crucial decision of who was the aggressor and who the aggrieved was to be made by the Council, which would also decide on the application of economic sanctions and organize the transport of troops when necessary. No state was to be called on to intervene in another continent, and an aggressor was to bear the whole costs of any war against it "up to the limits of its capacity". The principle of reparations was to continue. Neighbouring states were encouraged to draw up military plans which would help a victim of aggression.

Once her objections to Cecil's original version had been incorporated in the Draft Treaty, France supported the scheme whole-heartedly. This was hardly surprising, for since her army was the largest in Europe and her disarmament would thus have the greatest effect, the Draft Treaty was to a great extent an attempt to lessen her feeling of insecurity, and was almost tailor-made to her needs. In one respect it was even an improvement on the pact with Britain, since it would cover the French protégés in Eastern Europe.

Outside France the Draft Treaty met with much apathy and opposition. Half of the League members did not bother to reply, and it was rejected by the two outsiders, Russia and America - and even by several countries which felt themselves threatened, on the grounds that it provided insufficient security to justify any disarmament. Right from the start Britain was openly hostile. At a very early stage, long
before Cecil's scheme had taken its final form, the head of the Western Department in the Foreign Office ridiculed the idea that the British people would bind themselves to help a country such as Hungary, and advised that if the matter were to be raised in Geneva, Britain's attitude should be one of "mild approval and benevolence, coupled with a determination to shelve any such proposals sine die". The scheme was altered time and time again before it was sent to the governments for their opinions, and various objections were incorporated as the drafters tried to widen their base of support. But no change was able to shake off Britain's opposition.

The general staff dismissed it as not providing a solid foundation for disarmament, the Admiralty, which would be affected most of all, was suspicious of its large and unknown commitments, and all three services believed that it would actually result in an increase of armaments.

Crowe derided the atmosphere of unreality in which the discussions took place, and despite the substantial alterations which had been made in the interval he still felt, five months later, that the Draft Treaty was "full of uncertainties and even contradictions". His subordinates agreed with him. Tyrrell, for instance, held that no likely advantage would compensate for the complication in international relations which would ensue, and Villiers dismissed Cecil's

1 Minute, 3 Aug. 1922, F.0.371/8331, W6294/6294/98.
2 Memorandum, 30 Jan. 1923, F.0.371/9418, W819/30/18.
3 Memorandum, 14 March 1924, Cab.4/11, C.I.D. paper 484-B.
4 Minute by Villiers, 16 Feb. 1923, F.0.371/9418, W1075/30/18.
5 Minute, 9 May 1923, F.0.371/9419, W3679/30/98.
6 Minute, 26 Oct. 1923, F.0.371/9421, W8091/30/98. In between, on 25 June, he had written a 44-page MS memorandum attacking Cecil's scheme (F.0.371/9419, W5047/30/18). In this memorandum he wrote "what at present keeps the peace - a rather precarious peace - in Central and South Eastern Europe? The armies of France and of the Little Entente. What prevents us from reaping the fruits of our victory over Turkey, fruits which would be a blessing to the Allies, to all Eastern Christendom, to the Turks themselves, and to the whole world? Our military impotence", and he asked "if the cause of disarmament is a good one, it cannot, surely, be indispensable for its success that Great Britain should monopolize the position of its standard-bearer".
7 Tyrrell to Hankey, 23 April 1924, F.0.371/10568, C3066/134/98.
proposals as being "Utopian in theory and unworkable in practice", remarking that "they presuppose the millennium and the happy moment when the lion and the lamb share a couch - incidentally, mutual guarantees will then be entirely superfluous". 1

The cabinet was equally unenthusiastic. Curzon shared Villiers's scepticism, and told the C.I.D. that "in the present state of civilization" it was inconceivable that aggression would be brought to an end, 2 while Amery objected that the Draft Treaty added unnecessarily to Britain's commitments, and that any such treaty was bound to be a guarantee of the status quo, some of the details of which did not deserve to survive, and that it involved stereotyping the division of Europe into two camps. 3

The division of the world into continents came into conflict with the structure and the interests of the British Empire, which would be obliged to intervene to impose League decisions in every part of the world. The Draft Treaty's only apparent advantage, that it would make redundant a treaty of alliance with France, was uncertain and Curzon believed that once France had already pressed for a definite and precise agreement between the general staffs of both countries, she would hardly be satisfied with such an indefinite guarantee. 4

The government was in no hurry to deal with the Draft Treaty. The Ruhr crisis and the Dawes Plan took up most of its attention in 1923 and early 1924, and the new Labour administration needed time to familiarize itself with the problem. A decision was long postponed, and MacDonald had been in office for nearly six months before he wrote to the Secretary General of the League informing him that Britain could not accept the Treaty. He claimed that it "did not provide that element of certainty and reliability" essential if states were to disarm, that it would involve an increase rather than a decrease in British arms, and using Tyrrell's phrase told him that the proposal would result in an immense

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2 C.I.D. minutes, 29 June 1923, Cab.2/3, 173.
3 Memorandum, 4 July 1923, Cab.24/161, C.P.311(23).
4 C.I.D. minutes, 29 June 1923, Cab.2/3, 173.
complication of international relations without providing any serious prospect of compensating advantages.¹

MacDonald rejected the Draft Treaty with a guilty conscience since he was more sympathetic towards such general agreements than were his Conservative predecessors, his civil service or the armed forces. He opposed security guarantees as such, and felt that international public opinion should provide enough security, but if treaties were unavoidable, the more general they were, the better. He believed that "the old and hateful system of rival alliances" should be abandoned,² and that a military agreement was the worst form of security.³ Despite the friendliness which his government showed towards the French since it had come to power, he and the Labour Party remained intensely suspicious of France's ambitions in Europe and were disinclined to make any serious concessions to her. He abhorred alliances of the 1919 and 1922 type just as the Conservatives abhorred general agreements such as the League of Nations project, but even though he was relatively more sympathetic towards the Draft Treaty, the overwhelming opposition which it aroused and the utter lack of support which it received led him to reject it.

Once Britain refused to participate, the whole scheme fell to pieces. But MacDonald was under heavy pressure from Herriot to provide France with a security pact,⁴ and to avoid such a commitment he was prepared to join in salvaging something from the wreckage of the Draft Treaty.

At the League of Nations assembly in Geneva in September 1924 Herriot and MacDonald made speeches which showed clearly their differences on the security question, but they also proposed that the divergence between "certain points of view which have been expressed" should be resolved, and that committees of the League should consider ways of doing this. Fortified by this blessing from the two prime ministers,

¹ MacDonald to Drummond, 5 July 1924, Cab. 4/11, C.I.D. paper 502-B. Almost at the same time the prime ministers of Canada and Australia wrote to the Secretary General in similar terms.
² Crewe to MacDonald, 27 Jan. 1924, enclosing the text of MacDonald's interview in _Quotidien_, F.0. 371/9812, C1538/1288/18.
³ Minute, 17 July 1924, F.0. 371/9818, C11164/2048/18.
⁴ See chapter 5.
committees duly set to work and within a month produced a revised Draft Treaty, soon to be known as the Geneva Protocol. The assembly unanimously recommended the world's governments to accept it, and it met with far greater support and enthusiasm than its predecessor.

The Geneva Protocol laid a new emphasis on arbitration, and aggression was defined in terms of unwillingness to submit to arbitration.\(^1\) Every international dispute must be referred to one of the organs of the League for adjudication, and compulsory arbitration was to be applied to all disputes by the International Court of Justice. (Arthur Henderson, who with Parmoor represented Britain after MacDonald had returned to London, secured the concession that individual states might be able to make reservations and preserve some topics from compulsory arbitration.) If a member were attacked, all other signatories were to come to its assistance, but sensibly the fulfilment of this obligation was left to the honour or discretion of individual states. The division of the world into continents was abandoned, and the question of whether force should be used was to be decided by a two-thirds majority of the League council.

Despite several important concessions to the British objections which had destroyed the Draft Treaty, there was still much in the Protocol which British and Dominion opinion was not prepared to accept - in particular its provisions for compulsory arbitration and for the imposition of sanctions. Its chance of acceptance was lessened by yet another change of government in Britain. The MacDonald government was defeated in parliament the day after the League assembly had approved the Protocol, and the Conservatives returned to power in the following election. But despite MacDonald's sponsorship, it is doubtful whether the Labour administration would have supported the Protocol had it remained in office, and on balance this seems unlikely.\(^2\)

\(^1\) "The Protocol was primarily concerned to provide exhaustively for the compulsory settlement of all international disputes, so that no loophole would be left for the waging of a 'private' war between states which would not be stigmatized and penalized as an act of aggression" (S.I.A., 1924, p. 49).

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As early as 25 September MacDonald wrote to Herriot modifying his enthusiasm for the Protocol, which, he said, must not be regarded as "an unalterable gospel". His hopes were modest: "if we could only just make a beginning, we must not be disappointed if it does not go quite as far as either of us would like". 1

The Conservatives had no sympathy whatever with the Protocol, and although it was four months before the new cabinet pronounced its verdict, the change of government effectively marked the end of all interest in the scheme. In November Hankey remarked that Hurst, the Foreign Office legal adviser, and Cecil were the only two in the government who had a good word for it, 2 and Balfour was later to complain that it had no defenders. 3

Between December 1924 and February 1925 the C.I.D. held a series of meetings to discuss the Protocol and related security matters, and in opening the discussion at the first of these Curzon said that the papers submitted led to only one tentative conclusion - no government could accept the Protocol as it then stood. 4 All these papers agreed that it would involve a serious loss of sovereignty, that it would exalt the League into a super-state of some kind or other, and that the main burden of enforcing the Protocol would fall on the British navy "which would begin by being the watchdog, and would end in all probability, by being the scapegoat of the world". 5

The opposition was formidable: the Hankey sub-committee of the C.I.D. mangled the Protocol in its report and proposed

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1 Herriot, Jadis, p. 174. According to Chamberlain, Mac-Donald had told him in private that he would never have signed the Protocol in its 1924 form (Chamberlain to Cecil, 19 June 1925, Cecil papers, quoted in Carlton, Disarmament with Guarantees: Lord Cecil, 1922-27, Disarmament and Arms Control (1965), p. 163, n. 24). The Labour leaders were careful not to say flatly that they would have signed the Protocol, even when the Conservatives taunted them with their reluctance to commit themselves (Lyman, The Labour Government, pp. 176-77).

2 Hankey to Baldwin, 26 Nov. 1924 (Roskill, Hankey, ii, p. 393).

3 C.I.D. minutes, 4 Dec. 1924, Cab.24/172, C.P.105(25).

4 Ibid.

"such fundamental changes in the character of the Protocol that it is no longer likely to be regarded as of any value from the point of view of French and Belgian security"; Chamberlain echoed Curzon's complaint about the Draft Treaty, that however fervently France might advocate acceptance of the Protocol she would not be satisfied with it, and Britain would still face further demands for an Anglo-French pact; Curzon complained that the Covenant, previously flexible, was being made rigid and precise; Birkenhead declared bluntly that he hated and detested the Protocol; Churchill favoured moving from one practical step to another; Balfour argued that the proposed changes in the Covenant aimed at technical completeness rather than practical effect, and that a far more effective deterrent to aggressors would be defensive pacts between particular states which felt themselves to be in danger; and the Board of Trade emphasized the cost of imposing sanctions, the possible damage they would cause to British trade, and the dangers of a rupture with America.

Dominion and foreign pressures played their part in strengthening British opposition to the Protocol. Mackenzie King complained that it would permit Japanese immigration to Canada, and, far more seriously, Hughes warned that if the Protocol became effective, the United States would regard the League as a potential enemy. Naturally the prospect of

1 C.I.D. minutes, 16 Dec. 1924, Cab.24/172, C.P.105(25).
2 C.I.D. minutes, 4 Dec. 1924, op. cit. He felt that it would be easy to reject the Protocol straight away "because the thing is so full of flaws and absurdities and impossibilities that to knock it down would be as easy as to knock down a castle of cards".
3 C.I.D. minutes, 19 Feb. 1925, op. cit.
4 C.I.D. minutes, 4 Dec. 1924, op. cit.
5 Memorandum, 9 Feb. 1925, Cab.21/289, C.I.D. paper 586-B. Earlier at the C.I.D. meeting of 4 Dec. 1924, he had argued that American abstention was in itself enough to warrant the Protocol's rejection.
6 Curzon's speech, C.I.D. minutes, 4 Dec. 1924, op. cit.
7 A. Edgecombe (C.O.) to W. H. M. Selby (F.O.), 1 Jan. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257. Another Canadian objection had been made by Senator Dandurand at the League assembly: "in this association of Mutual Insurance against fire, the risks assumed by the different states are not equal. We live in a fire-proof house, far from inflammable materials" (Walters, A History of the League of Nations, p. 276).
8 Esme Howard (Washington) to Chamberlain, 9 Jan. 1925, describing a conversation with Hughes, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257.
having to apply League sanctions against America appalled the British government.

There was a general feeling that the idea of collective security was one-sided - only Britain would be strong enough to enforce it outside Europe, while her own security would not be enhanced in return. There was also a fear that she would be dragged into wars in which she had no interest. There was no chance that the government would accept the Protocol, but it delayed its decision for as long as possible on account of its anxiety to provide France with some alternative form of security. Finally, however, on 12 March 1925, Chamberlain told the League assembly in Geneva that Britain would not adhere to the Protocol.

The Draft Treaty and the Protocol are not important because there was ever any serious possibility that Britain would accept them, or even because there was much likelihood that they would have provided Europe with the security which she lacked. They were important because they were two further means by which France tried to increase her security, and they were both destroyed through British opposition. Their failure - and without Britain the Protocol, like the Draft Treaty fell to the ground - combined with the far more significant failure of the Ruhr occupation, meant that, in French eyes, Britain's record in the security question was purely negative. She had made use of a legal technicality to evade her commitment in 1919; she had made excessive demands and insufficient concessions at Cannes; she had sabotaged the Ruhr venture; she had helped defeat the Rhineland separatists; and she had killed both the League projects. By raising French hopes, the Draft Treaty and the Protocol increased France's frustration and resentment. Six years after the end of the war she still felt that she had no worthwhile security.
Chapter 5. Anglo-French or Mutual Guarantee Pact.

Until the end of 1922 efforts to solve the question of French security had centred on some form of Anglo-French guarantee treaty in which Germany's role was simply that of the likely or probable aggressor. From late 1922 onwards these discussions or negotiations were complemented not only by the Ruhr occupation, the Draft Treaty and the Protocol, but also by a series of German proposals in which Germany figured actively as a possible signatory of a mutual guarantee treaty. Slowly the idea of an Anglo-French pact aimed against Germany gave way to that of a more comprehensive arrangement until finally attempts to negotiate a bilateral agreement were abandoned and a triangular pact, between Britain, France and Germany, became the basis of the Locarno settlement.

The origins of such a treaty were inauspicious, and for a long time the idea remained unimportant.

In December 1922 the German government tried to ward off the imminent French occupation of the Ruhr. It instructed its ambassador in Washington to propose to Secretary of State Hughes that he act as intermediary in an attempt to lessen French fears of Germany, which were rightly seen as one of the main reasons for the French intransigence of the French attitude on reparations. Hughes was asked to find out, informally, whether France would accept a German proposal that all the states interested in the Rhine, such as Britain, France, Germany and Italy should agree not to wage war on any of the others for a generation (defined as thirty years or so) without first putting the matter to a popular vote, and that the United States should in some way be the "trustee". (This was exactly

1 As Rosenberg told the Länders prime ministers, in his opinion France was not interested in money, but in obtaining the Rhine frontier (5 Dec. 1922, Das Kabinett Cuno, p. 32, R 43 1/2327).

2 Memorandum by Hughes, 15 Dec. 1922, describing a conversation with German ambassador Wiedfeldt, United States Department of State, Foreign Relations 1922, ii, pp. 203-04. Zimmermann credits the Austrian ambassador in Berlin, Riedl, with the original idea; but the letter he quotes in which the suggestion was made to Rosenberg is dated 17 Dec., two days after Wiedfeldt's conversation with Hughes (Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Eco der Weimarer Republik, p. 140). He cites no evidence that Riedl had already mentioned the idea to Rosenberg or to some other cabinet minister. Harbeck says that there is no trace of the proposal's origins in the cabinet papers (Das Kabinett Cuno, p. 136, n.), and I have failed to discover any in the foreign ministry papers.
the basis of the Locarno Treaty, signed almost three years later, except that at Locarno Britain and Italy were the disinterested trustees or outside powers to whom France, Belgium and Germany made their declarations of non-aggression. Hughes forwarded this proposal to the French ambassador, and was told in reply that Poincare felt France could not make such an arrangement without changing her constitution, that the Germans could not be relied upon, and that if they wanted a war they could easily secure a vote to that effect. He passed on this answer.

Chancellor Cuno referred to the proposal in a speech in Hamburg on 31 December, and a few days later he and Rosenberg explained their plan and their motivation to D'Abernon at some length. They assured him that the thirty-year clause was intended to strengthen rather than weaken the proposal, and that they were ready to extend it to fifty years or to any other practicable period, or even to drop it altogether.

The French were right in seeing the proposal as a manoeuvre to distract their attention from the Ruhr, and it was only to be expected that they would reject it and go ahead with their occupation. But the British reaction was less obvious and less natural.

Although D'Abernon criticized the manner and the timing of the German initiative, he urged that it be considered nonetheless; that its widespread support, especially by the German

1 D'Abernon was to describe the Locarno proposal, possessively, as "das Kind", but by January 1923 he was already calling the Cuno proposal "the child" (Ambassador, ii, p. 157 (diary, 18 Jan. 1923)).

2 Memorandum by Hughes, 21 Dec. 1922, describing a conversation with French ambassador Jusserand (United States, Foreign Relations 1922, ii, p. 206). Jusserand asked whether the promise to be made to the United States meant that America would guarantee such an agreement, and said that if America were brought into the question this might affect the attitude of the French, even to the point of making them willing to alter their constitution. Hughes answered that there was no question of the United States binding herself in the matter (memorandum by Hughes, 28 Dec. 1922, ibid., pp. 209-10).

3 D'Abernon to Curzon, 2 Jan. 1923, F.0.371/8696, C178/178/18. Cuno chose America rather than Britain as the trustee because "England was directly interested in Rhine and could not assume same attitude of independence towards other Rhine powers".

4 Ibid., D'Abernon to Curzon, 3 Jan. 1923, F.0.371/8696, C186/178/18.
Right, was significant; that the project should be revived in some form or other; and that it might lead to a general improvement in both the short-term and the long-term situations. But Lampson, head of the Central Department in the Foreign Office, rejected the proposal as being of "purely academic interest" and "foredoomed to failure", while Curzon dismissed it scornfully as "a piece of impertinence".

The Ruhr was duly occupied, and the details of the Franco-German struggle naturally overshadowed such remote if fundamental solutions to the problem of their conflict.

Sthamer revived the idea of a mutual pact in a discussion with Curzon in late March, but Curzon told him that he saw no hope of a settlement through this scheme and that none of the parties involved would consider it seriously. He criticized the plebiscite clause of the Cuno proposal and Sthamer promptly withdrew it, but Curzon felt that this alteration would not make the formula any more acceptable, at least to the French. He also argued that the authority of the League would be damaged if Britain, France, Italy and Germany all entered into an agreement to provide those guarantees which it was the League's duty to secure. He offered Sthamer little hope of success.

In another interview a week later he told the ambassador that it was "hardly for Germany to make any independent proposals" in the security question since all the great powers were involved and the Versailles arrangements could be modified or extended only by common consent - scarcely a reason for her to renounce the initiative. He conceded that Germany could indicate to France that, if it were desired to bring up the matter of security the German government would be prepared to discuss it; and he told Sthamer that "if the question was..."

3 Curzon to Sir S. Head (Berlin), 22 March 1923, F.O.371/8725, C5439/313/18. He urged that the German government "instead of repeating in a helpless and hopeless sort of way offers which had been already rejected...should seriously consider whether they could not produce some plan more likely to meet with the acceptance both of France and of the Allies" [sic].
raised by France in a proper way, we should be quite willing to take part in the discussion, and I did not see why Germany should not do so equally." ¹ Hardly equally if merely passively; there can be no better example of the British attitude that Germany's role was to be an object rather than a subject in international relations, and that speaking out of turn was a presumption worthy of the rebukes which Curzon could give so well.

D'Abernon was not deflected from his faith in the Cuno proposal. He believed that the Ruhr occupation had shown the danger of military violence from France was far greater than from Germany, and that no pact which would not take into account the need of both sides for protection would have the slightest chance of acceptance in Berlin.² (But if a guarantee treaty were to involve only Britain and France, the question of whether or not it would be acceptable in Berlin was of little importance.) He suggested that security be discussed before reparations, and that Germany would "go very far indeed" in a reciprocal non-aggression pact, even though Berlin's ideas on the precise form which it should take were still vague.³ He advocated such a mutual pact to de Margerie, his French colleague in Berlin,⁴ and discussed it with other Frenchmen in Germany.⁵ However Phipps wrote to him from the Paris embassy that the French would have interest in a mutual non-aggression treaty with Germany since that would place Britain in the role of permanent arbitrator between the two countries.⁶

In late April he reported that the Germans were busy preparing new proposals on reparations and security,⁷ and

¹ Curzon to Sir S. Head, 29 March 1923, describing a conversation with Stahmer, F.0.371/8725, O5906/313/18.
² D'Abernon, Ambassador, ii, p. 194 (diary, 9 April 1923.) He even compared French hegemony in Europe to that of Napoleon between 1809 and 1812 (ibid., p. 223 (diary, 22 June 1923)).
³ D'Abernon to Phipps, 16 April 1923, F.0.371/8730, O5906/313/18.
⁴ Diary, 15 April 1923, D'Abernon papers, B.M., Add. MS 48959.
⁵ D'Abernon, Ambassador, ii, pp. 200-01 (diary, 12 April 1923)
⁶ Phipps to D'Abernon, 24 April 1923, F.0.371/8730, O7225/313/18.
⁷ D'Abernon to Foreign Office, 25 April 1923, F.0.371/8633, C7441/1/18. In the German foreign ministry documents this proposal was referred to as the Gaus proposal, and Gaus, the legal adviser, himself claimed the credit, describing it as the Gaus formula in contrast to the Cuno formula of December 1922 (Gaus to Bülow, 12 Jan. 1925, AA, Buro Staatssekretär (SS), Verhandlungen...über einen Sicherheitspakt I).
these were presented formally to the allies on 2 May.\textsuperscript{1} The security section included a clause suggesting that France and Germany bind themselves to submit all differences between them, not soluble by diplomatic means, to an arbitral tribunal, and also a demand that the Ruhr be evacuated. Minutes by British officials were confined to the reparations aspects of the German note, and there were no references to security.\textsuperscript{2} Poincare rejected the second set of German proposals as emphatically as he had rejected the first. He told Hoesch, the German ambassador in Paris, that "the indications which the German government has given concerning the guarantees of security which, it says, it is ready to offer France are both vague and illusory....France and Belgium cannot be satisfied with new declarations by Germany".\textsuperscript{3}

In a subsequent German note handed over on 7 June the question of security was not even mentioned, although Stahamer told Curzon that while his government had deliberately made no reference to the matter, it was still prepared to offer any guarantee of French and Belgian security which might be desired provided that it was reciprocal and that it did not infringe on German sovereignty.\textsuperscript{4}

The Ruhr deadlock continued, Germany's situation became steadily more desperate, and in August the Cuno government fell. The following month Stresemann raised the question of a mutual guarantee pact once again. In a speech in Stuttgart and in conversations with the French, British and Belgian ambassadors in Berlin he proposed a reciprocal pact in which all the Rhine states, together and separately, would guarantee their common frontiers. There were no references to the agreement lasting for a generation or being capable of being revoked by a referendum, though its duration would still be limited to a specific

\textsuperscript{1} Stahamer to Curzon, 2 May 1923, F.0.371/8633, C7832/1/18. The reparations section, which comprised the main part of the note, has been mentioned above, pp. 155-56.

\textsuperscript{2} The only exception is a tantalising reference by W. F. Wigram: "as regards security, Lord Curzon's advice (see file 88a) appears to have been followed completely" (F.0.371/8633, C7741/1/18). There is no sign in the volume of file 88a.

\textsuperscript{3} Poincare to Hoesch, 6 May 1923, D.D.F., notes allemandes, p. 18; Hoesch to AA, 6 May 1923, describing a conversation with Poincare, AA, RM, Ruhraktion II).

\textsuperscript{4} Curzon to Addison (Berlin), 7 June 1923, describing a conversation with Stahamer, Curzon papers, F/9/5.
period. Nor was there any mention of trustees. He told D'Abernon that he was anxious to know whether discussion of this topic now had any interest for France, and the answer, as before, was no. Poincaré repeated simply that the security question had no connection with reparations.

Stresemann had suggested that security be settled before reparations, an idea which killed whatever slight chance of serious consideration the proposal might have had, but even without this clause the German interest in a security pact was as obviously a result of the Ruhr situation as Cuno's had been the previous December. Germany was on the verge of collapse, and three weeks later passive resistance was abandoned. Having forced his opponent into a corner Poincaré was unlikely to drop his weapons and begin to discuss their long-term differences on an equal footing.

Throughout 1923, a year in which security remained in the background and received far less attention than reparations, it was the old question of an Anglo-French guarantee pact, rather than a mutual treaty including Germany, which provoked the greater interest and discussion. There was a widespread feeling in Britain that, however much the French might deny it, one of the reasons for the occupation of the Ruhr was their feeling of insecurity; as Bonar Law told the Commons, "all this action on the part of France is due to the fact that they are afraid". Now that France was proving herself a nuisance and needed to be pacified, the old idea of offering her a guarantee pact against German aggression, an idea which had been buried with relief after the Peace Conference and again after the Cannes negotiations, was exhumed once more.
Various sources indicated that Poincaré had acquired a new interest in concluding such a treaty.¹ Phipps reported from Paris that since the Ruhr occupation had begun, anxiety about future security was more marked than desire for reparations,² and Tyrrell believed that Poincaré would welcome a guarantee treaty which would enable him to make a more honourable retreat from the Ruhr.³

In April 1923 the Western Department of the Foreign Office produced a memorandum discussing the possibility of Britain's "moving in the direction of an Anglo-French Pact". It recognized that there was a powerful body of opinion in the country and in parliament opposed to such a treaty; it discussed possible amendments to the Cannes proposals; and it revived the idea of blackmailing France by demanding a satisfactory conclusion to outstanding disputes between the two countries. Time and the armies of Mustapha Kemal had removed Turkey from the list of contentious subjects, and the Genoa Conference also belonged to the past, but the Foreign Office and Admiralty still thought of demanding concessions over Tangier and submarines in return for agreement on a pact.⁴

Bonar Law sent for the papers on the Cannes Conference,⁵ but this did not spur him to any action and Crowe later reported him as thinking that there could be no question of negotiating a pact, if only because of the opposition of Smuts and, perhaps, of Canada.⁶

¹ Among them: Poincaré’s conversation with a reliable informant (Phipps to F.O., 19 March 1923, F.0.371/9394, W2080/1585/17; newspaper articles (Crewe to F.O., 26 March 1923, F.0.371/9394, W2261/1585/17; Poincaré’s conversation with journalists (Crewe to F.O., 27 March 1923, F.0.371/9394, W2338/1585/17). Other politicians such as Barthou and Loucheur displayed a similar interest (Cecil to Bonar Law, 11 March 1923, Bonar Law papers 111/12/64), and Loucheur later came to London and made his own proposals, but these were repudiated by Poincaré (F.O. report, 13 April 1923, F.0.371/3730, C8383/313/18).  
² Phipps to Curzon, 2 April 1923, F.0.371/8726, C6110/313/18. He believed that only anxiety about security could explain the Ruhr occupation - it was designed to settle the security question once and for all (ibid.).  
³ Minute, 26 March 1923, F.0.371/9394, W2261/1585/17.  
⁴ Memorandum, 16 April 1923, F.0.371/9395, W4136/1585/17. The following day the Central Department, in a memorandum discussing schemes of international control of the Rhineland, held that no solution of reparations was possible until French security was guaranteed (F.0.371/8279, C7304/313/18).  
⁵ Minute by Villiers, 20 March 1923, F.0.371/9394, W2080/1585/17.  
⁶ Minute by Crowe, 20 March 1923, Curzon papers F/9/3.
At first Curzon, too, was opposed to discussing the matter with France. In March he wrote that he understood there was then no question of reviving the pact, and shortly afterwards he brusquely dismissed Crowe's suggestion that the French might regard it as a way out of the Ruhr deadlock. At a meeting of the C.I.D. in June he referred to previous French requests for a general staff agreement and said that France would never be satisfied with such an indefinite guarantee as that contained in the Draft Treaty, and although he did not mention it, the same objection would apply to a pure Anglo-French pact. Cecil agreed with him, and Bridgeman, the First Lord of the Admiralty, argued that Britain must avoid joining in group alliances in Europe, that any treaty of guarantee was in effect a guarantee to the victorious powers.

But in July Curzon told St. Aulaire that the British government was quite prepared to discuss the question of security with France if this were desired. The ambassador answered that he did not intend raising this question since security had been dealt with sufficiently by the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and that there could be no danger to France for many years. In notes to the French and Belgian governments ten days later Curzon repeated his willingness to discuss the security question, but was rebuffed again; on 30 July St. Aulaire told him there was no connection between security and reparations, and it would be better if the two subjects were treated separately. In his note to the allied governments on 11 August Curzon referred to this French indifference, and concluded that no useful purpose could be served by following the matter any further. The French were determined not to be diverted from their objective of crushing Germany and extracting reparations from her, and Curzon's proposals were seen as distractions just as Cuno's had been.

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3 C.I.D. minutes, 29 June 1923, Cab.2/3, 173.
4 Memorandum by Curzon, 10 July 1923, describing a conversa tion with St. Aulaire, Cab.24/161, C.P. 319(23).
5 St. Aulaire to Curzon, 30 July 1923, F.0.371/8645, C13105/ 1/18.
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question. He made several speeches in which he referred to the topic, but these overtures met with no response, and the next important move came from Germany.

In 1924 D'Abernon continued to advocate a mutual guarantee pact on the lines of the Cuno proposal but without its much-criticized defects,¹ and for the first time he met with a positive response from the Foreign Office. In a long memorandum Bennett, a second secretary in the Central Department, argued that despite French rejections the Cuno proposal suggested "the possibility of an eventual solution by means of mutual guarantees against aggression". He made the unusual admission that France had not always been an innocent victim and that she had also had a history of aggression against Germany, and he drew attention to the fact that France's plans for her security involved taking away some of Germany's sovereignty; in other words, that Germany was to pay for the Anglo-American failure to ratify the guarantee treaties.²

Very slowly it was being realized that Germany might have as valid a claim to guarantees against short-term French aggression as France had against long-term German aggression. The lessons of the Ruhr occupation were being learned. Other reactions to D'Abernon's dispatch were cautious, Crowe and Bennett stressing that it required detailed consideration, and MacDonald, now foreign secretary, agreeing with Bennett's suggestion that it should form part of a general settlement of reparations and security.³

Shortly afterwards the Germans made their fourth proposal for a guarantee treaty (and it is significant that, as was the

¹ D'Abernon to F.O., 5 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9818, C2048/2048/18. He admitted that the second and third German proposals had not advanced the discussion.
² Memorandum, 5 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9813, C2028/1346/18. He also made the point, later to be repeated by many Foreign Office officials, that "it is not surprising if, after the lapse of the guarantee treaties, the French have attempted to secure that political, military and economic control over the Rhineland which the promise of the guarantee treaties had induced them to forswear". He urged that Britain seek some arrangement which would be a substitute for the 1919 pact, and in return for which France might renounce her control over the Rhineland.
³ Minutes, 6 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9818, C2048/2048/2048/18. Shortly afterwards Bennett went further, writing that the eventual solution would have to be some form of mutual guarantee of non-aggression rather than a solution "putting shackles on the one party and leaving a free hand to the other" (minute, 23 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9813, C2946/1346/18).
case with the May 1923 note, D'Abernon had already advocated such a mutual treaty to the Foreign Office, as if softening it for the German proposal which was to follow. Once more Stresemann told D'Abernon that Germany would be ready to give the fullest guarantees of non-aggression, provided that the security obtained would be reciprocal. He was prepared to consider a permanent neutralization of the Rhineland and Palatinate, even in time of war, but he doubted that the French would agree to any such plan. It seems that this proposal, unlike its predecessors, was made to Britain alone.

Lampson joined the group in the Foreign Office which agreed that the German demand for reciprocity was a reasonable one, but he, Crowe and MacDonald all agreed that any meeting with Stresemann in the near future would be inopportune. Crowe proposed what was soon to become a standard reaction — no decisions on security could be taken before the Dawes Report was received. (Later, after the report had been published, this was modified to waiting until decisions on its implementation had been made at the London Conference in July and August.) MacDonald emphasized in his minute that his interests lay in mutual arrangements and not in the old kind of alliance, so in him the Germans would seem to have a powerful ally.

This was a change from the marked lack of interest, even scorn, with which the German government's earlier proposals had been received; at last its request for inclusion in any guarantee treaty was being taken seriously, even if postponed indefinitely. It had taken three rebuffs and the disaster of the Ruhr conflict to achieve this result.

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3 The same day Schubert, the head of the English Department in the Wilhelmstrasse, handed D'Abernon a memorandum along the same lines (AA, RM, England III).
5 In a later minute he confirmed that he favoured either an Anglo-Franco-German pact, or else a general treaty including all nations (26 March 1924, F.O.371/9730, 05412/32/18).
6 Even if Germany was no longer viewed as a passive entity, an object rather than a subject in international relations, she was far from being regarded as an active, equal partner. Lampson interpreted Germany's views on security as meaning that she was at least inclined "to consider in a friendly spirit any proposals that may eventually be made to her" (minute, 23 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9818, 02842/2042/18).
The Foreign Office was on the way to joining the Treasury in viewing Germany's position with a certain sympathy, but the army remained as hostile as before. A general staff memorandum shared France's fears for her security: "Germany is bound to require room for expansion at a later date and France will not be able to resist that need when it comes"; France would never dare to fight Britain, while it was clear from the man-power figures that in the course of time Germany would clash with her; the Versailles Treaty would have no value once Germany felt herself strong enough to over-ride it; and the best guarantee for the future would be some kind of alliance with France.1

Despite the growing response to the idea of a pact including Germany, France remained very much in the foreground. More and more she showed herself friendly towards Britain, and at times she even displayed a certain consideration towards Germany.2 The softening of French attitudes towards both countries, often regarded as a consequence of the victory of Herriot and the Cartel des Gauches in the general election of May 1924, actually preceded the change of government by several months, and as in the sphere of reparations it was Poincaré himself and not his successor who began the painful process of backing down from the intransigence of 1923.

Poincaré's growing interest in the security question, illustrated in his speeches in the months which followed the German

1 Memorandum, 28 March 1924, F.0.371/9813, 05185/1346/18. The general staff felt that, deprived of the Anglo-American alliance, France saw herself practically helpless in the future unless she could either retain what she then held, or obtain other guarantees for her security. However it also believed that the military commitment in a guarantee to France would be too great - Britain would be accepting an obligation to maintain her forces "at a standard dictated either by growing French weakness or growing German strength".

2 Phipps wrote that any desire to reach a definite and direct agreement with Germany was prompted "by the probable leftward trend of the French elections" (to Curzon, 3 Jan. 1924, F.0. 371/9730, C134/32/18), and there was probably much truth in D'Abernon's sour comment that "the barometer of the success or failure of the Poincaré policy is the franc exchange. If it falls, Poincaré is amenable; if it rises, he returns to type" (Ambassador, iii, p. 55 (diary, 20 Feb. 1924)). Hoesh wrote to the Wilhelmstrasse "ich kann aber noch nicht daran glauben, dass ohne den starken Druck unabweisbarer Notwendigkeiten er zu wesentlichen Abstrichen von der Grundzielen seiner Politik bereit wäre" (14 Feb. 1924, AA, Polit. Abt. II, Frankreich, Politik III, Beziehungen zu England).
surrender, was continued in 1924. For instance, he told Crewe that since the guarantee pact had broken down in 1919, occupation of German territory was the only way in which France could guarantee her security,¹ and he wrote to MacDonald, in response to MacDonald's reference to the subject, that ever since the war France had been obsessed by both reparations and security, and that the Rhine must remain a barrier against aggression.² He told the Chamber of Deputies that France had a deep desire to reach agreement with all her allies on the two questions on which her future depended, reparations and security.³

There was a change in the tone of British policy, if not the content, as striking and unexpected as that in France. The replacement of Curzon by MacDonald at the beginning of 1924 made it possible for a fresh start to be made in the relations between the two governments, weighed down not only by conflicts on one issue after another from Turkey and Tangier to the Ruhr and Palatinate separatism, but also by the deep hatred which Curzon and Poincaré felt for each other.

MacDonald and the Labour Party had been consistently sympathetic towards Germany and suspicious or else frankly hostile towards France from 1919 to the end of 1923. They had attacked the harshness of the Versailles Treaty, they had objected to the 1922 pact proposals, and they had opposed the French occupation of the Ruhr with an open virulence which the government must often have secretly envied. Yet once they were in power, unencumbered by their predecessors' frustrations or by any need for consistency with their own previous policies or with those of the Conservative government, they showed themselves far more considerate of French susceptibilities, and a new politeness replaced the quarrels of the first two years of Poincaré's premiership. As was the case with France, the change on the British side preceded Poincaré's defeat.⁴

³ Débats Parlementaires, Chambre, 31 March 1924, p. 1636.
⁴ It was realized that there were limits beyond which Poincaré would not or could not go; as Nicolson wrote, while Britain could use Poincaré's improved disposition to reach some agreement on general principles, real cooperation in practice and in detail could be achieved only by dealing with a new French government (minute, 12 Feb. 1924, F.O.371/9812, C1538/1288/18).
However, unlike Stresemann who appreciated that fear of German revenge in the future was one of the driving forces behind French policy, 1 MacDonald was sceptical about the genuineness of French insecurity. 2 He accepted that France was disappointed at the failure of the 1919 guarantee treaty and that she had "some justification" in seeking other, more tangible guarantees to take its place, but he told Poincare that it was widely felt in Britain that, contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, France was trying to create a situation in which she would obtain what she had failed to obtain during the peace negotiations. 3 He was as opposed as he had ever been to a Franco-British guarantee pact: he explained "whereas France conceives of security against Germany alone...what we desire is security against war"; 4 he felt that separate pacts or alliances were the generators of war; 5 and he believed that France would find greater security in the League of Nations than in her military strength. 6 He was even to write "unless we change the qualities of our minds we had better arm to the teeth", 7 and naturally the idea of arming to the teeth never crossed his mind.

The French government reacted accordingly, and began to discuss security in terms vague enough not to offend MacDonald. St. Aulaire told him that the French government agreed that security could not be achieved merely by an agreement between

1 Notes for a speech to the Reichstag Foreign Affairs Commission, 7 Sept. 1923 (Diaries, i, p. 110).
2 He wrote that the French Rhineland policy was the result of much more than insecurity, that it was the result of "a historical craving" (minute, 18 Feb. 1924, F.0.371/9813, C2028/1346/18) - language reminiscent of Lloyd George in an anti-French mood. He was afraid that if the British government gave France the security she sought, it would thereby give her a free hand to carry out her own political and economic policy in Europe (C.I.D. minutes, 2 Oct. 1924, Cab. 2/4, 188).
3 MacDonald to Poincare, 21 Feb. 1924, F.0.371/9812, C1538/1288/18.
4 Ibid.
5 Minute, 26 March 1924, F.0.371/9730, C5412/32/18. The general staff, on the contrary, felt that "the value of the League lies in the opportunities it affords for creating alliances ad hoc..." (memorandum, 24 June 1924, F.0.371/9818, C10067/2048/18).
6 Interview with Quotidien, 27 Jan. 1924, F.0.371/9812, C1538/1288/18.
7 Minute, 4 July 1924, F.0.371/9818, C10067/2048/18. This provoked Grove to retort that it was the minds of possible peacebreakers which needed changing.
two countries - it was prepared to take a wider view and to bring in the League. Having got this out of the way he reverted to the traditional French demand, that agreements might be concluded between individual states before being registered with the League.¹

The French were most dissatisfied with the attitude of British governments with which they had to deal, especially with that of MacDonald. Poincaré told the Belgian ambassador in Paris that the security negotiations had not advanced a single step in two years; that Britain refused a military agreement and offered only "paroles vagues et imprécises"; and that, in any case, he wanted a guarantee treaty which would include Poland. He also showed himself alarmed at having to evacuate the Cologne zone the following January.²

Despite the new politeness on both sides, France was still to be made pay for her security, even if MacDonald's ideas on the matter were only vague and generalized. He told St. Aulaire that while security and reparations could not be divided, "reparations provided the conditions which would determine what the actual problem of security was to be";³ ambiguous, like so many of MacDonald's remarks, but probably meaning that France's good behaviour in the reparations question would help her to achieve the security she desired.

While prepared to widen its horizons and think of a pact including Germany instead of one aimed specifically against her, the Foreign Office continued its long-term speculations about an Anglo-French pact as well. France's nuisance-value as long as she was dissatisfied in this matter was appreciated, as is illustrated by a memorandum from Addison in Berlin. He wrote: "what we must aim at is to get the French out of the Rhineland, placate German national feeling and invent some formula which, whether efficacious or not, would at least give time for mutual passions to die down".⁴ The words "whether efficacious or not" are revealing.

¹ MacDonald to Crewe, 24 March 1924, describing a conversation with St. Aulaire, F.Ó.371/9750, C4992/32/18.
² De Gaiffier to Hynans, 29 April 1924, L.D.B., ii, pp. 524-25. He felt that Poincaré was dominated by the two problems of his reaction to the Dawes Plan and of French security.
³ MacDonald to Crewe, 24 April 1924, loc. cit.
⁴ Addison to F.Ó., 1 March 1924, F.Ó.371/9847, C3814/1346/18. He also remarked that the Germans had done nothing but fight for the last thousand years, that fighting was in their blood.
There was no question of Britain's taking the initiative; France was "to state her requirements which would then run the gauntlet of critical and expert examination in London". Lampson wrote to Hankey that the Foreign Office was "off" the subject of security, and that its immediate preoccupation was to make progress in applying the Dawes Report. Crowe too wished to avoid anything which could complicate "this supreme problem", and MacDonald ruled that "security must not be raised by us at present in any form and when it is raised France must take the initiative".

In 1923 France had been confident of forcing Germany into submission and she felt that other matters, however important, could wait, while Britain was prepared to consider the unpalatable guarantee treaty as a means of averting the expected disastrous consequences of a prolonged Franco-German struggle. In July St. Aulaire had assured Curzon that there was no connection between security and reparations. But Poincaré's victory had been a Pyrrhic one, by 1924 the French expected few significant gains from their triumph in the Ruhr, and they wanted to be certain of obtaining security in case they failed to secure their other objectives. The roles were reversed, and now while Britain was satisfied with the course which the reparations problem was taking, France tried to link reparations with security. In March 1924 St. Aulaire duly informed MacDonald that his government believed the two were bound up with each other. As Tyrrell had forecast, success in negotiating a guarantee pact would help Poincaré to retreat more honourably from the Ruhr. It was now Britain's turn to hold out against any distractions until she had achieved a satisfactory solution to the reparations question.

1 Minute by Lampson, 16 April 1924, F.0.371/9813, C5815/2048/18. Naturally Poincaré's references to the necessity of a guarantee for Poland met with a frosty reception.
2 24 May 1924, F.0.371/9818, C6725/2048/18.
3 Minute, 28 May 1924, F.0.371/9820, C8124/2072/18. St. Aulaire claims that he pleaded in vain that if the solution of so complex a subject as reparations were to precede any agreement on security, it would mean postponing it indefinitely (Confession, p. 694).
4 Minute, 11 June 1924, F.0.371/9818, C9078/2048/18. In his minute Lampson remarked that since the publication of the Dawes Report (on 9 April) the French government had avoided all references to security. This was not to last.
5 Discussions of 10 and 30 July 1923 (see above, p. 159).
6 MacDonald to Crewe, 24 March 1924, describing a conversation with St. Aulaire, F.0.371/9730, C4992/32/18.
7 Minute, 26 March 1923 (see above, p. 187).
MacDonald had not long to wait before the French took the initiative and, for the first time in two years, began formal discussions on security and on a guarantee treaty. Poincaré's successor, Herriot, was in many respects a soul-mate of MacDonald's, but there was one significant exception to their overall compatibility of views. He far exceeded Poincaré in his desire for an Anglo-French pact. ¹ When he visited MacDonald at Chequers shortly after taking office he expressed his fear of Germany in the clearest terms: "France has a dagger pointed at her breast, a centimetre from her heart...if there were to be a new war, France would be wiped off the map". He asked directly whether Britain would be willing to conclude a guarantee pact once the reparations question and the Dawes Report had been settled, and he suggested, significantly, first an allied pact and then another more general treaty in which Germany could participate. Already France had come halfway towards meeting the demands the Germans had made in their four proposals for a mutual pact. MacDonald protested with justice that Lloyd George would reproach him for accepting what he, MacDonald, had opposed at the time of the Cannes Conference. Herriot declared that he would prefer that France should not receive her reparations than that she renounce her security, and MacDonald professed himself ready "to take all steps to begin the consideration of the question", and, of course, expressed a wish to bring in the League of Nations. ²

Shortly afterwards, in a newspaper interview, Herriot made the point that previous guarantee treaties had been one-sided in their rights and obligations, but that much opposition in Britain would disappear if France were to agree to a mutual treaty "and accord to Germany the rights of security which she claims for herself".³ This was a daring remark for a French prime minister to make, and many in the Quai d'Orsay and in the National Assembly did not share such views.

¹ Phipps had warned from Paris that if the prime minister made friends with Herriot he would be able to get what he wanted, and that the real danger was that he might get or seem to get too much, and thus bring about Herriot's downfall (to Crowe, 15 June 1924, F.O.371/10534, W5043/115/17).
The Foreign Office still wanted to postpone discussion of security and Phipps, the charge d'affaires in Paris, was warned to go slow on the subject, that nothing should be done until France approached Britain with concrete proposals, and that no such approach should be encouraged until the Dawes Plan had actually been put into operation.¹

Yet MacDonald himself raised the matter when he and Herriot met for a second time in Paris in early July. (In the interval the British government had delivered its long-expected rejection of the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, but this had not yet been announced publicly and it was not discussed by the two prime ministers.) MacDonald tried to fob Herriot off with what even he admitted might be considered vague phrases. The only guarantee of security lay in the establishment of peace in Europe, the closest of alliances was that which was not written on a sheet of paper, they had still to find out what security was, and (whatever it was) it would be assured to the greatest possible extent if disarmament were achieved. He used the War Office argument that a pact with France would oblige Britain to keep the number of her troops up to a certain level. Herriot and his aide, della Rocca, were dissatisfied with this performance, and della Rocca, adopting a tougher line than his prime minister, declared that France could not accept that Germany should ask of her the same guarantees which she would be obliged to give her. But the two leaders agreed to postpone discussions of security until after the forthcoming London Reparations Conference.²

On 11 August Herriot followed this up with a memorandum on security.³ He sought a defensive pact similar to that of 1919 which would complement the occupation of the Rhineland, and it could be followed, perhaps, by a reciprocal non-aggression pact between the allies and Germany. All would be under the auspices of the League of Nations. He emphasized that the mere existence of the 1919 guarantee treaties indicated allied appreciation that the guarantees of French security contained in the Treaty of Versailles were insufficient.

¹ Lampson to Phipps, 26 June 1924; F.O.371/9820, C9313/2072/18.
² Minutes of Anglo-French meeting, 8 & 9 July 1924, F.O.371/9849, C1146B, C1146G & C12051/10794/18; also Soulé, La Vie Politique d'Édouard Herriot, p. 165.
Phipps warned the prime minister that the majorities in the Chamber and the Senate who voted their approval of the London reparations agreement undoubtedly expected Britain to make concessions in the questions of security and inter-allied debts, and he feared that if these expectations were disappointed the existence of the Entente would be threatened. 1

The official French request for a pact on the 1919 model led to a marked divergence of opinion between MacDonald on the one hand and the Foreign Office and War Office on the other. It was generally accepted that Britain was not yet ready to discuss security in any form, 2 and there were doubts about the compatibility of British and French objectives. Nicolson wrote "whatever the French may say, they wish, under the guise of the League of Nations to forge iron chains which will encircle Germany and keep her captive; whatever we may say, we wish, while aiming at general pacification and disarmament, to avoid in any way committing ourselves to military intervention in Europe".

He went on to argue that it would take time for Britain to work out exactly what she was aiming at, to produce a precise and considered plan by which her aims could be put into practice, and that in the meantime her only possible policy was one of absolute reserve. 3

In general, however, both offices clung to their belief, reiterated in so many memoranda and minutes, that however undesirable a pact with France might be, however long it might safely be postponed and however dependent it must be on matching concessions from France, it could still be a solution, perhaps even the only solution, to much of the conflict and unrest in Europe. Early in September, well aware of MacDonald's abhorrence of guarantee treaties of the sort desired by the French, Lampson declared that until the basic outline of government policy on the matter had been decided, it was useless to prepare draft agreements or to set about their negotiation. 4

1 29 Aug. 1924, F.0.371/9813, C13819/1288/18.
2 Central Department memorandum on French security, 27 Aug. 1924, F.0.371/9819, C13663/2048/18.
3 Minute, 28 Aug. 1924, F.0.371/9819, C15683/1288/18. But Lampson and Crowe minced that the question was essentially one for the C.I.D., a sign that it was being taken seriously.
4 Minute, 2 Sept. 1924, F.0.371/9813, C13819/1288/18. Lampson wished that the 1919 pact had not fallen through, "for in that case we should not now be faced with all this difficulty respecting French security; and we shall now probably have to give more than was promised in the abortive 1919 treaty".
In his speech at the League of Nations assembly MacDonald once more rejected the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee, while Herriot once more praised it. MacDonald also attacked the idea of a military alliance within a security agreement which, even though it might be small to begin with, "is the essential seed of that agreement, and that seed, with the years, will grow and grow until at last the tree from it will overshadow the whole of the heavens, and we shall be back in exactly the military position in which we found ourselves in 1914". So Herriot and the Foreign Office had their answer: under the Labour government there would be no security pact between Britain and France. The idea of an Anglo-Franco-German pact, which MacDonald had been prepared to accept as an alternative to a world-wide agreement only six months before, was ignored or forgotten.

The Foreign Office's dissatisfaction is illustrated by a memorandum written by Troutbeck, a junior clerk in the Central Department, and by the minutes on it. Troutbeck claimed that Britain and France were back in the situation of 1919 since every alternative to the Rhine frontier had either fallen through or was in danger of doing so. The only exception was Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles which provided for continued occupation of the Rhineland after 1935 if France had not yet received sufficient guarantees against unprovoked aggression. Only Britain could provide guarantees convincing enough to persuade France to withdraw. MacDonald had rejected all ideas of a military guarantee, and France would not consider herself secure until she had one.

Nicolson saw the problem as being that of reconciling the French theory of security by force with the British theory of security by agreement. After listing the pros and cons he

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1 4 Sept. 1924, Cab16/56, C.I.D. sub-committee on the Protocol. Shortly afterwards MacDonald warned the Foreign Office against making any concessions to French views on security (minute, 10 Sept. 1924, F.O.371/9813, C13819/1288/18).
2 Minute, 26 March 1924 (see above, p. 190, n. 5).
3 Memorandum and minutes, 9 & 10 Sept. 1924, F.O.371/9819, C14272/2048/18.
4 Troutbeck added that "when public opinion is ready for it" Britain's responsibility might take the form of guaranteeing Germany against France as well as France against Germany, and that Britain must "either provide France with sufficient guarantees or expect to see her on the Rhine until she is driven out of it by force".
came down firmly against MacDonald's attitude:
"in desiring to be firmly protected against Germany, France is absolutely and wholly in the right. Unless we thoroughly understand not only the reasons, but also the real justification of this French terror, we shall make but little progress. We are morally bound to give France precise conditions of security: there is no reason why we should not make the security of France part of the wider security at which we are ourselves aiming".

(In 1924 under MacDonald the Foreign Office felt the need to make such ritual genuflections towards general security, a procedure quite unnecessary in 1923 under Curzon or in 1925 under Chamberlain.)

Lampson pointed out that, even though Britain was not so obsessed by security as France, she would still not agree to the construction of a Channel tunnel. France would not moderate her claims until she had received solid security, in addition to all the paper guarantees which she might get from the League. He wrote that the Central Department believed "you are not going to have a solution of the "security" question (which means also disarmament) unless you can safely satisfy France that she is secure from attack: and to do that you must first give her some concrete promise of armed support in case of wanton attack".

Tyrrell proclaimed his confidence in the League in terms which must have satisfied MacDonald if he read the file (he did not minute it), but the Foreign Office opposition to the declared policy of the government was nonetheless impressive.

The military once more repeated its argument of the previous March, that German aggression was the greatest threat facing Britain and that French security was British security. The general staff saw a pact as being in reality no more than the official recognition of an existing commitment, and believed that it would be a great advantage to have the most powerful army and air force in Europe as a screen against a future threat from Germany, especially in view of Britain's military unpreparedness. Several provisos were made - Britain must not state, even approximately, the strength of the forces which she could send to help France, and there must be no commitment other than to France and Belgium - but

1 At one C.I.O., meeting an impressive range of public figures - Beatty, Cavan and Trenchard, the three service chiefs, Asquith, Balfour, Lloyd George, Baldwin and Sidney Webb all opposed building a channel tunnel on strategic grounds (minutes, 1 July 1924, Cab.2/4, 186).
on the whole the general staff was as much in favour of guaranteeing French security as was the Foreign Office. 1

The negotiations which were to result in the Geneva Protocol took some of the pressure off discussions on a guarantee treaty, even though everyone knew that if the Protocol failed, and even if it succeeded, the perennial question would re-emerge. To some extent the Protocol was a desperate attempt by MacDonald to escape from the dilemma in which his opposition to military treaties had placed him: without the support of his armed services or the Foreign Office, he was faced with the near-certainty of a breach with the most friendly possible government in Paris. The Protocol brought him what little time he needed. Before he was obliged to take any firm decision one way or the other his government was defeated after less than ten months in office, and in November 1924 the Conservatives returned to power. Austen Chamberlain became foreign secretary, and Curzon was relegated to the Presidency of the Council and chairmanship of the C.I.D.

The Foreign Office promptly set out to guide the new government along the path which MacDonald had refused to follow. On the day it was formed the Central Department prepared a memorandum in which it warned that the French were always influenced by their desire for security, and that unless this problem were solved, it would make all other problems insoluble. "A great proportion of the trouble of the past five years is traceable to the failure to implement the guarantee treaties". Britain was morally though not legally bound to seek an acceptable solution for French insecurity, and if she did not try to do this she would risk a renewal of the "nightmarish happenings of the past five years". If the Protocol fell through, or if it did not provide adequately for French security, the whole security question would be reopened. 2

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1 General staff memorandum, 29 Sept. 1924, Cab.4/11, 516-B. It was stressed that "in no circumstances must the Allies be so supine as to sacrifice the initiative in a future war". The air staff disagreed with the army, arguing that a buffer state, France, should not have a stronger air force than Britain, and that British security against Germany could not be divorced from security against France (memorandum, 1 Oct. 1924, F.O.371/9820, C15874/2048/18).

2 4 Nov. 1924, F.O.371/9820, C16913/2048/18. In his minute Lampson remarked that the Protocol was unlikely to be ratified by Britain, it would have to be replaced by something else, and a revival in some form or other of the 1919 pact was the most obvious alternative.
The Foreign Office was preaching to the converted. Chamberlain was as aware of French insecurity, as fervent a supporter of an Anglo-French pact and as suspicious of the Protocol as were his officials. He realized that British acceptance of the Protocol would not solve his problems, for it would be followed immediately by Franco-Belgian demands to supplement it with a guarantee treaty.\(^1\) No matter what happened, Britain would face French demands for a pact. MacDonald's delaying tactics had postponed the issue for no more than a few months.\(^2\)

In four meetings between December 1924 and February 1925 the C.I.D. discussed the Protocol and possible alternatives to it. At the second of these Chamberlain dismissed the Protocol as insufficient, repeated his expectation that France would want a guarantee treaty even if it went through, and argued that an Anglo-French pact would really give France the security which the Protocol was supposed to provide. Later in the discussion when Cecil referred to problems arising in the future if an Anglo-French combination were to face an increasingly powerful Germany, he conceded that if it were desired to conclude a pact with France and Belgium, "it might be possible at a later date to induce Germany to enter into a similar pact", but that the French would never agree to the inclusion of such an arrangement in the original document.\(^3\)

In December 1924 the C.I.D. established a sub-committee to examine the Protocol, and at one of its meetings later in the month Crowe suggested the possibility of a declaration which both France and Germany could sign, but the group decided that if Germany were to be included in any such mutual pact the French would seek a British guarantee of Germany's Eastern as

\(^1\) Chamberlain to Cecil, 19 Nov. 1924, Chamberlain papers, F.0.300/256. This impression was confirmed by the evasive answer which Herriot gave when Chamberlain asked him directly whether the Protocol would satisfy France (memorandum by Chamberlain describing a conversation with Herriot, 5 Dec. 1924, F.0.371/9813, C18401/1288/18). The same meeting left him convinced that Herriot was "obsessed in every question by his fear of Germany" (to Crowe, 6 Dec. 1924, Chamberlain papers, F.0.300/256).

\(^2\) An example of the extent to which the Protocol diverted attention from an Anglo-French guarantee pact is the fact that no reply was sent to Herriot's note of 11 August.

\(^3\) C.I.D. minutes, 16 Dec. 1924, Cab.24/172, C.P. 105(25).
well as her Western frontiers. It was hoped that Germany might be brought into some wider grouping later on. 1 After this Crowe remained convinced that any German adhesion to a guarantee treaty must wait until Britain and France had worked out the details of their relationship with each other.

Since Stresemann’s last proposal in February, attention in the Foreign Office had been focused on reparations, the Draft Treaty and the Protocol, and French requests for a guarantee treaty. Little notice had been given to Germany - in the security question she had to draw attention to herself if she were not to be forgotten.

D’Abernon was not content to let things drift. In June he proposed to Maltzan, by now head of the Wilhelmstrasse, that Germany might try to reach a settlement of the security as well as the reparations problem, making it clear that this was purely his own, personal idea. 2 Maltzan said he would discuss the matter with Stresemann and Schubert. Shortly afterwards he reiterated his belief that Germany was prepared to give serious guarantees provided that they were reciprocal and that they would not infringe her sovereignty in the Rhineland and that they were exchanged as between independent, sovereign states. 3 He advocated a "reciprocal iron curtain", or strip of inviolable territory between the two countries, but Stresemann, while professing willingness to accept such a plan, doubted that France would do so. 4

The idea of a mutual pact was little discussed in the Foreign Office, and D’Abernon was warned in several letters to go slow on the subject of security. Lampson suggested in one minute that a possible eventual solution might be a mutual non-aggression treaty to be signed by Germany and her neighbours, but he added that he had not thought out the idea at all and - a necessary qualification during MacDonald’s tenure of office - it had the serious disadvantage of involving a military commitment. 5 The Foreign Office viewed the idea of a mutual pact with mild approval, little interest and no urgency.

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1 Sub-committee minutes, 19 Dec. 1924, Cab.16/56. Its members were Hankey, Crowe, Sir Henry Lambert of the Colonial Office and Sir Arthur Hirtzel of the India Office.
2 Ambassador, iii, pp. 73-74 (diary, 8 June 1924).
3 Ambassador, iii, p. 74 (diary, 16 June 1924).
4 Ambassador, iii, p. 101 (diary, 14 Sept. 1924).
5 Minute, 16 April 1924, F.0.371/9813, 05815/1346/18.
MacDonald himself was too interested in world-wide arrangements to concern himself with such an Anglo-Franco-German treaty, preferable though it would be to an old-style treaty aimed against Germany. Probably, if he had remained in office and had felt obliged to reject the Protocol as he had rejected the Draft Treaty, he would have looked on it with more enthusiasm.

Chamberlain was determined to rebuild the Anglo-French alliance, and any question of including Germany in a Western pact was to be postponed indefinitely until this first aim had been achieved.

D'Abernon's main objectives were to prevent France from increasing further her already excessive power in Europe and to prevent Germany from veering towards Russia. These could best be achieved by reintegrating Germany in Western Europe. So while MacDonald's grandiose visions of world harmony were from his point of view no more than a tiresome irrelevance, Chamberlain's fondness for an alliance with France, aimed implicitly against Germany, was a positive threat. He set to work to forestall such an alliance, and despite initial appearances to the contrary, events were to move in his favour.

Towards the end of 1924 a new and important problem brought to an end the improvement in Anglo-Franco-German relations which had been gaining ground for almost a year — the question of the evacuation of the Cologne occupation zone.

The Rhineland occupation, to which Lloyd George had agreed in 1919 only with great reluctance and after a prolonged rear-guard action, was seen in Britain as an awkward, costly and embarrassing responsibility. Most of the British troops were stationed in the first occupation zone, the Cologne district, which was due to be evacuated at the beginning of 1925 if Germany was found to have disarmed to the extent laid down by the Treaty of Versailles. It was generally and eagerly expected that after this date Britain's physical commitment in Europe would be minimal. Until the Ruhr crisis Britain had been satisfied with the scale of German disarmament. At the beginning of 1921 Kilmarnock wrote to Curzon "I see no reason to differ from the opinion, which I understand is entertained by the British military authority, that the disarmament of

1 The Koblenz zone would be evacuated in 1930 and Mainz in 1935.
Germany has been such as effectively to accomplish the aims of the Entente Powers", and in March 1923 it was announced that the British representative on the Allied Control Commission was convinced that Germany had effectively disarmed. MacDonald even told his cabinet that he wanted to wind up the Control Commission if this could be done without provoking a breach with France, and the Foreign Office, which also wanted to get rid of it as soon as possible, saw it as a source of expense and political friction. There was a general desire to withdraw British troops and the control commissioners if this could be done without violating treaty responsibilities.

As the date of evacuation, 10 January 1925, drew near, the British military authorities began to show themselves more exacting and became increasingly dissatisfied with the extent of German disarmament. In December the Chief of the Imperial General Staff concluded that the Germans had not disarmed sufficiently, and that they should fulfil their treaty obligations before any concessions should be made to them in the question of Rhineland evacuation.

The Foreign Office was angry at this decision, aware that it would provoke an indignant outburst in Germany and probably lead to a crisis in her relations with the allies, but it could not dispute with the War Office in its own sphere of competence, and there was little doubt that the Germans had not disarmed to the extent laid down by the Treaty. The Foreign Office confined itself to grumbling and to blaming the Germans for provoking such a situation, to hoping that the embarrassing incident would soon blow over and that the necessary further disarmament would be carried out so that Britain could evacuate Cologne in the near future.

2 Statement by Lt. Col. Guinness (Under Secretary of State for War), 22 March 1923, Hansard, 5s., HC, 161, col. 2746. Crowe had no such illusions, and wrote a few months later "it is the recorded opinion of all the allied authorities that it is in practice quite impossible to prevent her from re-constituting a formidable force, more or less surreptitiously, and that preparations for so doing are undoubtedly in existence" (memorandum, 25 June 1923, Crowe papers, F.O.800/243, 2).
3 Cabinet conclusions, 18 June 1924, Cab.23/48, Cab.38(24)1.
5 Early in 1925 Lampson, again expressing his distaste for British involvement, wrote "real and effective control of the disarmament of Germany is an impossibility" (minute, 2 Jan. 1925, F.O.371/9820, C18874/2048/18).
The French viewed the question far more seriously - the Reichswehr's refusal to cooperate in disarmament could not be taken so lightly in the Quai d'Orsay as in the Foreign Office. The retention of allied troops on the Rhine had a considerable psychological importance for France since they were the only reliable and effective guarantee of her security. It was in her interest that Germany should be found in default and that the allied occupation of Cologne be extended. No-one said so, but it was commonly accepted that if France had some other form of security, a guarantee pact perhaps, occupation of the first zone would no longer be so important, and France might be inclined to take a more generous view of Germany's inadequate disarmament.

Although French politicians and diplomats denied any connection between their wish for security and the non-evacuation of Cologne, and insisted that the latter was a purely military and technical question,¹ the British and German governments rightly took such a connection for granted. They feared that even after disarmament had been carried out to Britain's satisfaction, France could avail of the tiniest infringements of the Treaty to stay in Cologne indefinitely.

Once the seriousness of the danger that the allied occupation of the Cologne zone might be prolonged after January 1925 was appreciated in Berlin, its evacuation became the principal aim of German foreign policy.² Towards the end of 1924 the Wilhemstrasse and the German embassies in London and Paris engaged in frantic discussions on how to deal with the impending crisis. While there was determined opposition to the idea of linking security and evacuation, it was realized that since the Anglo-American guarantee pact had fallen through and the question of the extent of Germany's disarmament was now in question, occupation of the Rhineland was the only form

¹ Only on 28 Jan. 1925 did Herriot declare openly that the occupation of Cologne was linked with the security question and with the failure of the 1919 guarantee pact (Débats Parlementaires, Chambre, 28 Jan. 1925, p. 365).
² Chancellor Marx described it as the central point of future German policy (cabinet minutes, 4 Dec. 1924, BA, R 43 I/1397) and Schubert, soon to succeed Maltzan as state secretary, wrote that it was just as important as the solution of the reparations and Ruhr questions had been (memorandum, 11 Nov. 1924, AA, SS, Raumung I Zone, I).
of security left to France, and that the two questions would probably be connected. Hoesch recommended closer contact with France, and also that Germany try to secure British support; he thought that Britain might want a positive answer (i.e. an early evacuation) and so put pressure on France.

The fate of the Geneva Protocol was bound up with the evacuation of Cologne. Hoesch drew attention to the dangers of the recent Conservative victory in the British elections, pointing out that the French saw the Protocol as a measure of security, the Conservative government was less likely to ratify it than its Labour predecessor, France would feel even more insecure, and she would be more inclined to insist that the allied troops continue their occupation. In a later dispatch, after repeating that France would evacuate Cologne only when a substitute for the Anglo-American pact had been found since the Herriot government dare not make concessions on the security question, he admitted that he saw no solution to the problem. He still looked to Britain as a possible ally. No-one else on the German side had any realistic proposals to make, and an air of fatalism set in.

D'Abernon, too, was at a loss. Distressed at the turn events were taking and at the prospect that the goodwill resulting from the settlement of the reparations question at the London Conference might evaporate, he was able to do no more than suggest, as a compromise, that both Cologne and the Ruhr be evacuated in May 1925. Shortly before Christmas he had a conversation with Schubert in which he stressed the urgency of finding a solution and showed himself willing to do whatever he could to bring one about, but gave the impression of not knowing how to begin. He confined himself to repeating his idea of evacuating both Cologne and the Ruhr at the same time.

1 As early as 11 Nov. 1924 Schubert emphasized the importance of French disappointment over the failure of the Anglo-American guarantee treaty, and insisted with fervour that the two questions be kept separate (memorandum by Schubert describing a conversation with D'Abernon, AA, SS, Räumung I Zone, I).
2 Hoesch to AA, 6 Nov. 1924, AA, Akten betreffend Frankreich IV.
3 Hoesch to AA, 1 Nov. 1924, AA, Akten betreffend England III.
4 Hoesch to AA, 11 Dec. 1924, AA, SS, Räumung I Zone, I.
5 Memorandum by Schubert, 18 Nov. 1924, describing a conversation with D'Abernon, AA, SS, Räumung I Zone, I.
6 Memorandum by Schubert, 22 Dec, 1924, describing a conversation with D'Abernon, AA, SS, Räumung I Zone I.
As it grew steadily more probable that the zone would not be evacuated according to schedule, public opinion in all three countries became excited on the issue, and in Britain as well as in Germany the final decision was awaited with some trepidation. Finally the expected happened. On 27 December the Conference of Ambassadors, the body formally responsible for applying the Treaty, announced that Cologne would not be evacuated in January.¹ The German cabinet held a meeting at which Stresemann, deeply disappointed, declared that this decision meant the bankruptcy of the conciliatory policy which had been pursued since the London Conference, and suggested that the three ministers mainly responsible for this policy, himself, Chancellor Marx and Finance Minister Luther, should resign.²

On the same day, 29 December, D'Alberton suggested to Schubert that the Germans should consider reviving the Cuno proposal of two years earlier. He made no mention of how far this idea might be followed, but reminded Schubert how preferable a mutual pact would be to either the Geneva Protocol or an Anglo-Franco-Belgian agreement, that America was in a much stronger position than in 1922, and that Cuno's proposal had been well received there. The referendum clause should be dropped.³

At first this suggestion met with little success and at one point it seemed even to have worsened the situation, but it was to start a chain of events which would end by solving not only the immediate problem of the Cologne occupation, but also the long-term question of French security. Not long before Stresemann had complained that the question of an Anglo-French pact was not yet settled, and that "auch hier wieder seien wir Objekt der Politik der anderen" ⁴ The Cuno proposal

¹ Salewski, Entwaffnung und Militärkontrolle, p. 285, n. 27;
² Cabinet minutes, 29 Dec. 1924, BA, R 43 I/1397. The Marx government fell shortly afterwards, and Luther became chancellor in January.
³ Memorandum by Schubert, 29 Dec. 1924, describing a conversation with D'Alberton, AA, SS, Sicherheitspakt I.
⁴ Cabinet minutes, 20 Dec. 1924, BA, R 43 I/1397. At a later cabinet meeting on the very day D'Alberton made his proposal to Schubert, Stresemann went further. He declared pessimistically that "man müsse abwarten, welche von beiden Ansichten, die englische oder die französische den Sieg davon trage. Dabei müsse man bedanken, dass Frankreich auf England wenig Rücksicht zu nehmen brauche, während England infolge innerer Schwierigkeiten in Indien, Egypten usw. darauf angewiesen sei, es mit Frankreich nicht zu verbinden" (minutes, 29 Dec. 1924, BA, R 43 I/1397).
which D'Abernon revived was to achieve his and Stresemann's great aim of ending this passivity and enabling Germany to become once more an active participant in European diplomacy.

On 27 December Sthamer reported a conversation with the British journalist George Glasgow, in which Glasgow discussed with remarkable accuracy the views of the leading members of the British cabinet on the security question. According to this account, Chamberlain was inclined to give France a guarantee treaty if necessary, but Baldwin, Churchill, Curzon and Birkenhead would oppose such a step and were warming towards the idea of a triangular agreement between Britain, France and Germany in which Germany as well as France would be able to feel secure. This was noted by Stresemann. But there is no evidence that the German government would have followed up this suggestion without D'Abernon's intervention, and despite later claims that the Wilhelmstrasse was already thinking along the same lines, at the time his authorship of the idea was acknowledged fully. Even before Germany passed on the proposal to Britain Stresemann was to refer to "Lord D'Abernon's suggestion of the resumption of the Cuno pact's basic ideas".

After an interval of two weeks Schubert suggested that the matter be pursued further, and D'Abernon agreed eagerly. They discussed a series of headings or comments which Schubert had prepared, and D'Abernon repeated that Germany should revive the Cuno proposal, slightly modified, as soon as possible; other alternative solutions to the security such as a control commission or neutralization of the Rhineland he dismissed as impossible. He assured the sceptical Schubert that America could be brought into the pact, though in this he was hardly honest - in his diary only a week later he wrote that he had

1 Sthamer to AA, 27 Dec. 1924, AA, SS, Räumung I Zone, I. Glasgow was reported as believing, wrongly, that not even the Foreign Office was in favour of a guarantee treaty with France alone. Stresemann's initials are not on the file, but the section of the letter referred to above was underlined in blue pencil, which no-one but he was allowed to use.

2 For instance, Stresemann later told Brockdorff-Rantzau in Moscow that the idea had been in the air for some time before D'Abernon's suggestion, but a marginal note indicated Brockdorff-Rantzau's scepticism (Stresemann to Brockdorff-Rantzau, 19 March 1925, Ruge (ed.), Locarno-Konferenz, p. 73. The documents cited in the Ruge volume are those from the German embassy in Moscow - hence the ambassador's minute.

3 Stresemann to Hoesch, 19 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I.

4 Memorandum by Schubert, 14 Jan. 1925, describing a conversation with D'Abernon, AA, SS, Sicherheitspakt I.
always thought American participation was impractical. He also suggested that the mutual pact proposal be sent to London only, and not to Paris as well, but Schubert was afraid that this would give it the appearance of a move against France.

Others were uncertain about some of D'Abernon's advice. Gauss was unenthusiastic about the Cuno pact; Germany would have no objection to reviving it, but even without the plebiscite clause it would be a "ganz blutleere Zusicherung" which would be unlikely to impress the allies. Its only strength lay in the possibility that America could be induced to take an active part, but like Schubert he thought this unlikely. So did Stresemann, though Hoesch felt that American participation was not essential.

Stresemann shared Schubert's doubts about making the proposal to Britain alone and ignoring France - France was Germany's real negotiating partner, and Britain was more likely to side with her than with Germany. However he believed firmly that an agreement between France and Germany alone would be impossible, and that any solution would be dependent on British participation. D'Abernon's proposals were taken seriously - as Stresemann told Hoesch, "it is hardly possible that Lord D'Abernon has negotiated entirely on his own initiative and without having been instructed to do so by his government". If the British government had ordered D'Abernon to encourage the Germans to propose such a mutual security pact they must have had a good reason for doing so.

1 Ambassador, iii, p. 124 (diary, 21 Jan. 1925).
2 Gauss to Bülow, 12 Jan. 1925, AA, SS, Sicherheitspakt I.
3 Stresemann to Hoesch, 15 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I.
4 Hoesch to AA, 16 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I.
5 Stresemann to Hoesch, 15 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I.
6 Stresemann to Hoesch, 15 & 27 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I. Hoesch, referring to the dazzling successes of the German government in late 1924, wrote that it should not be forgotten "dass diese Erfolge zu einem erheblichen Teil dadurch errungen sind, dass Frankreich durch den moralischen Druck der Welt unter Führung Englands zum Nachgeben bewogen wurde" (to AA, 6 Nov. 1924, AA, Polit. Abt. IV, Akten betreffend Frankreich II).
7 Stresemann to Hoesch, 15 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I. But Stresemann was not altogether convinced, and a few days later he told Stahmer that it was not certain whether D'Abernon was acting on his own initiative or on his government's instructions (19 Jan. 1925, Locarno-Konferenz, p. 47).
had little to lose and perhaps much to gain by following the ambassador's advice.

In fact D'Abernon was acting on his own, as St. Aulaire had been three years earlier, Chamberlain and the Foreign Office had no idea of the steps which he was inciting the German government to take, and even after Locarno Chamberlain, while he had his suspicions, did not know just how dependent on D'Abernon's advice the German initiative had been.¹

So on 20 January 1925, one day after the new Luther government had been formed in Berlin, D'Abernon was able to send Chamberlain a formal German memorandum in which the government sought "advice as to the best way of bringing the German attitude to the Allies' knowledge".² The note suggested that it might be easier to solve the evacuation and disarmament questions if they were linked to security – thus emphasizing the obvious fact that the proposal was designed to solve a problem other than French security, just as the Cuno plan and its successors had been.³ The countries interested in the Rhine, especially France, Britain, Germany and Italy, could enter into a solemn obligation to America as trustee not to wage war against a contracting state, and this could be combined with a comprehensive arbitration treaty. Germany was ready to sign arbitration treaties with all countries, she would accept formally the present territorial status on the Rhine,⁴ and she would again confirm the demilitarization of the Rhineland. Only Stresemann, Luther and high officials in the Wilhelmstrasse knew of the memorandum's existence.

D'Abernon had seen that the calamity of the non-evacuation of Cologne might be put to good account. He used the Germans'...
dismay and resentment to persuade them to reach their objective by a roundabout means, by a mutual guarantee pact of the sort which had been rejected so often before. This would also have the advantage of providing an alternative to the Anglo-French alliance which he dreaded. In launching the proposal D'Abernon had played an essential part in solving the security question. But once the German note reached London the initiative passed from his hands to Chamberlain's, and the vicissitudes which the project of a mutual pact underwent in the course of the next two months centred on the foreign secretary and his cabinet colleagues.

Chamberlain was more interested in the security question than any other politician. He believed that it dominated the policy of all the Continental European states, and that until it was solved there was no chance of their being able to resume normal relations with each other. His lifelong French sympathies and his experiences as one of the leading figures in Lloyd George's government, when he had to help face the consequences of the failure of the Paris and Cannes guarantee treaties, had led him to think solely in terms of an Anglo-French pact, which he saw as an essential prerequisite to any genuine return to normalcy.

He was convinced that unless France were given a sense of security Britain would lose all influence over her policy and it would be impossible to retain her friendship. "French fears, goading France to every kind of irritating folly, will keep alive German hatred and lead us, inevitably, sooner or later, to a new catastrophe". Unless Britain guaranteed France, Germany would think she could divide the allies or challenge them with success, and she would be encouraged to prepare for a new war of revenge.

Chamberlain realized that he would meet serious problems in trying to realize his objective of an Anglo-French pact since British and Dominion public opinion had lost much of their wartime sympathy for France. He admitted that he could see no solution, and threw out, as one possible answer to the problem, the idea of an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact which could be followed by a quadruple pact, including Germany.

1 Minute by Chamberlain, 4 Jan. 1925, F.O.371/11064, C362/9/98. This minute gives an excellent summary of Chamberlain's views.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
eventual inclusion of Germany would lessen criticism that Britain was backing the unpopular French policy towards Germany and was thereby helping to perpetuate the pre-war division of Europe into hostile alliances, while it would still put her relations with France on a far closer footing than those with Germany and would effectively maintain the Entente. It was a very different solution to that which D'Abernon had already proposed to the German government and which they in turn were shortly to propose to Chamberlain.

Crowe, too, thought in terms of an Anglo-French pact, and the general tone of the Foreign Office was more Francophile than it had been at any time since the war. Opinions varied as to whether French apprehensions of German aggression were rational or foolish, but no-one doubted that they were genuine or that they must be eliminated as soon as possible. Germany's role was, as usual, that of the once and future enemy.

So when the German note was received it was welcomed as "a move in a good direction", and as a proposal which should be examined carefully, but it was not in accordance with Chamberlain's and the Foreign Office's policy and was on the whole treated coolly. Bennett, who favoured the idea of a mutual pact and regarded it as preferable to a separate treaty directed against Germany, commented that before any such plan could be considered seriously, Germany must first show her goodwill by concluding her disarmament. Lampson, who saw no reason why such a mutual non-aggression pact should not be accepted, qualified his support by remarking that no treaty which included France and Germany on equal terms would be possible until Britain had disposed of the security question and of the Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact.

Chamberlain told Stamer that the time was not yet ripe for a move of this sort - "such proposals for a German pact or treaty of guarantee could not be usefully discussed until the British attitude towards the Geneva Protocol, and, in particular, to the question of French security, had been defined". He did not exclude the possibility of such an arrangement.

1 Minute by Crowe, 14 Jan. 1925, F.O.371/10726, C459/459/18. He consoled himself that the danger against which the pact would be directed was remote.
"at the proper time", but he felt that this lay in the future.\textsuperscript{1} One Foreign Office minute after another repeated this attitude.

The German memorandum was regarded as premature because other urgent problems had not yet been settled. Yet it was precisely to forestall an unfavourable settlement of these problems, of the negotiation of a pact which would guarantee French security and the evacuation of the Cologne zone,\textsuperscript{2} that Germany had taken the initiative. As Stresemann later put it, a settlement without Germany was a settlement against Germany.\textsuperscript{3}

After damning the D'Abernon-Stresemann proposal with faint praise and scant interest the Foreign Office returned to its preoccupation with an Anglo-French pact in which German participation was no more than a desirable appendage. The proposal had fallen flat.

Even Hankey, who had been a severe critic of the 1919 and 1922 treaties, rallied to the idea of a separate pact with France. All his old objections remained, but he had come to appreciate more fully what a menace France would be if she were to be at war with Britain, and he wanted to be on as friendly terms with her as possible. An Anglo-French pact seemed to him to be the easiest way in which Britain could secure herself against both German and French aggression. The Geneva Protocol had raised French expectations, and it would now be more difficult than ever before to leave her with nothing. He felt it was possible that "the astute French politicians" had always had in mind the idea of using the Protocol as a means of acquiring a pact, yet believed that such a treaty with France alone would be far less dangerous than the Protocol.\textsuperscript{4}

The C.I.D. sub-committee under his chairmanship which advocated the rejection of the Protocol also recommended an

\textsuperscript{1} Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 30 Jan. 1925, describing a conversation with Stahmer, F.O.371/10727, C1454/459/18. Chamberlain had been ill - hence the delay in his reaction.
\textsuperscript{2} There were widespread fears in Berlin that Britain would try to achieve a compromise according to which the allies would evacuate Cologne in the near future, but that in other spheres concessions would be made to France at Germany's expense. In mentioning this danger to Brockdorff-Rantzau Stresemann gave as an example the permanent stationing of a League control force in the Rhineland (6 March 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt II).
\textsuperscript{3} Reichstag speech, 18 May 1925, Diaries, ii, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{4} Memorandum by Hankey, 23 Jan. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O. 800/257.
Anglo-French pact, though one which might eventually be expanded to include Germany. ¹ Only three days after the German note was handed over, Crowe, on the instructions of this sub-committee, drafted an Anglo-Franco-Belgian treaty in which Germany's implicit role was that of the probable aggressor. ² Crowe later reported that he had told Baldwin "the first thing to do is to get clear about the Anglo-French pact before we proceed with the problem how to bring Germany into a wider combination", and he received the impression that the prime minister shared this view. ³ The forces, the army in particular, remained staunch in their support of a link with France. ⁴

Never before had there been such unanimity in favour of an Anglo-French guarantee treaty, and it must have seemed to D'Abernon, growing more and more anxious as time went on, that his initiative would be unable to prevent a pact with France and might even have as its only result a further unnecessary rebuff to Germany. Word from London indicated that the memorandum which he had inspired had succeeded in arousing suspicion in official circles - though this was to a considerable extent his own fault - and he found it "difficult to know how to bring them round". ⁵

The Germans resented Britain's lack of interest. Schubert wrote to Sthamer that they could not afford to wait too long, and that a delay or an unfavourable response from London would make difficulties in forwarding the proposal to Paris. ⁶ The Wilhelmstrasse revived its earlier doubts about the wisdom of sending the memorandum first to Britain and then to France instead of to both countries simultaneously. ⁷ Stresemann even

1 C.I.D. sub-committee report, 23 Jan. 1925, Cab.24/172, C.P. 105(25). France's concern with Poland's frontiers was mentioned, and the sub-committee assumed that a pact with Germany would cover her Eastern as well as her Western borders, so that if she were included, Britain would risk being involved in war if Russia attacked Germany.


5 Ambassador, iii, p. 137 (diary, 5 Feb. 1925).

6 24 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I.

7 As the Germans had expected and as they had warned D'Abernon, the British became suspicious when the note of 20 Jan. was sent to London alone, and thought that the Germans might be trying to divide the allies. These suspicions were intensified when, in February, a second note was handed over to the French government and the French were requested not to (continued)
told D'Abernon that since the German note did not seem to be welcomed or properly appreciated he was inclined to postpone discussing it, or even to abandon it altogether. Yet even though Britain had certainly not given any constructive advice as to how the Germans' attitude should be brought to the allies' attention, Stresemann decided that he might as well continue his advance rather than retreat, and on 9 February a note similar to that given to D'Abernon on 20 January was handed over to the French government.  

Herriot acknowledged the German proposal, promised to consider it, and did nothing more than keep it in reserve while he waited and hoped for British ratification of the Protocol and, far more important, for British willingness to conclude a guarantee pact against Germany. Stresemann, disappointed by the reaction of Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, waited on a decision from Paris, while Herriot and the Quai d'Orsay waited in turn on a decision from London.  

When the British government finally made up its mind the results were dramatic, gratifying to Stresemann and D'Abernon, disappointing to Herriot and Chamberlain. A combination of the isolationist and anti-French ministers in the cabinet roundly defeated Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, rejected the idea of an Anglo-French pact, and gave the Cuno proposal a new lease of life.

1 D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 29 Jan. 1925, describing a conversation with Stresemann, F.O.371/10727, C1416/459/18. On the same day he also telegraphed that while this reason was probably genuine, it might have been precipitated by cabinet opposition (to Chamberlain, F.O.371/10727, C1372/459/18). Lampson remarked that this reaction justified Britain's caution, as if it were not this caution which had provoked the reaction (minute, 30 Jan. 1925, F.O.371/10727, C1372/459/18). Chamberlain saw it as proof of his view that the move had been premature (to D'Abernon, 3 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O.800/257).

2 The main difference between the two notes was that the second made a gesture towards the Geneva Protocol, a step no longer necessary in Britain since the defeat of the Labour government.
The Foreign Office continued to show great interest in French fears and little in the German offer, but there was an influential group in the cabinet which was opposed to any pact with France and wanted a more general settlement of Europe which would not run the risk of alienating Germany. Steel-Maitland, the Minister of Labour, summed up a widespread attitude when he suggested that Chamberlain encourage the Belgians to tell Herriot that the German proposals gave France the opportunity of getting from Britain "by way of a quadrilateral agreement the British guarantee of French security which France may not otherwise extract from her". 1 Churchill was the most influential advocate of an agreement which would feature Germany as a partner rather than as a likely enemy. 2

The extent of the ministerial hostility to the Anglo-French pact favoured by Chamberlain and the Foreign Office became clear at a meeting of the C.I.D. which took place on 13 February, only a few days after the German plan had been passed on to France. 3 The main topic on the agenda was the Geneva Protocol, but since there was general agreement that this could not be accepted much of the discussion centred on what alternative, if any, should be offered to France.

Chamberlain found himself in a minority and was soon forced on the defensive by critics of an Anglo-French alliance. His opponents could not agree among themselves on what they wanted — for instance Birkenhead was quite prepared to accept a wider pact which would include Germany, while Amery proposed a narrower one, confined to Belgium and Luxembourg 4 — but they, and most of the rest of the C.I.D., shared a distaste for an Anglo-French or an Anglo-Franco-Belgian treaty.

1 Steel-Maitland to Chamberlain, 2 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O. 800/257
2 The previous month he had told the French president, Doumergue, that he thought "the English people would feel that the risk attaching to a pact based on an effective arrangement with Germany was far less than a mere renewal of a defensive relationship while the fundamental antagonism between France and Germany continued unappeased" (memorandum by Churchill, 11 Jan. 1925, F.O. 371/10727, C1787/459/18).
4 Birkenhead was prepared to consider a revival of the 1839 guarantee of Belgian neutrality on the curious ground that having broken her word once on this matter, Germany would be unlikely to break it again. He admitted to, and Amery revealed, an ignorance of European affairs. Both ministers were of the sort whose interference in foreign policy Curzon would have damned had he still been foreign secretary and had he not valued their support against Chamberlain.
Curzon, who retained all his old opposition to a French alliance and who, as chairman, directed the discussion, led the attack. He queried Chamberlain's references to French insecurity and pointed out that she was in no danger for the time being. He suggested that France's emphasis on her obsession was a means of putting pressure on Britain, and later, towards the end of the discussion after Chamberlain had backed down and had adopted a less Francophile stance, he argued that there would be great difficulty in securing public support for a treaty such as that which had been offered at Cannes. He was strongly in favour of a pact which would include Germany, believing that this "would disarm suspicion to a very wide extent indeed, and might provide the basis of an agreement".

Balfour also emphasized the unpopularity of a pact with the French whom he described as "rather insane" and unable to manage their own affairs, and he thought that it would be enough for Britain to pledge that she would always be ready to enter into some arrangement with France and that they should wait until the danger became real. He felt it was ludicrous to promise to fight a war in twenty years time.

The most powerful and most positive criticism came from Churchill. He explained his conversion from a pro-French attitude in 1922 as a result of his experiences of the Poincaré years, and even of French policy under Herriot.¹ These had made him aware of the dangers of being involved in a policy which would perpetuate Franco-German antagonism. It was not enough to make a pact à deux with France, but if Britain could bring about a real peace between France and Germany it would be worth her while to involve herself in their affairs. He concluded that Britain should not give way to French demands, but should join as a partner or guarantor in a tripartite agreement.²

Chamberlain had begun his remarks by stressing the reality of French apprehensions and the necessity of dealing with them, claiming that as long as France remained frightened there was

¹ As he reminded the committee, in 1922 he had favoured making good the guarantee pact in return for which France had abandoned her demand for the separation of the Rhineland in 1919.
² Churchill went on to favour British participation in a "real peace" involving allied withdrawal from the Rhineland and a substantial rectification of Germany's Eastern frontiers. Balfour reacted strongly against this idea.
no chance of pacifying Europe. As the meeting progressed and its anti-French tone became more pronounced he was thrown on the defensive, and he was glad to seize the opening which Churchill's speech had given him. The idea of a mutual treaty including Germany had not repelled his colleagues as much as his own preferred Anglo-French pact, and in his later remarks he showed more sympathy for such an arrangement than he had ever done before. He suggested that the difference between his own stand and Churchill's was not so great, and he went on "I think you could perhaps work it on his principle that it shall not be a simple Franco-British or Franco-British-Belgian guarantee, but that it shall be we three and Germany guaranteeing the western frontiers of France. That, after all, is the proposal which Stresemann first made in secret to D'Abernon and now makes in secrecy to France".

This was a sudden and forcible conversion.¹

He reminded his colleagues that no British government would ever fight for the Polish Corridor, if that alone were in dispute,² and he made a significant concession to Germany by taking for granted that Stresemann's proposal was dependent on the allies evacuating Cologne. He reassured the C.I.D. that the Germans demanded no more than the evacuation of the first zone - Koblenz and Mainz would not be affected.

On Curzon's suggestion the C.I.D. decided that Chamberlain should prepare "a draft instrument showing how he would give effect to the tentative suggestion of an agreement between the British Empire, France, Belgium and Germany".

The following day Chamberlain wrote to Crewe that "in the circumstances of to-day" (perhaps meant more literally than Crewe could have realized) a guarantee of the French and Belgian Eastern frontiers would be more practical if Germany were associated with it. For this reason he attached "immense

¹ It was also an ironic development. Schubert had hoped that the offer of a tripartite pact would help Britain in her expected rejection of the Protocol by enabling her to point out to the existence of an alternative, a guarantee pact including Germany (Schubert to Sthamer, 24 Jan. 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I). Instead, the first use to which it was put was to help Chamberlain defend his project of a pact with France against C.I.D. members more sympathetic towards Germany than he himself.

² The next day, in a letter to Crewe, Chamberlain made his much-quoted reference to "the Polish corridor, for which no British government ever will or ever can risk the bones of a British grenadier" (14 Feb. 1925, Crewe papers, C/8).
importance to this new move on the part of the Luther Government". Crewe must have been surprised at such fervour in such a cause.

On 23 January, three days after the German note was handed to D'Abernon, Crowe had drafted an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact on the instructions of the Hankey sub-committee. On 17 February, four days after the meeting described above, he duly drafted "Suggestions for a Form of Declaration which might be signed by France, Belgium and Germany".

D'Abernon noted this change of mood with relief: "the German initiative regarding Security is no longer considered as inopportune, but as an event of cardinal importance".

The C.I.D. held the last of its four meetings on the Protocol and the security question on 19 February. Some other members of the committee expressed their opinions on the proposals for a guarantee pact. Cecil favoured a treaty including Germany; Cavan, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, opposed it; Hoare, the Secretary of State for Air, was personally in favour of doing nothing at all, but felt that if a commitment were necessary the population figures should be an argument against Britain tying herself to France and Belgium; while Worthington-Evans, Secretary of State for War, stressed public opposition to a pact with France and Belgium, but did not favour including Germany in the near future.

Churchill, more aggressive than in the discussion a week earlier, was all for blackmailing the French. He thought that France might be in a better frame of mind in two or three years time, and an opportunity might occur in which Britain would obtain a better or a more general solution; that continuing anxiety would make the French all the more anxious to obtain

1 Chamberlain to Crewe, 14 Feb., 1925, Crewe papers, C/8.
2 F.0.371/10731, C558/459/18. This draft marked a stage in modifying the Cuno proposal in the direction of the treaty which was finally negotiated in Locarno the following October. America was dropped as a guarantee, though there was as yet no mention of Britain as a replacement.
3 Ambassador, iii, pp. 141-42 (diary, 18 Feb., 1925).
4 Cab.247172, Cab.105(25). The first two meetings had been on 4 & 16 Dec. 1924. The Hankey sub-committee considered the question of the Protocol between the second and third meetings, and issued its report on 23 January.
British assistance, and it might be possible "to procure from the French concessions to Germany of a far more sweeping character".  

One striking aspect of the discussion was the defeatism, the lack of confidence in French power and the fear of Germany shown by several of those present. Hoare worried about the danger of Britain tying herself to "a Power that is getting weaker and weaker as Germany gets stronger and stronger", Trenchard also expressed anxiety lest Britain should be linked with a country going downhill continuously (a particularly interesting attitude since the air force was the only one of the services which displayed any anxiety about French strength), and Churchill feared that in a war with Germany Britain might be defeated since she no longer had Russia as an ally as she had had in 1914.

The atmosphere of the meeting was not quite so Francophobe as it had been a week before, and Chamberlain must have been encouraged to hold out for a more generous policy towards France. He assured the committee that an urgent decision on the security question was necessary, that Britain would meet difficulties immediately unless France got rid of her fears, that Herriot would stand on the letter of the Treaty and would never evacuate Cologne unless he obtained the security he wanted, and that the Cologne occupation was poisoning the whole situation. In the long term, British intervention could help bring to an end the unrest which dominated the Continent.

1 Chamberlain and Crowe were also ready to apply pressure. Chamberlain told Fleuriau that a moderate French attitude would do a great deal to remove the difficulties in the path of the British government, while "unreasonable insistence on small points or a constant succession of irritating incidents" would strengthen opposition to a pact (Chamberlain to Crewe, 20 Jan. 1925, describing a conversation with Fleuriau, F.O. 371/10726, C1001/459/18). This was a far more modest advance payment than had been contemplated in Curzon's time. Crowe thought it important that the question of French debts to Britain should not be settled before agreement had been reached on a pact and on the evacuation of Cologne. Once this question was out of the way, Britain would have no lever of any kind with which she could bring pressure to bear on France, "pressure which it may possibly be most useful to be able to exercise at a given moment" (Crowe to Chamberlain, 2 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O.300/257). Worthington-Evans also recommended seeking concessions, though in the questions of disarmament and inter-allied debts (memorandum, 27 Feb. 1925, Cab.24/172, C.P. 121(25).
She should help make Germany's position more tolerable so that her people would lose some of their bitterness and forget some of their humiliation, and that they might come to feel that they had too much to lose by going to war. Germany should also be deterred from challenging the status quo once she had recovered her strength by being made aware that she would face a most formidable opponent if she were to do so.

When Chamberlain was asked by Curzon what steps he had taken in drawing up a draft pact which would include Germany he was evasive, answering that while he had some drafts with him he did not wish to produce them as he thought it would not be very helpful to do so until he could see his way a little more clearly. One problem which he raised was that of whether Britain would be prepared to guarantee Germany's frontier against aggression, presumably by France, a matter in which her own interests and security were not affected directly. He showed no enthusiasm for a mutual pact.

The committee came to no decision, and the matter was referred to the cabinet. There, opposition to Chamberlain's policy was not confined to members of the C.I.D. - Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, abandoned a long-standing attitude to come out against the idea of a pact with France.

A few days after the C.I.D. meeting Churchill sent Chamberlain a letter in which he showed even greater respect for Germany's future strength, and even less confidence in the ability of France and Britain to defeat her, than he had shown before. He held that, if it came to the worst, Britain could stand alone. She would have more influence on France if she were independent and had to be won over. Once again he emphasized that France was not ready, not desperate enough, to make sufficiently drastic concessions: "we have not got sufficient bargaining power and leverage at the present time to produce any decisive modification of French policy as the price of a British guarantee". It was not the time for a pact with France. Britain should pledge her assistance in promoting Franco-German friendship, and when that had been achieved she could join in a triple agreement - "when France

1 Joynson-Hicks to Baldwin, 2 March 1925, Baldwin papers, 115.
2 One example which he used to illustrate French intransigence was the myth of Poincaré's rejection of Britain's offer of a guarantee pact after the Cannes Conference.
has made a real peace with Germany, Britain will seal the bond with all her strength." But it was clear from what he wrote that he was prepared to do little to bring this about.

Unaware of such views or else unimpressed by them, the Foreign Office continued its support of an Anglo-French pact. Lampson minuted that until Britain had made her arrangements with France and Belgium it would be a technical error to involve Germany. Nicolson wrote a lengthy memorandum on Britain's European policy, which Chamberlain described as "representing not only the personal opinion of the Secretary of State, but the considered view of the Foreign Office as a whole", in which he analysed the European situation, Germany's grievances and her probable future strength, France's fears of future invasion, and the significance of her steadily declining population. He noted indications that it would be "increasingly difficult for any French Government to evacuate the Rhineland unless and until they received some compensating guarantee" for French security, and he concluded that if France were not secured against the menace of German attack "she will be driven to expedients which in the end will only provoke the German revenge of which she stands in terror". It would be necessary for Britain's own defence for her to guarantee French and Belgian territory, and there was nothing to prevent "the eventual inclusion of Germany within the guarantees of security". Eventual inclusion was not what D'Abernon or Stresemann had in mind.

Lampson summed up the Foreign Office view when he wrote: "an agreement to include Germany from the outset is no doubt desirable: but to make such a suggestion to France in her present mood is to ask her to wreck the scheme....We should all of us welcome forthwith a comprehensive Pact including Germany: we here gravely doubt that it is possible before the first stage of an Anglo-Franco-Belgian arrangement has been gone through".

1 Churchill to Chamberlain, 23 Feb. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257.
2 16 Feb. 1925, F.0.371/10727, C2155/459/18. German participation would come later, when French public opinion was in a more receptive state.
4 Until France was quietened no Concert of Europe was possible, "and we can only quieten France if we are in the position to speak to her with the authority of an Ally".
But he concluded that the Foreign Office might be wrong, and that there were signs that Herriot was trying to educate his public opinion in the direction of a mutual pact.¹

D'Abernon kept up his pressure, and warned again that if a general pact were to supplement or be subordinated to an allied agreement, there would be little hope of German public opinion supporting Stresemann's initiative.² Crewe gave the other side of the case, reporting that the French were opposed to any pact which would include Germany and that Poincaré had claimed the Senate would be overwhelmingly against it,³ while Fleuriau, the new French ambassador, told Chamberlain that Britain, France and Belgium should first reach an agreement among themselves before dealing with Germany.⁴ Herriot himself was still ready to accept a pact including Germany,⁵ but even for him a treaty with Britain remained the ideal, a mutual pact was no more than a second best.

Despite the pressure by the C.I.D. members which had forced him to adopt a more favourable attitude towards German participation in a security pact than he had held until then, Chamberlain still thought in terms of an Anglo-French alliance, with any German participation coming later, after the allies had concluded an agreement between themselves. He withdrew to his earlier pro-French position, and told the Belgian ambassador that he did not think that Britain could proceed any further in negotiations with Germany, and that there would be no point in discussing the German plan until the more urgent

¹ Minute, 4 March 1925, F.0.371/10728, C3097/459/18.  
² D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 2 March 1925, F.0.371/10728, C3097/459/18. He had been told this by Schubert.  
³ Crewe to Chamberlain, 22 Feb. 1925, F.0.371/10727, C2259/459/18. Poincaré later described the Stresemann proposal to Phipps as "détéstable", and said that if Germany were allowed to discriminate between her Eastern and her Western frontiers she would be encouraged to violate the latter. Force was the only argument which Germany understood (Crewe to Chamberlain, 5 March 1925, F.0.371/10728, C3402/459/18).  
⁴ Chamberlain to Crewe, 24 Feb. 1925, describing a conversation with Fleuriau, F.0.371/10708, C2746/21/18. When D'Abernon told Schubert of Fleuriau's suggestion, Schubert wrote to Sthamer that the German government would have great difficulty in carrying through a general pact; if an allied pact, necessarily concluded against Germany, were first concluded, it would hardly be able to win public and parliamentary support for a separate treaty with the allies (13 March 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt I).  
⁵ Crewe to Chamberlain, 12 Feb. 1925, describing a conversation with Herriot, F.0.371/10703, C2113/2/18.
question of Cologne had been dealt with. In a memorandum entitled British Foreign Policy and the Question of Security he recommended an Anglo-French pact, and added that if this policy were to be rejected he did not know what other could be substituted for it. He never mentioned German participation. His favourable comments on the German note at the C.I.D. meeting had been a tactical retreat, not a genuine change of mind.

In Autumn 1924 the Labour government was at odds with the Foreign Office and the War Office because of the departments' advocacy of an Anglo-French treaty. In Spring 1925 it seemed that the situation would be repeated, since the new government, or at least its most powerful members, were equally inclined to reject the Foreign Office's policy. The main difference was that the foreign secretary, instead of being the strongest opponent of a guarantee treaty with France, was its strongest supporter.

Chamberlain's clash with the other ministers at the two C.I.D. meetings had left him well aware of the problems he would face, and in one letter he remarked that while he had got his policy clear and definite in his own mind he was uncertain whether he could carry his colleagues along with him.

The issue was finally settled at a cabinet meeting on 2 March. It was decided to reject the Protocol, and to send to the C.I.D. for its examination a "Rough Draft Formula on Security" which ruled out an Anglo-French or an Anglo-Franco-Belgian pact. However a quadrilateral pact including Germany, and, if possible, Italy as well, "for mutual security (and for guaranteeing each other's frontiers in the West of Europe) stands on a different footing and might become a great

1 Chamberlain to Grahame, 26 Feb. 1925, describing a conversation with Moncheur, F.O.371/10727, 02854/459/18. In the same conversation, however, he referred to the danger that Germany would throw in her lot with Russia, and he was afraid that to keep Germany at arm's length for too long might be to push her into the Russian embrace.
3 Chamberlain and his officials approved of each other. He wrote to his sister "the Foreign Office is very happy...They say that the Foreign Office view gets presented to the Cabinet and defended in Cabinet as it has not been for years, and that they are astonished at my 'grasp'" (1 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 5/1/347).
4 Chamberlain to his sister, ibid.
5 Cabinet conclusions, 2 March 1925, Ca.23/49, Cab.12(25)1 & Appx.
assurance to the peace of Europe and lead to a rapid reduction of armaments. Chamberlain was asked to prepare a formula on this basis for use in his talks with Herriot, and he was to be given "reasonable latitude for purposes of negotiation".

That was the end of all the discussions on an Anglo-French pact. Chamberlain wrote somewhat later to his wife that he was unable to do what he wanted to do, but that he had been authorized to try something much more difficult, although certainly more likely to meet with public approval. The result was a compromise between the two extremes, between Chamberlain and the Foreign Office who sought a French alliance, and the isolationists who wanted no European contacts whatsoever. By agreeing to consider seriously a treaty including both France and Germany, Britain would involve herself in European affairs, but she would not bind herself to any group or to any one country. It was a compromise which should please Stresemann, satisfy Chamberlain and be acceptable to Herriot. But it was not acceptable to some members of the cabinet, and a counter-attack was promptly launched against it.

Hankey objected to the possibility that Britain might have to protect Germany against France, and he went to Baldwin, Curzon and Balfour to protest against the cabinet decision. Curzon and Balfour, whom Hankey described as having been "much moved" by his arguments, went to discuss the matter with Chamberlain. Curzon declared himself opposed to the decision reached, claiming that at the cabinet meeting he had been caught off guard by not having been asked to open the discussion and that events had followed a path which he had not anticipated. Abandoning the policy he had favoured at the C.I.D. meetings he recommended a simple rejection of the Protocol, without proposing any alternative. Balfour showed himself even more hostile to a pact including Germany than to one without her.

1 10 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/602. Later he repeated that "the policy is not the one I first and most favoured" (to his wife, 15 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/603).

2 Hankey's diary, 22 March 1925, describing the events of 2-4 March, Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, ii, p. 396.

3 Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Nov. 1930, quoted in Johnson, Austen Chamberlain and the Locarno Treaty, University of Birmingham Historical Journal, viii (1961), pp. 73-74. The next day, 5 March, Curzon expressed his satisfaction to Hankey at having killed the four power guarantee pact (diary, 22 March 1925, Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, ii, p. 396).
The result was that at another cabinet meeting two days later Chamberlain had to make a further retreat. This second meeting decided that the "tentative and provisional" policy of 2 March was unsatisfactory, and in particular there was opposition to the clause specifying that, if necessary, Britain would defend Germany against an attack by France — the provision which had so offended Hankey. Chamberlain was authorized to tell Herriot that he attached the greatest importance to the German proposal and that it seemed to offer the best chance for giving security to France and peace to the world. To turn it down now would be to thrust Germany into the hands of Russia. He hoped, therefore, very much, that the proposals would be most carefully considered. It might be possible for the government to deal with opposition to a guarantee pact "if Germany were included in the proposed arrangement, though he could not offer any such hopes without Germany". British participation was desired, though Chamberlain was not entitled to agree to any particular formula. 1

Baldwin was not present at this meeting, and later told Crowe that the cabinet had gone much further than he would have approved, and that its instructions to Chamberlain had been far too rigid. 2 Hankey said that Chamberlain went to Paris with instructions "severely limiting his initiative and powers in the matter of the Four Power Pact". 3 But the authority given to him by the cabinet was clear enough, and while no promise to negotiate a pact had been made, a hope that opposition to it could be dealt with if Germany were included and the cabinet's declaration that it would "use their best endeavours to secure that such a project should not fail for want of British concurrence" amounted to a definite declaration of intent.

On his way to Geneva where he announced the British government's rejection of the Protocol at the League assembly on 12 March, Chamberlain met Herriot in Paris and told him the content of the speech he would make. Herriot was prepared for this news, but as Chamberlain reported, "what completely upset him was my announcement that no separate Anglo-Franco-Belgian

1 Cabinet conclusions, 4 March 1925, Cab.23/49, Cab.14(25)1; Chamberlain to Amery, 19 March 1925, summarizing the cabinet decisions, Baldwin papers, 132.
2 Crowe to Chamberlain, 12 March 1925, describing a conversation with Baldwin, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/240.
3 Diary, 22 March 1925, Roskill, Hankey, Man of Secrets, ii, p. 396.
pact was possible, in view of public opinion both at home and in the Dominions....His face turned very white and he looked suddenly a sick man".  

Herriot was highly suspicious of the German proposal and made several objections to it, complaining in particular that there was no mention of Belgium and that, while France had to care for Polish safety, a distinction was drawn between the frontiers of Western and Eastern Europe.  

Could not the allies first agree on the terms which they would propose to Germany for a quadrilateral pact? (Chamberlain accepted this in principle, provided that it did not result in two separate pacts.)

Chamberlain felt that while Herriot was prepared to try the alternative of a pact including Germany, he was already considering what France would be able to accomplish with Belgian, Polish and possibly Italian assistance, in Britain's absence. In his disappointment Herriot even said that the Treaty of Versailles would provide France with justifications for remaining permanently in Cologne. Chamberlain was most alarmed at such a prospect, since it would be a sure guarantee of further disputes between France and Germany, and also because it would harden the views of those sections of British public opinion which were opposed to a pact.

His reluctance at having to give such a distasteful message to the French made him react violently against a

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1 Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 March 1925, describing a conversation with Herriot, Chamberlain papers, F.O.800/257. Herriot did not contradict Chamberlain's statement that even if Britain had accepted the Protocol, this would not have given France the security she needed.

2 Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 March 1925, describing a conversation with Herriot, F.O.371/10728, C3367 & 3368/459/18. Foch's reaction was naturally stronger. For him the German proposals were "but the thin end of the wedge, which, if admitted, would burst asunder all the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles one after the other. First the Polish corridor would disappear; and then Czechoslovakia and Austria would readily follow" (memorandum by Phipps, 11 March 1925, describing a conversation with Foch, F.O.371/10728, C2531/459/18.) For Poincaré's views, see above, p. 224, n. 3.

3 On this point at least Chamberlain agreed with the Germans. He drew a sharp distinction between East and West: "I would say broadly that in Western Europe we are a partner; that, comparatively speaking, in Eastern Europe our role should be rather that of a disinterested amicus curiae" (minute, 21 Feb. 1925, F.O.371/11064, W1252/9/98).

4 Chamberlain to Crowe, 7 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O. 800/257.
dispatch from Berlin in which D'Abernon suggested that Germany had offered everything that could reasonably be asked of her, and that more should not be demanded. He retorted that unless Germany advanced with every step which Britain took, unless she were pressed as hard as France, the negotiations would fail. A telegram was sent to D'Abernon with Baldwin's approval, telling him to take a tougher line with the Germans, and he was soon able to report that they would give the desired precision to their proposals. The Foreign Office officials were also suspicious of Germany and adopted a highly critical attitude towards her. Lampson minuted that unless Germany at once declared herself ready to apply for unqualified membership of the League "she automatically knocks out any prospect of a quadruple arrangement including herself and France". Having been obliged against their inclinations to be firm with France, they were in no mood to be indulgent towards Germany.

Chamberlain had warned Herriot against taking independent action, and specifically against continuing the occupation of Cologne without good reason. He threatened that if this were to happen public opinion might compel the British government to withdraw its occupying forces, leaving only French and Belgian troops on the Rhine. Limited in his freedom of manoeuvre by the cabinet instructions of 4 March, he sought guidance as to whether he could safely continue to use this threat and he wrote to Crowe asking him to find out, through Baldwin, the cabinet's views on such a withdrawal.

In his conversation with the prime minister Crowe was critical of this idea, feeling that Chamberlain had put it forward in the hope that it would be turned down but would yet indicate to the cabinet the seriousness of the situation, and he tried to persuade Baldwin to allow Chamberlain to agree to the principle of separate but simultaneous pacts.

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1 Chamberlain to Crowe, 9 March 1925, F.O. 371/10728, C3376/459/18. He feared that in the atmosphere of Berlin D'Abernon might "wholly misconceive" the situation.
3 To Chamberlain, 12 March 1925, F.O. 371/10728, C3664/459/18.
5 7 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.O. 800/257. He pointed out that British troops had remained in the Rhineland despite Britain's violent opposition to the French occupation of the Ruhr.
Baldwin felt unable to take such a decision on his own since it conflicted with the most recent cabinet ruling, and he called a conference of several of the leading ministers, including Birkenhead, Churchill, Cecil and Amery, to discuss the matter.¹

At this meeting Chamberlain's opponents in the cabinet made a last attack on the principle of a guarantee pact, even against one including Germany. Crowe wrote a near-hysterical letter to Chamberlain describing what had happened in the first part of the discussion before he was asked to leave.²

According to Crowe, Churchill saw no reason to do anything at all - France "could be left to stew in her own juice" and in a few years she would allow Britain to impose anything whatever on her. There was no danger of a breach; "France would ask for things, we should refuse them, and everyone would be perfectly happy". Amery "as usual dilated on the impossibility of doing anything".³ Salisbury and Hoare favoured a unilateral declaration of Britain's interests, and Birkenhead came out firmly against any kind of pact, saying that the cabinet had never sanctioned one and arguing that the British people would not stand for a formal guarantee. Apart from Cecil, an ironic exception in view of his crusade for the Draft Treaty, his support of the Protocol and his previous hostility to a guarantee pact, the group agreed with Birkenhead that the government did not wish to participate in any guarantee treaty, but that if aggression were to take place Britain "might possibly consider the question whether they would give an undertaking to take part in any consultation as to what might be done". Baldwin said nothing. Crowe protested that the words of the cabinet decision of 4 March could not be interpreted other than as signifying willingness to conclude a guarantee pact, and that Chamberlain had so interpreted it in his conversation with Herriot. The prime minister interrupted him and asked him to leave the meeting.

¹ Curzon was not present. Already seriously ill, he died a week later. Crowe survived him by only a month.
² 12 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/240.
³ Throughout his letter Crowe was surprisingly frank. He went on "I confess I have never heard even Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in his most woolly-headed pronouncements, talk such utter rubbish as Mr. Amery poured forth", and he warned Chamberlain that Churchill and Birkenhead seemed to be trying to make his position impossible.
Baldwin may have supported Chamberlain once Crowe had gone, or there may have been a reaction against Birkenhead's vehemence. Whatever happened, Bridgeman described the meeting's conclusion as being "to continue the policy of refusing any pact with France...unless a quadrilateral arrangement could also be made to include Germany"; essentially the same as that of the full cabinet a week earlier.

The same day Baldwin wrote to Chamberlain expressing appreciation of the way in which the foreign secretary had presented the cabinet decision to Herriot, thus in effect supporting Chamberlain's interpretation of this decision rather than that of Churchill and Birkenhead, told him that it was impossible to say more than he (Chamberlain) had done, and concluded that they could discuss the matter when he returned from Geneva. This was little comfort in the light of Crowe's letter.

Chamberlain telegraphed to Crowe that if the report of the conference of ministers was accurate he was placed in an impossible position, and that Baldwin's letter had given him little guidance or support. He made it clear that he intended to resign if he did not get his way, and told Crowe to transmit the contents of the telegram to Baldwin. Crowe promptly wrote to the prime minister. He attacked the attitude of the ministers at the conference and the decision, or the interpretation of the earlier decision, which they had reached; he argued that it "really amounted to nothing at all. It certainly could not properly be described as a pact"; he repeated that Chamberlain had interpreted the cabinet conclusion very differently and had passed on this different interpretation to Herriot; and he warned that the result would be a serious misunderstanding with France. He told Baldwin that he had received a telegram from Chamberlain, and requested an immediate interview.

This conversation reassured him. Baldwin referred to the different opinions in the cabinet on the form which an eventual mutual pact might take, but assured Crowe that the views expressed by Churchill and the other ministers did not constitute a cabinet decision, and that he did not anticipate any

2 Baldwin to Chamberlain, 12 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/80.
3 Chamberlain to Crowe, n.d., Chamberlain papers, AC 52/241.
4 Crowe to Baldwin, 14 March 1925, Baldwin papers, 115.
difficulty "in obtaining Cabinet's assent to policy of a pact as you understand it". In a private postscript Crowe told Chamberlain that he felt Baldwin would stand by him and oppose Churchill, Birkenhead, and Amery, and that the prime minister agreed that a mere promise to consult with other signatories would not constitute a real pact. Baldwin repeated this to Chamberlain when he returned from Geneva and Paris, and Chamberlain was later able to report that since he came back everything had gone smoothly. What could have been a major crisis turned out to be a false alarm.

Chamberlain wrote of Crowe and of the ministers whom he had attacked in his letter "perhaps he did not understand them; perhaps they changed their minds when they heard of my telegram; perhaps, and most probably, something of both". Perhaps, too, Churchill and the others were venting their anger and resentment against a decision which they disliked but which they also accepted as a fact and did not try seriously to change. If the threat was serious, it remains unclear whether Baldwin, Crowe or Chamberlain's telegram was responsible for averting it.

On 20 March the cabinet authorized Chamberlain to state in the Commons "that the recent proposals of the German Government appeared to offer the best basis for reaching a settlement on security, but that such a settlement could not possibly be reached without our co-operation"; that Britain's responsibilities would be limited to participating in a mutual pact including France, Belgium and Germany; and that "if we refused to enter into any such arrangement and reverted to a policy of isolation, the only result would be an aggravation of the existing unrest on the Continent of Europe, leading ultimately to a fresh war".

This conclusion marked the end of the cabinet's decision-making process. The broad outline of Chamberlain's policy had been laid down, and it remained unchanged. From then on his task and that of the Foreign Office consisted of working out

1 Crowe to Chamberlain, 15 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/244. Baldwin approved the telegram.
2 Chamberlain to his wife, 19 March 1925, describing a conversation with Baldwin, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/605.
3 Chamberlain to his wife, 23 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/606.
4 Chamberlain to his wife, 25 March 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/608.
5 Cabinet conclusions, 20 March 1925, Cab. 23/49, Cab. 17(25)2.
the troublesome, and often controversial, details of a mutual security pact.

The chief protagonist in this phase, the pre-history of Locarno, was D'Abernon. Almost alone he remained convinced that the best solution to the main problem of the day was a mutual guarantee treaty, and his encouragement and advice were probably a necessary precondition of the Stresemann proposals of 20 January and 9 February. The significance of these proposals was that when the British cabinet rejected both the Protocol and Chamberlain's project of an alliance with France, as it probably would have done even if there had been nothing else to fall back on, it had to hand an alternative acceptable to both elements in the cabinet - if only just - and also, of course, to Germany. Only France had to be won over, and Herriot had declared himself ready to accept German participation in principle. Once all three governments had agreed on the necessity of a prompt solution to the problem and had agreed on the framework within they had to build their treaty, the most difficult stage in the 1925 negotiations was already over.

1 After Locarno, Chamberlain was amazed "at the simplicity of it all... it all seems so simple, so natural, so easy. Once the policy was accepted, each step followed the other as of course. We did what we did because it was inevitable that we should do it, because it was the only thing to do" (to Tyrrell, 18 Oct. 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 6/1/623).
In marked contrast with the attempts to conclude security pacts in 1919 and 1921-22, the 1925 negotiations were held at a leisurely pace, and often more than a month passed between one stage and the next. The first delay was the longest. The German notes to Britain and France were handed over on 20 January and 9 February respectively, and on 2 March the British cabinet decided that the security question should be solved within the framework of these proposals. Herriot, agreed to this a few days later. Yet the French government, acting on the allies' behalf, sent its reply only on 16 June, nearly five months after the first German initiative.

The French accustomed themselves only slowly and reluctantly to the prospect of signing a pact in which Germany would feature as a partner rather than as an opponent. Foch and Loucheur opposed the idea because they felt it would give the Germans the chance to attack in the East, and even after the decision had been taken Fleuriau grumbled about it and still hankered after a British alliance. There was a widespread suspicion in Paris that the proposal was some sort of trap, that it was a manoeuvre to divide the allies, and Germany was watched carefully for any signs of insincerity or second thoughts. It took quite some time for France to summon up interest in an arrangement which was for her no more than a third-best solution, to draft an answer to Stresemann's note, and to coordinate her reply with Britain.

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1 This delay not only exasperated the Germans and led to frequent protests, but it caused Stresemann much difficulty in handling the Nationalist members of the cabinet.
3 Phipps to Crowe, 24 March 1925, describing a conversation with Fleuriau, F.O.371/10729, 04630/459/18.
5 Hindenburg's election to the presidency in April caused particular unease, but this soon passed.
6 In their Paris meetings, before and after Chamberlain rejected the Protocol in Geneva, he and Herriot had decided that their governments should reach agreement between themselves, before opening negotiations with Germany. On his return to London Chamberlain suggested to Fleuriau that France define what she wanted within the limits set by Britain (Chamberlain to Crewe, 19 March 1925, describing a conversation with Fleuriau, F.O.371/10729, 04007/459/18).
Since Britain had excluded the only alternatives, the Geneva Protocol and an Anglo-French alliance, and since a mutual pact seemed the most that they were likely to get, the French were determined to use it at best advantage. They tried to turn Germany's weapon against herself by applying the pact to strengthen rather than to weaken the Treaty of Versailles and to tighten rather than to loosen their encirclement of Germany. Britain's commitments should be made precise and effective, and the security of France's Eastern allies should be assured to the greatest possible extent - two aims which came into direct conflict with Britain's policy. In the early months of 1925 France's main anxiety was that a British guarantee of the Franco-German frontier against attack by either side would prevent her from going to Poland's assistance if Germany invaded to the East, and that she would purchase her own security at Poland's expense.¹

Germany's objectives, and to some extent her problems, also remained constant. Her principal objective throughout the 1925 negotiations, as it had been in proposing a mutual pact in the first instance, was to secure the evacuation of Cologne. As Stresemann told Brockdorff-Rantzau, Germany's immediate task in the West in the foreseeable future was the "Sicherung des Rheinlandes", and she could become a strong European power only when she had freed her territory from foreign control.² He promised that Germany would not enter the League without a guarantee of evacuation,³ and he assured Maltzan that the mutual pact would secure the Rhineland from

¹ But to some extent Poland was seen as a burden. Herriot told the Belgian ambassador that he wished the Poles would agree to a frontier revision with Germany (Gaiffier to Hymans, 10 March 1925, D.D.B., ii, pp. 122-23), and he felt that France might use her influence with Poland "en vue d'envisager la solution de certains problèmes qui pesent sur son avenir" (memorandum by Hymans, 11 March 1925, describing a conversation with Herriot, D.D.B., ii, p. 126). Briand described Poland as the "rheumatism of Europe and catches you in the back when you try to move" (Chamberlain to his sister, 22 Sept, 1925, describing a conversation with Herriot, Chamberlain papers, AC 5/1/365). Poland was never more than a substitute for the late, lamented alliance with Russia.

² Stresemann to Brockdorff-Rantzau, 19 March 1925, Locarno-Konferenz, pp. 72, 74). Hoesch agreed that the question of the Eastern frontiers must give way to the object of freeing German soil, and that the only chance of progress in the foreseeable future lay in peaceful means. The main enemy was France (to AA, 10 April 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt III).

³ Minutes of a meeting between Stresemann, Luther, Schubert and Kempner (state secretary in the chancellry), 17 March 1925, BA, R 43 I/424.
the Rhineland from French persecution, split the Entente, and open new possibilities in the East.¹

The other three great tasks of German diplomacy which Stresemann outlined in his letter to the crown prince later in the year² - the solution of reparations, the protection of Germans abroad and the readjustment of Germany's Eastern frontiers - would have to wait, and they played no positive part in the negotiations of 1925.

What Germany sought was a simple and direct quid pro quo, either formal or informal, whereby in return for guaranteeing France's 1919 frontier (and later also Belgium's, although this was not mentioned in the notes to London and Paris), the allies would evacuate Cologne. In order to forestall French objections she was also prepared to sign arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, although this too had not been stated explicitly in the initial proposals.³ She would resist anything which went beyond this, and until the end of the Locarno Conference she fought determinedly against extending the pact in any way, in particular against any move which would tend to stabilize her frontier with Poland.⁴ She was anxious to secure her position in the West, in Cologne, without having to make any sacrifices in the East.

Even though there was as yet no question of re-opening the problem of the Polish border, Schubert argued that since a

1 Stresemann to Maltzan, 7 April 1925, Diaries, ii, p. 263. Both Brockdorff-Rantzau and Maltzan opposed the Western pact, and in his correspondence with them Stresemann persuaded as well as instructed. He may have exaggerated his aims and expectations, but he did not otherwise distort them.
2 Diaries, ii, pp. 503-05 (7 Sept. 1925).
3 In the notes of 20 January and 9 February Germany expressed her willingness to sign arbitration treaties with all states. Stresemann even assured Brockdorff-Rantzau that these arbitration treaties would be no real obstacle to Germany's ambitions in the East, and that the Polish reaction showed that they were seen in Warsaw as a threat to Poland's borders rather than as a guarantee (19 March 1925, Locarno-Konferenz, p. 72).
4 However, there was always a certain pessimism concerning the chances of confining the pact so rigidly. Hoesch warned that the Germans must "unerträglich erscheinende Lasten auf uns zu nehmen, um in anderen Fragen vorwärts zu kommen"; they would have to make disarmament concessions, sign compulsory arbitration treaties with their Eastern neighbours, and would have to enter the League without obtaining any concessions in connection with Article 16 (see below, p. 239) (to AA, 19 March 1925, AA, Polit. Abt. II, Politik IV, Sicherheitspakt II). Hoesch was usually a shrewd adviser, but on this occasion he was far too pessimistic.
non-aggression pact implied frontier recognition, Germany must refuse to sign such a pact. When Chamberlain announced in the Commons that Germany would renounce the use of force in the East Stahmer caused a flurry in London and Berlin by expressing his unease at this remark, and Chamberlain threatened to withdraw what he had said about going through with the German proposals unless the matter were cleared up satisfactorily. It was, and Germany duly renounced the use of force, but in private, not in public. In Berlin the incident was seen as a lesson in how carefully Germany would have to proceed if she were to avoid the opposing dangers of giving an impression of deceitfulness, and of diverging from her policy. She did not then intend to change her Eastern frontiers by violent means, but she was anxious not to have to renounce them. The less said about the East, the better, and Stahmer had been foolish in drawing attention to it.

The mutual pact held other advantages and disadvantages. It would remove the threat of an Anglo-French anti-German alliance and it would provide a guarantee of British assistance if Germany were to be attacked by France. Even if Britain could not be expected to take up arms in Germany's defence, such a guarantee would still be useful since Britain could be relied upon to restrain France in order to avoid having to break her word. The pact should also make it impossible for France to enforce the Treaty of Versailles by occupying German territory as she had done in 1920, 1921 and above all in 1923.

1 To Hoesch, 21 March 1923, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt II.
2 Stahmer to Schubert, 25 March 1925, Schubert to Stahmer, 26 March 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt II; Chamberlain to D'Aberton, 25 March 1925, F.0.377/10729, 4302/459/18. But the German ambassador was not taken seriously in London; as Chamberlain told D'Aberton, "much as I like Stahmer as a man, I feel that he is quite useless as a medium of communication with the German Government, and I do not suppose that his opinions have the slightest weight with them" (2 April 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257).
3 Schubert to Stahmer, 29 March 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt III. Schubert explained to D'Aberton that Germany saw an arbitration treaty as the only possible way of excluding a war with Poland, and that Germany was not prepared expressly to renounce war. He also instructed Stahmer to emphasize that Germany did not want any violent change of her frontier with Poland (ibid.).
4 Naturally Stresemann stressed such advantages when defending the pact against its many critics (e.g., to the Nationalist members of the Reichstag, 2 April 1925, Ra, R 45 I/162), and Hoesch referred to them constantly.
On the other hand, the allies insisted that Germany enter the League of Nations, a step which she was most reluctant to take. And a rapprochement with the West would damage her friendship with Russia.

The Russians were already alarmed by Germany's steadily-improving relationship with the Western powers throughout 1924, especially after agreement had been reached on implementing the Dawes plan. Fearing that they would be isolated once more, that as Germany moved closer to Britain and France the community of interest between the two Rapallo powers would diminish, the Russians began to make overtures to Berlin. In December 1924 they took the initiative in a series of discussions on the Polish question, and Chicherin followed this up by making a formal proposal of a Russo-German pact, according to which both sides would agree not to enter into any political or economic alliance with third parties directed against the other, and would coordinate their policies towards the League. Brockdorff-Rantzau reported this to Berlin on 29 December, the very day that D'Abernon suggested a Western pact to Schubert.

Germany's suitors were unevenly matched. Russia had little to offer beyond declarations of continued affection, while the West was able to seduce her with a dazzling prospect—the evacuation of Cologne. For Stresemann, as for most of the cabinet and the foreign ministry, relations with Britain and France had priority. He opened negotiations with them shortly afterwards, but months passed before he answered the Russian proposal, it was not discussed seriously until the negotiations for a Western pact were under way, and it was not signed until April 1926. This cool response to their own proposal increased the

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1 Speng, Vorgeschichte des Beitritts Deutschlands zum Völkerbund, pp. 48-50; Carr, Socialism in One Country, 311, pp. 254-57. During these talks Brockdorff-Rantzau declared that it was the common aim of both countries "to push Poland back to her ethnographical frontier", and this phrase was approved by the Wilhelmstrasse.

2 Brockdorff-Rantzau favoured a Russian pact, and, as Carr puts it, "in the controversies of the year 1925 he was more often in sympathy with the views of the government to which he was accredited than with those of the government which he represented" (op. cit., p. 255). He spent two months, between April and June 1925, lobbying the German government in Russia's interests, and not vice-versa. Too influential to be removed, he was treated by Berlin less as an ambassador than as a power in his own right.
Russians' opposition to what they saw as a further slide to West by Germany and as a further abandonment of the special relationship between the two outcasts of Rapallo.

In Berlin there was genuine and universal regret that the negotiation of the security pact would necessarily damage relations with Russia, but Britain and France held all the cards and Germany felt that she must come to terms with them. However this made her all the more anxious to avoid causing any unnecessary offence to Russia, and in the question of her entry into the League, an organization to which the Russians were bitterly opposed, she fought with great determination to defend Moscow's interests.¹ Even if League membership were to be made an essential condition of agreement on a pact, all political and diplomatic groups in Germany were agreed that they would refuse to be bound by Article 16 of the Covenant; the Russians saw this clause as being aimed against them, and under it Germany would be unable to remain neutral in a war between Russia and the League.² Schubert reflected the general opinion when he wrote that the League of Nations question was crucial in relations between Berlin and Moscow.³

Although the prospect of gain, or at least of avoidance of loss, caused Stresemann to abandon for the time being his balancing-act between East and West, he was anxious to keep his options open and to retain the bargaining strength which friendship with both sides gave him. So even though he kept

¹ Apart altogether from her reluctance to antagonize Russia on this question, Germany had reasons of her own for disliking the League. It was associated with the Treaty of Versailles and with the loss of Upper Silesia.

² Article 16 dealt with the treatment of aggression. The relevant section read: "the Members of the League agree... that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special measure aimed at one of their number by the Covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the members of the League which are co-operating to protect the covenants of the League". Germany had a good case for special consideration. Stresemann claimed with much justice that "logically there are only two alternatives; either we must be allowed an army, in which case we too may be called upon for military services, or we are to be disarmed, in which case we cannot be involved in any military action" (memorandum, 3 Jan. 1925, Diaries, ii, p. 22). The most likely situation in which Germany might be involved in implementing this article would be a war between Poland and Russia, and naturally she would have no interest in helping Poland.

³ Memorandum, 6 April 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt III.
Chicherin's proposal in cold storage lest it complicate the security pact negotiations, he was eager to remain on good terms with Russia.

In March 1925 he sent Brockdorff-Rantzau a message for communication to Chicherin in which he defended Germany's links with the Western powers, declared that Russia's friendship would not be sacrificed to League entry, argued that the Western pact would not be directed against Russia, and suggested that Russia should welcome the strengthening of Germany's international position which would result. The Russians were not impressed, and Krestinsky, their ambassador in Berlin, complained that while Germany took the initiative in dealing with the West, she showed no interest in following up the Russian proposals. On 2 June this protest was followed by a memorandum praising the Treaty of Rapallo and complaining that German entry into the League would be a considerable step towards the treaty's destruction and towards a new orientation of Germany's foreign policy; whatever her original intentions might be, she would be caught up in the general anti-Russian chorus in Geneva. Just before the Locarno Conference Chicherin visited Berlin and tried to win German agreement to a political treaty by threatening implicitly that Russia would come to an agreement with Poland.

Stresemann wanted to obtain extra concessions from the allies to compensate for the worsening of Germany's relations with Russia, and he even suggested to D'Abernon that the whole of the Rhineland be evacuated, that Eupen-Malmedy be restored and that Germany be given a colonial mandate. These were impossible demands as he realized full well, but he needed to give the impression of being a brutal and intransigent defender of Germany's interests if he was to make the pact negotiations more palatable to his Nationalist (DNVP) opponents, particularly to their representatives in the cabinet. Wanting to

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1 Stresemann to Brockdorff-Rantzau, 19 March 1925, Locarno-Konferenz, pp. 70-80.
3 Memorandum from the German to the Russian government, 2 June 1925, Locarno-Konferenz, pp. 95-96.
5 Stresemann, Diaries, ii, p. 87 (10 June 1925); D'Abernon, Ambassador, iii, p. 169 (diary, 11 June 1925). D'Abernon makes no reference to Eupen-Malmedy.
saddle them with a share of responsibility for the concessions which would have to be made to the allies, he tried to avoid giving them reasons for leaving the government. This would not be easy, since their demands were as extravagant as those which he had made to D'Abernon, but were held with much greater fervour. On two successive days in March 1925 the DNVP sought the evacuation of the whole Rhineland, recognition of Germany's right to territorial revision in the East, and acceptance of her repudiation of the war-guilt clauses of the Versailles Treaty, and also complained that the evacuation of the Cologne zone would be an inadequate return for the renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine.¹

Of the three main participants in the Locarno negotiations the German government was the most insecure and the one most subject to attack from powerful and irreconcilable pressure groups. It was partly in an effort to appease and disarm such groups that Stresemann proved to be an exceptionally stubborn and unconciliatory negotiator.

Britain faced no such problems. Her aims and interests lay in between those of France and Germany, and Chamberlain, soon a devoted partisan of a mutual pact despite his initial lack of interest,² saw himself in the role of honest broker, mediating between the two extremes,³ while both D'Abernon and Bennett felt that since Britain, alone of all the powers concerned, was giving something and receiving nothing, she was in a good position to dictate the terms of an agreement.⁴ To a considerable extent she succeeded in doing this.

¹ DNVP delegation to Stresemann, 21 March 1925, quoted in Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Stresemann), p. 179; minutes of a conversation between Stresemann and Berndt (a DNVP Reichstag member), 22 March 1925, BA, R 43 I/162. Stresemann's attitude on the question of Alsace-Lorraine was sensible. He felt it would be best for Germany to give up her claim to a plebiscite, since it would be embarrassing if one were to be held and, after fifty years of German rule, 90% of the people voted for France. An acceptance of the status quo would eliminate this danger (memorandum, 1 July 1925, Diaries, ii, pp. 112-13).
² Already in April Schubert remarked that Chamberlain saw himself as the father of the security pact, and he regarded this as a gratifying progress (memorandum, 6 April 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt III).
³ Chamberlain to Crewe, 2 April 1925, Crewe papers, C/8.
⁴ D'Abernon, Ambassador, iii, p. 184 (diary, 11 Aug. 1925); minute by Bennett, 29 July 1925, F.O. 371/10737, C9886/459/18.
With Chamberlain in charge of the Foreign Office there was no danger that Britain would veer from a Francophile policy, and as soon as Herriot had recovered from his disappointment and pique on being informed that neither an Anglo-French alliance nor the Geneva Protocol would be acceptable to Britain, relations between the two countries were remarkable untroubled. Even Balfour, so vehement against the French in the C.I.D. discussions in February, felt that Britain would lose by France's disarmament, since the French army was unlikely to be used as an aggressive force, and it might be able to prevent other countries from going to war. The British continued to insist on the theoretical separation of the security question and the evacuation of Cologne, but in practice they accepted the link, and Crowe warned the Foreign Office that it must abandon its threatening or bullying attitude towards the French in this matter.

The prospect of having to fight France in defence of Germany continued to appal the Foreign Office, as it had appalled the C.I.D. earlier in the year, and Bennett, referring to this "distasteful possibility", said that Britain was "at present really only prepared to envisage the possibility of joining France in fighting Germany. We realize, however, that it is impossible for us to join in an alliance specifically directed against Germany....Having decided upon a mutual pact we cannot shrink from its consequences". He concluded that Britain's efforts should be directed towards making a war against France on Germany's behalf as remote an eventuality as possible, and that she should mould the security pact with her eyes open to this danger.

London and Paris were in basic agreement about the necessity of Germany's entry into the League, and agreed completely in their desire to detach her from Russia. Chamberlain described Britain and Russia as fighting for the soul of Germany, and saw the situation as a tug of war in which both

1 Foreign Policy Committee on Security minutes, 29 May 1925, Cab.27/125, F.P.(25)2. At the same meeting Churchill declared that the existence of a large French army was necessary to get full benefit from the Dawes Plan.
2 Minute, 16 March 1925, F.0.371/10728, C3669/459/18. Chamberlain remained worried about Cologne, and shortly afterwards told Kerr that he felt that a breakdown was more likely to occur on this point than on any other (6 April 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/257).
3 Memorandum, 7 April 1925, F.0.371/10730, C4853/459/18.
4 H. A. Gwynne to Chamberlain, 8 Oct. 1925, quoting Chamberlain's earlier remark to this effect (Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/258).
sides tried to detach her from the malign influence of the other. In Moscow Britain, not France, was seen as the leader of the new anti-Bolshevik front being formed in the West.

Yet however much Britain and Germany might quarrel—and Chamberlain was loud in his complaints and his denunciations of her, month after month, while he had nothing but praise for Briand and the French—Britain's fundamental interests coincided more closely with Germany's than with France's. In the London-Paris-Berlin triangle, Paris was the odd man out.

The British were anxious to limit their commitments to the defence of France's Eastern frontier—"the basic principle... is, and must be, that any new obligation which they undertake shall be specific and limited to the maintenance of the existing territorial arrangement on the western frontier of Germany"—and to differentiate between East and West as much as possible. There was to be no question of battening down the Versailles settlement in all its details. Chamberlain did not expect Germany to renounce hope of change in the East, and he complained that she seemed unable to appreciate that the Eastern guarantees in the security pact were the only possible way of re-writing the Franco-Polish alliance, that they were in her interests, and in Britain's. Chamberlain and Cavan both declared, in almost identical terms, that if a war were to break out, it should be as far from Britain as possible.

1 Chamberlain to Amery, 19 June 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/38. Nonetheless he appreciated the German feeling that it was the abandonment of Bismarck's Russophile foreign policy which had led to her downfall.
2 Carr, Socialism in One Country, iii, p. 262.
3 After Crowe's death in April, the Foreign Office consistently took a less Francophile line than its chief.
4 Chamberlain to Crewe, 28 May 1925, F.o.371/10732, 07174/459/18. This refrain recurred time and time again throughout British minutes, memoranda and correspondence in 1925.
5 Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 2 April 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.o.800/257. According to the Belgian ambassador in Paris, the French government, remembering that Alsace-Lorraine had not been renounced in 1871, did not expect her to do so either (Gaiffier to Hymans, 23 March 1925, D.D.E., ii, p. 153). Nonetheless the French did all they could to win German recognition of the Polish border.
6 Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 11 Aug. 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/291.
7 Chamberlain's "object was to ensure that if a war broke out it should be one on a frontier as far as possible from this country" (memorandum by Bennett on a Foreign Office discussion, 22 July 1925, F.o.371/10736, C9784/459/18), and Cavan informed the C.I.D. that "the fundamental strategic doctrine of the General Staff was that the security of England (continued)
Germany was averse to any unnecessary mention of Eastern Europe, and Britain was determined to have nothing to do with the area beyond fulfilling her League of Nations obligations.

In March Herriot had reconciled himself to Britain's lack of interest in Eastern Europe, and after that the French made only occasional and half-hearted attempts to involve her in commitments extending further than the Rhine frontier. They realized that they would receive a guarantee of their border with Germany, and no more.

The immediate result of the German notes of 20 January and 9 February was, ironically, to end for some time Germany's role as an active partner in Western diplomacy and to restore the earlier situation in which Britain and France discussed the security question without consulting her. Having taken the initiative and made a definite proposal, she felt obliged to wait until she received a reply before making any further move. Herriot saw no reason to hurry, little progress was made until Briand succeeded him at the Quai d'Orsay in April, and it was not until 12 May that a draft reply was sent to London for examination.

This draft demanded: that Germany enter the League; that the agreement to be reached should not imply a revision of the Treaty of Versailles or any modification of the allies' rights, in particular of the Rhineland occupation; that Belgium be included in any settlement; that the arbitration treaties proposed by Germany should apply to all disputes of whatever nature between her and the other signatories (thus including Britain) and should rule out any resort to force unless the

2 For the first time since the Clemenceau—Pichon government, six administrations earlier, the offices of prime minister and foreign minister were divided. Painlevé became prime minister for the usual brief period, but Briand remained permanent foreign minister until just before his death in 1932.
3 F.0.371/10731, C6493/459/18. According to Laroche, he, Fromageot and Massigli prepared this draft (Au Quai d'Orsay, p. 207).
provisions of the guarantee and arbitration treaties were violated; that Germany's arbitration treaties with other countries should be covered "by the same joint and several guarantee" as the Rhineland pact; that "all the agreements... ought to be co-ordinated in a general convention...capable of forming, as suggested in the German memorandum itself, the nucleus of a still more general pacific entente"; and that "the agreements contemplated in the present note form an indivisible whole". This last demand cannot have been made with any hope that it would be accepted.

On the whole Chamberlain was pleased with the French note, and he was able to tell his colleagues that, although it tried to extend Britain's obligations as far as possible, its spirit and tone were "all that could be desired and more than could have been expected". 1 Even D'Abernon was agreeably surprised by it. 2 However it contained several points which Britain found unacceptable; as Chamberlain told the cabinet, "it would appear to involve us in new guarantees of Poland and Czechoslovakia, and...the suggestion that this would be only the nucleus of a still wider Entente carries us back to the Protocol and would seem to imply a readiness to undertake in the future obligations that we have hitherto refused to assume". He also queried the reference to universal arbitration which would lay obligations on Britain as well as on France and Germany. 3 On this last point Chamberlain remarked to Crewe, "while for the continental Powers concerned the conclusion of the suggested arbitration treaties forms...the natural complement of a Rhineland pact, this is not equally the case with Great Britain". 4 Earlier he had warned Fleuriau that he was unwilling to stake as confidently on the durability of the Eastern settlement as on that in the West, that he favoured arbitration in the East but had not contemplated that Britain should be a guarantor, and that, if both areas were to be guaranteed equally it would mean either giving excessive

1 Foreign Policy Security Committee minutes, 26 May 1925, Cab.27/275, F.P. (25)1.
2 D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 19 May 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/271.
3 Memorandum, 14 May 1925, Cab.24/173, C.P.245 (25).
4 Chamberlain to Crewe, 23 May 1925, Cab.24/173, C7174/459/18.
In an earlier cabinet paper Chamberlain had discussed at greater length the question of Britain's reluctance to submit to arbitration (Cab.24/173, C.P.245 (25), 14 May 1925). Tyrrell remarked that "we should give a reason for encouraging arbitration in others while refusing it ourselves" (minute, 27 May 1925, F.O.371/10732, C7174/459/18).
guarantees to Germany's Eastern neighbours or inadequate security to France and Belgium.¹ In the Foreign Office there was also some unease at the implied one-sidedness of the French right to send troops into the Rhineland and at the right claimed by France to take immediate action against a "hostile act" in the area.²

The British government asked for elaboration on several of the vague or controversial points in the French draft, and Briand promptly confirmed that the interpretation of the Peace Treaty would be subject to arbitration and that German entry into the League would be an essential but not a prior condition to agreement on a pact. He also assured Chamberlain that he did not want to confer the same guarantees on the East as on the West since only the West would be covered by a special territorial guarantee, but he assumed that Britain would give a "chiefly moral" guarantee to the Eastern arbitration treaties.³

Two sets of British queries and French answers and modifications removed many of the disagreements or misunderstandings between the two governments.⁴ A British counter-draft, handed over on 29 May, contained several important changes; it made clear that Britain would not be bound to submit to arbitration and that the Eastern and Western arbitration treaties would be independent of each other - it was declared merely that "the Powers signatory of the Treaty of Versailles and of the proposed Rhineland Pact would have the option, if they so desire, of constituting themselves the guarantors of such arbitration treaties".⁵

France accepted the British amendments, making only one further significant change, designed to ensure that she could intervene as guarantor of the arbitration treaties between Germany and her Eastern neighbours without thereby violating the Rhineland pact.⁶ Chamberlain agreed that it would be

¹ Chamberlain to Crewe, 14 May 1925, describing a conversation with Fleuriau, F.O.371/10732, 06558/459/18.
⁴ The correspondence is summed up in table form in F.O.371/10737, C10079/459/18, annex.
⁵ Cab.24/173, C7174/459/18.
⁶ Briand to Fleuriau, 4 June 1925, F.O.371/10732, C7565/459/18.
unjust if the Rhineland pact "should in any circumstances operate in favour of any signatory Power which subsequently broke the treaty obligations into which it had entered",¹ so the last major difficulty was overcome.

Chamberlain and Briand met at Geneva between 10 and 12 June and formalized their agreement on the terms of the French reply to Stresemann's proposal.² The final version included the amendments which Britain desired. It was specified that the British guarantee would apply only to Germany's frontiers with France and Belgium, and instead of the reference to the Eastern frontiers having "the same joint and several guarantee" as the Rhineland pact, it was declared that the other arbitration treaties could have the same scope as that between the Rhineland states and could (but need not) be guaranteed by the signatories of the Western pact. France's guarantee of Poland would be safeguarded by a clause allowing her to attack Germany "in virtue of the guarantee given to an arbitration treaty". Most important of all, there was no reference whatever to the treaties and agreements forming an indivisible whole.

The British were delighted that everything had gone so smoothly, and there was general optimism in London concerning the eventual outcome of the negotiations.³ Churchill was able to assure Chamberlain that his fence lay behind him.⁴ But only two of the three sides were in agreement on their general policy - and the principal reason for Anglo-French cordiality throughout the negotiations was that France had abandoned her case, and accepted Britain's, before the talks even began.

¹ Chamberlain to Briand, 8 June 1925, F.0.371/10732, C7565/459/18.
² Chamberlain established good relations with Briand. At Geneva they discussed not only security but also Scott's novels, Byron's poetry and the relative merits of Voltaire and Rousseau (Chamberlain to Tyrrell, 8 June 1925, F.0.371/10733, C7862/459/18).
³ Naturally D'Abernon was delighted at the Anglo-French agreement on the policy they would adopt, and rejoiced that "London is conducting the negotiations...with admirable vigour" and at "the paradox that he who was thought to be a very reluctant convert to the Reciprocal Pact is more persuasive and able to achieve more than any first-hour enthusiast. Paris feels that if Chamberlain adheres, no other course is open; Paris must therefore follow suit" (Ambassador iii, p. 170 (diary, 22 June 1925)).
⁴ Chamberlain to his sister, 27 June 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 5/1/357. He went on, as so often, to praise himself and to quote the praise of others with a distasteful fervour.
Germany would not make concessions so readily, and the allies were to find it much harder to reach agreement with her than it had been to coordinate their policies towards her.

The French had been afraid that even more concessions would have to be made in order to win British support, and they were delighted at the firmness of the reply which, at long last, was handed over on 16 June. They felt that Germany's proposal, made with ulterior motives, was being used against her and that she would be hoist with her own petard. The Germans, who had been assured time after time that the French would reply in moderate and conciliatory terms, were less than enthusiastic, and protested indignant that their original offer had been twisted out of all recognition. Stresemann had a long list of complaints: in the French reply the Eastern arbitration treaties had a much wider significance than in the German note; France would guarantee these treaties, and Germany would have to sanction the anti-German Franco-Polish alliance; the arbitration treaties would bind Germany to accept the territorial settlement in the East to a much greater extent than if she were an ordinary League member, unencumbered by such treaties; the only reason why she had mentioned arbitration treaties of this sort in her original proposal was that she did not belong to the League, and she would now be obliged to become a member; and France was not concerned with her own security but with the encirclement of Germany. He objected to the fact that France would have the right to decide who was the aggressor in a conflict between Germany and Poland, and that she would be able to attack Germany without League sanction. In general he saw the

1 Chamberlain still thought that Germany's role was to await an intimation of what the next step should be (to Addison, 21 June 1925, F.0.371/10734, C8303/459/18.).
2 Crewe to Chamberlain, 21 June 1925, F.0.371/10734, C8310/459/18.
3 D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 1 July 1925, describing a conversation with Schubert and Gaus, F.0.371/10735, C9066/459/18.
4 Stresemann to German embassies, 20 June 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt IV. Stresemann said later that if Germany had thought, when drawing up her memorandum, that her entry into the League would be regarded as a matter of course, she would probably have made no mention of arbitration treaties (Diaries, ii, p. 404 (memorandum, 1 July 1925)).
5 To Bthamer, 22 June 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt IV.
allied note as an indication of how far Britain had given way to France.\(^1\)

Gaus protested that France would be able to violate the Rhine frontier while Germany would not,\(^2\) and Hoesch was afraid that France would tend to supervise Germany's relations with her Eastern neighbours.\(^3\) Seeckt was opposed to the whole project, believing simply that Germany should regain her power and reconquer everything which she had lost.\(^4\) The newspapers were highly critical of the French reply.\(^5\) Even Luther tried to renege on his approval of the January initiative and to lay the whole responsibility on Stresemann. On 1 July he informed the foreign minister that he could not remember having seen the text of the proposals before 21 February - that is, long after they had been sent to Britain and France - and that he intended making a statement to this effect. Schubert and Gaus supported Stresemann in his claim that the chancellor knew of the proposal before it had been submitted to the allies and Stresemann threatened to resign if the statement were delivered. Faced with the possibility of a cabinet crisis, Luther backed down.\(^6\) According to Stresemann, the cabinet was even inclined to make a show of continuing the negotiations while in practice setting out to wreck them, but he managed to dissuade them from such a course.\(^7\)

Britain was taken aback by the vehemence of this reaction. Chamberlain complained that as the allies advanced Germany receded, and he wondered whether she had made the proposals with the intention of causing dissenion within the allied

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\(^1\) Diaries, ii, p. 95 (memorandum, 26 June 1925).
\(^2\) To Stürmer, 8 June 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt IV.
\(^3\) To AA, 30 June 1925, AA, RM, Sicherheitspakt V.
\(^4\) Turner, Stresemann, p. 203.
\(^5\) Addison to Chamberlain, 20 June 1925, F.O. 371/10734, C8428/459/18. The violence of the reaction can perhaps be explained partly by the fact that the allied note, listing the inadequacies of German disarmament, and thus the justification for continuing the occupation of Cologne, had been sent to Berlin less than a fortnight earlier.
\(^6\) Diaries, ii, pp. 119-22; Turner, Stresemann, pp. 205-07. For the next two months chancellor and foreign minister were barely on speaking terms. In his memoirs Luther makes no mention of the incident.
\(^7\) Diaries, ii, p. 96 (26 June 1925, describing a cabinet meeting of 24 June). Turner says that this was the policy of the DNVP, but does not refer to it being endorsed by the rest of the cabinet (Stresemann, p. 204).
ranks or of enhancing the price she would receive from Russia in return for breaking off the discussions. ¹ He and the Foreign Office concluded that if she withdrew from her proposal "all the world will see that Germany does not mean peace and will have to frame its policy in consequence".²

In a note handed over to Briand on 20 July Stresemann confined himself to stating the most important German objections. He complained that the French answer had put a different construction on the February proposals and had carried them further than the Germans had intended, particularly in the question of the Eastern arbitration treaties. He made it clear that Germany expected changes in the Rhineland occupation to follow agreement on a security pact, and argued that she should not incur the obligations laid down by Article 16 until other nations were disarmed as she was. And he was unwilling to accept that France could act as guarantor in a dispute in which one of the states concerned was her ally.³

Reaction to this note was mixed. The DNVP was satisfied, thus achieving one of Stresemann's main objectives. Chamberlain told Sthamer that it was "a challenging document"⁴ and he warned that Britain must never encourage Germany to hope for modifications in Article 16,⁵ but in a letter to Phipps he described the note as a not unsatisfactory answer.⁶ The Foreign Office had some sympathy for the German proposal. Lampson felt that the French reply of 16 June seemed to allow the allies to attack Germany without recourse to any inter-

¹ Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 30 June 1925, F.0.371/10735, C8770/459/18.
² Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 10 July 1925, F.0.371/10735, C9066/459/18. Lampson felt that if Germany wrecked the negotiations it would be interpreted "as a deliberate notification by Germany that her future policy was against European peace" (memorandum, 7 July 1925, F.0.371/10735, C9103/459/18).
³ In earlier memoranda he had written that Germany could not accept any obligations which would risk another power declaring war on her, and that the Germans must continue their pressure until they were released, de facto if not formally, from the provisions of Article 16 (Diaries, ii, pp. 106 & 135, 1 & 17 July 1925).
⁴ To D'Abernon, 29 July 1925, describing a conversation with Sthamer, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/289. He was disappointed as he had hoped that the note's terms would be sufficiently favourable to permit a prompt opening of negotiations.
⁵ Minute, 28 July 1925, F.0.371/10737, C10059/459/18.
⁶ 27 July 1925, F.0.371/10736, C9789/459/18.
national or arbitral body, and that unless Britain could respond along more conciliatory lines— as she would do according to the draft prepared by the Central Department—the Germans could break off negotiations on grounds which would win general approval. Massigli, the secretary general of the Conference of Ambassadors, denounced the German note as being entirely unacceptable, and he wanted simply to inform the Germans that there was no point in continuing to discuss the pact until they agreed to enter the League unconditionally. Briand, always milder than the Quai d'Orsay, told the Belgian ambassador that while the German note was unacceptable as it stood, it might still form the basis of negotiations.

The French drafted an answer to the German answer to their answer to the original proposal, but long before this was dispatched the allies had progressed to another, parallel stage in their preparations for a conference. Early in May, even before the French had sent Chamberlain the first version of their reply to the German note, the Foreign Office began drafting a security pact, and by the beginning of July Chamberlain was able to submit this to the C.I.D.

The Foreign Office draft pact was a short document of thirteen articles, only one of which ran to more than one clause. Its main points were: all the signatories were to guarantee the inviolability of Germany's frontiers with France and Belgium; France, Belgium and Germany were to renounce war

1 Memorandum by Bennett on a Foreign Office discussion, 22 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, 09784/459/18.
4 This reply was handed over to the German government on 24 August. It refused to accept any of Stresemann's contentions, but was phrased less bluntly than the note of 16 June.
5 This letter to Tyrrell on 13 October Chamberlain gave Lampson the credit for the idea of preparing a British draft of the pact and admitted that he had thought of leaving the French to take the initiative in this matter. He believed that this would have been a crucial error (Chamberlain papers, 6/1/623). Hurst and the Central Department prepared draft pacts on 12 & 13 May 1925 (F.O.371/10731, G6579 & 5580/459/18). The main difference between the two was that Hurst's version guaranteed all the European territory of the contracting states while the Central Department confined its guarantee to the Rhineland (minute by Lampson, 14 May 1925, F.O.371/10731, 06583/459/18).
6 26 June 1925, Cab.24/174, C.P.312(25). Although drafted before the German note of 20 July, it met many of the German objections to the French reply of 16 June.
against each other; the Rhineland states were to conclude arbitration treaties with one another; the guarantee of assistance to any victim of unprovoked aggression was to become effective only when the Council of the League of Nations notified the signatories that an aggression had taken place; and enforcement of other arbitration treaties would not be regarded as violations of the Western pact. This draft was modified in the course of correspondence and discussions with the French, at a conference of legal advisers, and finally at Locarno, but it remained the basis of the final settlement.

At the C.I.D. discussion on the draft treaty there was some unease about the difficulty of defining who was the aggressor and who the aggrieved, and Chamberlain reassured the committee that, according to the Foreign Office draft, if the facts were unclear Britain "was justified in refusing to take action until the question had been referred for consideration to the Council of the League of Nations". He revealed how close his position was to Stresemann's when he declared "in fact our liabilities under the proposed draft were reduced because in the case of one frontier, by making it perfectly clear that we were prepared to make our maximum effort, it was implied that in the case of the other frontiers we were not". He also presumed that under the proposed pact Britain would be required to assist Germany if France should repeat the Ruhr occupation.¹

Cavan supported the draft, saying that the general staff "were unable to read into it any greater commitments than Britain already had under the Treaties of Peace and the Covenant of the League of Nations". He did not take seriously the possibility of a war with France. Chamberlain resisted with success Balfour's attempt to impose a time limit of 25 or 50 years on the pact's duration, but the draft contained a clause according to which Britain might withdraw from her obligations if the international situation changed.² (Later Chamberlain pointed out that the guarantee treaty would define only Britain's obligations, but that it did not restrict her in any way and that outside it she retained her freedom: "we may - in certain cirses. we should - do more, but as to that

¹ At this meeting he also remarked that if France refused to evacuate the Rhineland after the end of the fifteen year period, she would be violating the Treaty of Versailles.
² C.I.D. minutes, 1 July 1925, Cab.2/4, 201(25).
more, we remain masters of our fate".\textsuperscript{1} To his great satisfaction the cabinet and the C.I.D. made only the slightest of amendments to the draft treaty.

Shortly afterwards the draft pact was submitted to the French, and it went through a process similar to that which the two governments and foreign ministries had applied when answering the German note of 9 February. An important difference between the two stages was that, this time, it was Britain which made the initial proposal and France which sought the amendments.

Briand's main criticisms concerned the speed with which Britain would provide assistance in the event of a German attack, although he had other objections to make as well. Under the British draft treaty the guarantee would not come into effect until the League Council had decided whether aggression had really taken place, and he felt that this was no more than a repetition of the League Covenant which had often been recognized as insufficient. He wanted an immediate guarantee.\textsuperscript{2}

Chamberlain appreciated that France would have a just cause for complaint if she were to be attacked by Germany and Britain waited for a League decision before making any move to help her - the clash would take place once more on French soil and the whole purpose of the demilitarization of the Rhineland would have been destroyed. But he did not think that that the British draft had this effect.\textsuperscript{3} Since no guarantor could take automatic action on the mere allegation of one of the parties concerned, they must establish a foolproof method of confirming that aggression had taken place; as he assured Fleuriau, the more certain and obvious the facts, the less would be the delay in coming to a decision on them.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{1} Minute, 6 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, C9186/459/18. The Foreign Office believed that if France attacked Germany in defence of Poland, and Germany launched a successful counter-attack, Britain would not be obliged to defend France. But in such a situation it was almost inconceivable that she would not intervene"either in virtue of obligations under the League Covenant or from sheer political necessity" (memorandum, 18 June 1925, F.O.371/10733, C8209/459/18).

\textsuperscript{2} Briand to Fleuriau, 9 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, C9216/459/18.

\textsuperscript{3} Memorandum, 10 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, C9216/459/18.

\textsuperscript{4} Chamberlain to Fleuriau, 11 July 1925, F.O.371/10737, C9216/459/18.
while Britain was willing to provide assistance "at once", this meant "as soon as the fact that a breach has taken place has definitely been established by the Council", and that if Britain did not get her way in this matter she should proceed no further.¹ Briand was not satisfied, and continued to demand effective, i.e. immediate action.²

The two foreign ministry legal advisers, Hurst and Fromageot, discussed the Anglo-French differences, and Fromageot repeated the claim that in clear cases of aggression, when Britain agreed that a violation had taken place, the guarantee should operate in advance of a League decision. They agreed to propose minor amendments to the Foreign Office draft, but Hurst was unable to accept some of Fromageot's suggestions.³ The Central Department was firmly opposed to giving way to the French on this point, and its maximum concession was agreement that Britain could intervene without waiting for a League Council decision if German troops had actually invaded France. Chamberlain promptly included the demilitarized zone in the area to be affected in this way. Hurst and Lampson forecast correctly that Germany would be unlikely to leave to the independent judgement of one of the contracting parties the decision whether to take action or not.⁴

Briand submitted a revised draft on 31 July.⁵ He wanted, among various other requirements, that the British guarantee would come into effect if Germany violated the disarmament and demilitarization clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, but Chamberlain was now more cautious than at the Foreign Office discussion a fortnight before and he was afraid that this might result in a minor and technical infringement of these clauses being the cause of war.⁶

The two foreign ministers overcame their differences when they met in London between 10 and 12 August, and they agreed on a draft pact which they could propose to the Germans. On

¹ Memorandum by Lampson, 11 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, C9216/459/18.
⁴ Memorandum by Bennett on a Foreign Office discussion, 22 July 1925, F.O.371/10736, C9784/459/18.
⁵ F.O.371/10737, C10146/459/18.
⁶ Cabinet conclusions, 5 Aug. 1925, Cab.23/50, Cab.43(25)2.
the key point in dispute between them it was decided that in the case of an unambiguous attack by one of the signatories against a second, "if the other Contracting Parties are agreed that such violation constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression", they should go to the immediate assistance of the state under attack. Otherwise Britain would wait for a League Council decision. Chamberlain warned Briand that Britain would not become involved if Germany invaded Poland, France invaded Germany, and Germany in turn invaded France.

At this meeting Chamberlain suggested that all the foreign ministries concerned should send their legal advisers to discuss the Anglo-French draft treaty, so that the Germans would be familiar with the general outline of the allied proposals before they would have to negotiate formally at a conference. This was a step which he had favoured for some time. Briand approved of it, and although the Germans were at first unenthusiastic, they rallied to the idea.

The Jurists' Conference was held in London from 31 August to 3 September. The conversations were informal, and it was made clear that any decisions reached would not be binding on the governments concerned. Using the Anglo-French draft of 12 August as a basis, the lawyers discussed the technical aspects of the guarantee and arbitration treaties, and nothing else; problems such as German entry into the League and the effect which an agreement would have on the Rhineland occupation were put to one side. Gaus noted approvingly that the draft opposed only violent frontier changes and did not rule out peaceful change, that there was to be no new renunciation of Alsace-Lorraine and Eupen-Malmedy, and that while under

1 Minutes of Anglo-French conversations, 11 Aug. 1925, C.P.400(25).
2 Cabinet conclusions, 13 Aug. 1925, Cab.23/50, Cab.45(25)1. For the Foreign Office's view of this situation, expressed two months earlier, see above, p. 253, n. 1.
3 D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 25 July 1925, Chamberlain papers, AC 52/239. Stresemann felt that the jurists would become involved in theories and would never solve the problem (Diaries, ii, p. 152 (3 Aug. 1925)). But on 15 Aug. D'Abernon was able to report German satisfaction at the arrangement (to Chamberlain, Chamberlain papers, F.O.800/258).
4 Its members were Hurst, Fromageot and Gaus, Rolin from Belgium and Pilotti from Italy. Descriptions are given by Hurst (4 Sept. 1925, F.O.371/10741, C11425/459/18); Gaus (Locarno Konferenz, pp. 120-31); and Rolin (D.D.B., ii, pp. 376-23). Hurst, whose account is comparatively uninformative, gives the dates as 1 to 4 September).
Article 44 of the Treaty of Versailles France could treat even the lightest violation of the demilitarized zone as an act of war, under the Anglo-French draft treaty she could move against Germany only when a violation "constitutes an unprovoked act of aggression".

However there were several points in the draft treaty with which he was dissatisfied. He protested that the reference to Article 180 of the Treaty of Versailles, which concerned the fortifications on Germany's Southern and Eastern borders, had no connection with the Rhineland pact, and he argued that the Western guarantee would work to France's advantage and against Germany - Britain would help Germany against France only when Belgium and Italy agreed that France had attacked Germany, and Belgium would never give such agreement. According to Gaus, Hurst showed some sympathy for this criticism. Gaus declared that German entry into the League, together with the Eastern guarantee treaties, provided sufficient security for Poland, and he did not think that any German government could win public acceptance of a French guarantee of the German-Polish frontier since this would be misinterpreted in Berlin as giving France the opportunity to intervene in the relations between the two countries.

Several revisions were made to the draft of 12 August, but only on small points, and the principal difficulties remained to be debated a month later at Locarno. But the purpose of the talks had not been to reach agreement on these questions, rather to acquaint Germany with the allies' proposals and to give both sides an idea of the other's aims and problems. In a sense the Jurists' Conference was a rehearsal for Locarno.

It had another, equally important function. From Chamberlain's meetings with Herriot in March onwards, Britain and France presented an unbroken front towards Germany, and every disagreement between them was ironed out in private before tripartite discussions began. This was the main reason for the slow pace of the negotiations. The Jurists' Conference did something to dispel Germany's fears that she might be presented with an allied Diktat as she had been at Versailles.  

1 Jacobson points out that until Locarno Stresemann had nothing whatever to show for his initiative; the evacuation of the Ruhr had been arranged a year earlier; the Anglo-French pact had been killed by the British cabinet; and Chamberlain's anxiety to evacuate Cologne preceded the German note. He had quite failed to divide the allies (Locarno Diplomacy, pp.58-9).
Nevertheless the German extreme Right remained unreconciled to an agreement with Britain and France on any terms which the allies would be likely to accept, and they continued to exert pressure on the government. In an effort to burden Stresemann with the full responsibility for the negotiations and for any concessions which would have to be made, the DNVP parliamentary chairman, Interior Minister Schiele, opposed Luther's participation in the conference, but Stresemann ensured that the chancellor would accompany him. He remained anxious to lessen the DNVP's hostility to the pact negotiations and to retain them in the cabinet, and he yielded readily to their demand that Germany's reply to the invitation to the Locarno Conference should include a rejection of the war-guilt clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. The foreign ministry drafted an answer and the German ambassadors duly informed the allied governments - in terms as moderate as was possible - that entry into the League must not be understood as implying acceptance of war-guilt, and that the Cologne zone should be evacuated before Germany's entry. This provoked an indignant reaction in London and Paris, but it did no permanent damage to Germany's relations with the allies, and it helped satisfy her nationalists for the time being.

The cabinet laid down an exacting set of instructions and objectives for the German delegation at Locarno. Its guiding

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1. Cabinet minutes, 22 Sept. 1925, BA, R 43 I/425. Schiele was surprisingly blunt. He referred to the lead given by Britain and France "die nur ihre Aussenminister entsenden würden, dass beim Scheitern der Verhandlungen auch nur ein Scheitern diesen Aussenminister in Betracht kommen könnte". Luther had already suggested that Schiele accompany Stresemann so that the DNVP would be bound by any decision which would be reached (D'Abernon to Chamberlain, 27 Aug. 1925, describing a conversation with Stresemann, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/258; Stresemann, Diaries, ii, p. 165).


3. Locarno Konferenz, pp. 140-41. The declaration took the form of a verbal explanation accompanying the delivery of the written acceptance of the invitation to Locarno.

4. Chamberlain told D'Abernon that "the German government, like a nagging woman, must have the last word" (26 Sept. 1925, F.0.371/10740, C12224/459/18) and that "your Germans - I use the possessive pronoun as one says to one's wife: 'your housemaid - are very nearly intolerable" (30 Sept. 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/258). This was an unusually explicit example of how D'Abernon was seen as the "Lord Protector of Germany". Earlier Chamberlain felt differently and he had told D'Abernon that he thought it had been foolish to include the war-guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles (2 June 1925, Chamberlain papers, F.0.800/258).
principle was to be the memorandum of 20 July. It was to make no renunciation of any German population or territory and was to insist that the Eastern frontier would not come under arbitration. There must be a serious attempt to deal with the problem of general disarmament before Germany entered the League. The delegation must express its opposition to Article 16, and must ensure that not only would the Cologne zone be evacuated, but also that the occupation period in the second and third zones be shortened and that the nature of the occupation be changed.\(^1\)

The objective shared by Britain and France was simple in comparison. It was to win German agreement to their draft treaty, or, if changes would be necessary, to retain all its substance. On the whole they were optimistic about the prospects of the conference, and the general atmosphere had been much improved when, in July and August, France finally evacuated the Ruhr and the sanction towns which she had occupied in 1921. The United States was using its considerable influence in favour of a settlement.\(^2\) The ground for the conference had been well prepared, each side knew what it and what the other wanted, and many of the problems had been eliminated long before the delegations met in Locarno.

The Rhineland was Chamberlain's primary concern, and he felt that the Jurists' Conference indicated that no great difficulties were likely to occur in connection with the Western pact, but he was afraid that even with good will it might be impossible to reach agreement on the problems associated with the German-Polish frontier. He also worried lest French engagements in Eastern Europe might impose indirectly obligations which Britain was unwilling to assume directly.\(^3\)

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1 n.d., BA, R 43 I/435; Locarno Konferenz, p. 143. This was virtually identical with a list prepared by Stresemann himself (Diaries, ii, pp. 165-67 (23 Sept. 1925)). At Locarno Luther was much influenced by the cabinet's instructions and by his fear of DNVP opposition to any agreement reached.

2 Germany's payment of reparations was utterly dependent on American finance, and France had not yet reached an agreement on the repayment of her war debts. The Belgian ambassador in Paris remarked that "le pacte sera signé parce que telle est la volonté de l'Angleterre et des États-Unis; il est difficile pour la France de résister aux deux Puissances qui seules détiennent l'argent dont elle a un si pressant besoin" (Gaiffier to Vandervelde, 26 Sept. 1925, D.D.B., ii, p. 334).

3 Memorandum, 2 Oct. 1925, F.0.371/10741, C12491/459/18.
But apprehensions about Poland and the Eastern arbitration treaties did not seriously dampen the general optimism, the near-certainty that the security question was about to be solved and that its solution would have far-reaching effects.

The Locarno Conference lasted twelve days, from 5 to 16 October, and apart from a few lapses towards the end, it was characterized by an extraordinary cordiality and mutual understanding. At the first meeting the foreign ministers accepted Chamberlain's proposal that the Anglo-French draft, as modified at the Jurists' Conference, should form the basis of the discussions. Agreement was reached promptly on the uncontroversial clauses, and some difficult or technical points were referred back to the jurists.

The pattern of the conference was a series of attacks by the German delegation on several articles in the draft treaty and a reaction, either yielding or unyielding, by the allies. The Germans wasted no time, and on the first day they launched an onslaught against two of the clauses. Stresemann objected to the requirement that at least two signatory powers must petition the Council of the League before the treaty could lapse, arguing that it would be easier for any of the allies to find a partner in this matter than it would be for her. Chamberlain and Briand protested at length that such an attitude implied the continued existence of two rival groups in Europe, precisely what the security pact was intended to avert. But they gave way.¹ At the jurists' meeting Gaus criticized the permission given to a guarantor to take immediate action in the case of a flagrant attack—the result of lengthy negotiation between Britain and France during July and August—and claimed that if the guarantor state itself could decide whether aggression had taken place, German public opinion would feel that Britain would help France against Germany, but would not help Germany against France. He wished to impose a more definite or impartial obligation.² This too was accepted by the allies, and the result of the change was that the guarantor powers would have less discretion in deciding whether flagrant violations had taken place.

¹ Minutes of first meeting, 5 Oct. 1925, F.0.371/10742, C12742/459/18; Locarno-Konferenz, pp. 144-49.
² Minutes of meeting of the British delegation, 5 Oct. 1925, F.0.371/10741, C12712/459/18. Hurst remarked that such an alteration would not be unwelcome to Britain.
The third alteration which the Germans sought concerned the Eastern arbitration treaties. They were determined not to accept a French guarantee of their arrangements with Poland and Czechoslovakia, but Briand refused to budge on this question. He declared that France would sooner abandon the Rhineland pact than abandon her guarantee of the Eastern arbitration treaties and asked why, if it were agreed that the provisions for arbitration should rule out force in all circumstances, should Germany worry at the obligations thus assumed being specially guaranteed. He expressed himself willing to facilitate the German government's task, but pointed out that France's public opinion, as well as Germany's, had to be taken into account.

Stresemann replied that in her February proposals Germany had expressed her willingness to join the League and had included a reference to arbitration treaties other than those forming part of the Rhineland pact, with the simple object of satisfying France. The guarantee treaties would be supplemented by Germany's entry into the League and by arbitration treaties, and he regarded this as sufficient.¹

The Eastern treaties did not prove to be the great stumbling block which many had dreaded, and the question was solved along simple lines according to a formula worked out by Hurst. There was no mention of the Eastern arbitration treaties in the Rhineland pact, but additions were made to the list of circumstances in which a resort to violent measures would be legitimate, and references to two articles in the Treaty of Versailles would allow France to attack Germany in defence of Poland.² France did not guarantee the Eastern arbitration treaties, but confined herself to concluding separate treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, independent of the mutual guarantee pact. Germany did not recognize this arrangement, or, naturally, her Eastern frontiers themselves. Both sides claimed victory, but the Germans did so with far greater cause.

¹ Minutes of second meeting, 6 Oct. 1925, F.0.371/10742, C12942/459/18; Locarno-Konferenz, pp. 149-54.
² France would be enabled to invade Germany in Poland's defence if Germany attacked her without recourse to the Convention's conciliation procedure or even if conciliation had failed, under Article 15, Clause 7, which stated that if the Council could not reach unanimous agreement "members of the League reserve to themselves the right to take such action as they shall consider necessary for the maintenance of right and justice".
By 8 October, the fourth day of the conference, when this problem was on the way towards being solved and after many minor points had been cleared up, Stresemann was able to tell Chamberlain that the question of Article 16 was the only serious obstacle to an agreement. At the meeting on that day Chamberlain pressed for German entry into the League, and Stresemann retaliated by referring to Germany's difficulties in connection with Article 16, and also to her claim, in principle, to be able to have colonial mandates. He opposed any transit of League troops through Germany on their way to attack Russia, and even objected to German participation in an economic boycott organized by the League; because of her powerlessness Germany must avoid a situation in which another state would declare war on her, and her participation in a boycott of Russia would be followed by a Russian declaration of war. Luther neatly reversed the normal comments when he declared that Germany wished to be a League member in the fullest sense, but "it was necessary to find a formula which gave to Germany safety and the feeling that safety existed".

Chamberlain admitted that if he were a German he would no doubt have sought to do what the German government was doing - a considerable change from his earlier intolerance of its concessions to the nationalist Right - but he and Briand tried at great length and with a great variety of arguments to persuade the Germans to agree to unconditional membership of the League. They would not, and in the end it was the allies who gave way. Along with the various treaties, the allies signed a letter giving their "interpretation" of Article 16 in which

1 Chamberlain to Tyrrell, 8 Oct. 1925, describing a conversation with Stresemann, F.O.371/10742, C12881/459/18. He remarked that Germany's opposition to Article 16 was "more deep rooted and uncompromising than I had thought possible" (memorandum, 8 Oct. 1925, F.O.371/10741, C12780/459/18).

2 In his diary Stresemann wrote that Chamberlain "was inwardly quite prepared to resign the French colonies to us, just as Briand was certainly prepared to resign those of his English allies" (Diaries, ii, p. 482 (13 Oct. 1925)).

3 As if to emphasize that she had not abandoned her balancing act, on 12 October, four days after this discussion, Germany signed a trade treaty with Russia.

4 Minutes of the fourth meeting, 8 Oct. 1925, F.O.371/10742, C13094/459/18. On 16 October the Germans made a last-minute attempt to extort further concessions, claiming that the League's scheme of military investigation created problems if she were to become a member. The allies were indignant that a completely new condition should be raised at that late stage, and the Germans retreated (Chamberlain to F.O., 16 Oct. 1925, F.O.371/10742, C13004/459/18).
they agreed that a member state was "bound to co-operate
lozally and effectively in support of the Convention and in
resistance to any act of aggression to an extent which is
compatible with its military situation and takes its geograph-
ical situation into account".

Germany's main objective was to secure the prompt evacuation
of Cologne and a change in the nature of the occupation in the
other two zones. On 12 October, after all the other major
issues had been solved, Stresemann requested that the allies
fix a date for evacuation. Briand pleaded that he had not the
authority to make any such agreement at Locarno, but he assured
the Germans that if the pact went through there would be an
immediate detente which would "render impossible a state of
affairs which was possible before", and hinted that certain
allowances might be made even though Germany had not disarmed
sufficiently. He went so far as to say that "once agreement
had been reached and a serious beginning made, he would accept
the German word as to its execution, and thus accelerate the
evacuation". Chamberlain supported him and told the Germans
that if the pact materialized British public opinion would
expect changes to accompany it, and that once security had
been achieved, other things would follow naturally. But he
was as anxious as Briand not to give the impression that he
had bought the pact by making promises on matters outside the
scope of the conference.

Both men made it clear that they intended to give the
Germans what they wanted. Chamberlain told them he thought it
important to hasten evacuation as much as possible and Briand
promised to tell the Chamber that the conditions of the occupa-
tion must be reviewed as a result of the pact. All this made
little impact, and Stresemann and Luther remained dissatisfied.
Pleading difficulties with the Reichstag and reluctance to
return empty-handed, they wanted a definite promise of early
evacuation. ¹ They returned to the fray three days later, at
the meeting of 15 October,² but on this point alone they had
to give way. They received the substance of what they wanted,
the near-certainty that Cologne would be evacuated in the
immediate future even though German disarmament did not meet
the requirements of the Treaty of Versailles, but they were

¹ Minutes of the sixth meeting, 12 Oct. 1925, F.O.371/10742,
C13004/459/18.
² AA, RM, Sicherheitsprotokolle Locarno.
denied the shadow, a formal announcement to this effect coinciding with the initialling of the guarantee pact. (In their great concern with such an announcement they reflected German public opinion.)

On 16 October seven different treaties were initialled, six arbitration treaties between Germany and her Eastern and Western neighbours, and the Western guarantee pact. In the first article of this pact all the signatories guaranteed the inviolability of the demilitarized zone and of Germany's frontiers with France and Belgium, while the remaining nine provided the machinery by which the guarantee would be made effective. The second article contained an undertaking by France, Belgium and Germany not to attack each other, although there was a list of situations (self-defence, action in support of Article 16, etc.) in which the use of force would be legitimate. Article 3 covered arbitration; conflicts over legal rights were to be submitted to judicial decision, all others to a conciliation committee or to the League Council. The fourth article was probably the most important. It provided that the League Council should authorize action to defend a state under attack, except in the case of flagrant aggression when the guarantor states could act on their own initiative. The fifth article guaranteed the Western arbitration treaties, the sixth laid down that the Locarno agreement would not invalidate rights and obligations connected with the Treaty of Versailles or the Dawes Plan, and the seventh that it would not restrict the authority and duties of the League. Article 8 concerned the pact's duration and the procedure for annulling it, Article 9 ensured that no obligation would be laid on the British Dominions without their consent, and Article 10 concerned the coming into force of the Treaty, declaring in particular that it would be valid only after Germany had entered the League.

In both France and Germany the Locarno Treaty was received with mixed feelings. In general French public opinion was enthusiastically in favour of it and saw the agreement as providing real peace and real security, but the Right remained dissatisfied, it still yearned for a British alliance against

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1 The allied letter interpreting Article 16 in Germany's interests was signed as well.
2 This proviso, which had also featured in the 1919 guarantee treaty, marked a step towards the Dominions' full independence.
Germany, and complained that France had paid too high a price for her security, that Germany had gained more at Locarno than she had.\(^1\) And despite all the concessions which Stresemann and Luther had wrung from the allies, opposition to the Treaty was strongest in Germany. Cologne was still occupied, the status quo in the West had been accepted, and Germany would be obliged to enter the League. For many nationalists such losses outweighed the gains which had been won. While the negotiations were still in progress Seeckt hoped for the collapse of the conference since "an agreement can only mean a victory for the enemy",\(^2\) and after his return from Locarno Stresemann was unable to prevent the withdrawal of the DNVP ministers from the cabinet and the party's adoption of a policy of outright opposition to the Treaty.\(^3\) But even without any "reactions" to the Treaty, in the form of changes in the Rhineland occupation, he was able to win a parliamentary majority for ratification.\(^4\) The evacuation of Cologne was begun only on 1 December, the day on which the pact was signed solemnly in London. Germany duly applied for admission to the League in February 1926, although she did not enter until the following September.

The Locarno agreement was greeted with euphoria in Britain, and even Amery, who had been most suspicious of any European commitment, was able to assure Chamberlain that he had brought back peace with honour all round.\(^5\) In the summer Chamberlain had told the C.I.D. that the government's three main aims were

\(^1\) Poincaré in particular was hostile towards the Locarno Treaty (Laroche, Au Quai d'Orsay, p. 215). But when he returned to power nine months later he retained Briand as foreign minister and allowed him to continue directing French foreign policy. This was perhaps the most remarkable of all the proofs of the defeat which France had experienced between September 1923 and October 1925.

\(^2\) To his wife (Rabenau, Seeckt, p. 240). However he modified his attitude when he discovered that the treaty was not quite as bad as he had first thought.

\(^3\) The occasion of their withdrawal was Stresemann's refusal to agree to making a statement that the pact would not rule out a peaceful reacquisition of Alsace-Lorraine. He thought that this would be too provocative (Turner, Stresemann, 213).

\(^4\) The vote was 292 to 174, with the normal combination of DNVP, Nazis and Communists voting against the pact.

\(^5\) To Chamberlain, 20 Oct. 1925, Chamberlain papers, AG 52/61. The acclaim encouraged Chamberlain to identify himself with the treaty, and soon he was able to write to his sister "it was my policy... mine in conception and still more mine in execution... no-one else (except perhaps Tyrrell) inside or outside the office would have seen the importance of the (continued)
"to make it an absolute impossibility for Germany again to overrun Europe...to induce France to adopt a more friendly and reasonable frame of mind towards Germany...to prevent a German-Russian understanding framed against the rest of Europe".  

The Locarno Treaty seemed to go some distance towards achieving these objectives, and he was able to assure the Commons that he did not think "that the obligations of this country could have been more narrowly circumscribed to the conditions under which we have an actual vital national interest than in this Treaty of Locarno". Unlike its French and German counterparts the British Right was perfectly satisfied with the settlement, a sure sign that Britain had got everything she wanted.

It has long been a cliché that the details of the Treaty were less important than the fact of its signature, and that the late 1920s were influenced less by the guarantee or arbitration treaties than by the "spirit of Locarno", the feeling that the aftermath of the war had finally been dissipated and international friendship would replace international distrust. In Britain it induced a mood of utter satisfaction. A Foreign Office memorandum written in early 1926 declared that "we have no territorial ambitions nor designs for aggrandisement. We have got all that we want — perhaps more. Our sole object is to keep what we have and live in peace". After Locarno

early moves or made them" (31 Oct. 1925, Chamberlain papers, 5/1/367). His initial lack of interest in the Stresemann-D'Abernon proposals was quite forgotten.

1 C.I.D. minutes, 22 June 1925, Cab. 2/4, 200(10).

2 Hansard, 5s., HC, 183, col. 450 (18 Nov. 1925). Jordan saw Locarno as "more a British than a French solution of the security problem — more a pact of understanding than, from the French standpoint, an effective Treaty of Guarantee" (Great Britain, France and the German Problem, p. 56). It reflected Britain's interests (or lack of interests) and her predominant role throughout the 1925 negotiations by providing only for peace in the West. As Medlicott put it, like the Washington Naval Conference of 1921, Locarno "purchased a temporary cessation of trouble in certain spheres by arrangements which created conditions of fresh troubles elsewhere" (British Foreign Policy since Versailles, p. 84).

3 Even in November 1925 Grey told the Lords that it was already a commonplace "that the spirit of Locarno is more important than the Treaties themselves" (Hansard, 5s., HL, 62, col. 854, (24 Nov. 1925).

4 The Foreign Policy of His Majesty's Government, n.d. (April 1926), P.0.37/11848, W2260/1/50). In this memorandum it was remarked that "war and rumours of war, quarrels and friction, in any corner of the world spell loss and harm to British commercial and financial interests...Locarno and the unemployed have an intimate connection".
France lost for a time much of her fear that the invasion of 1914 might be repeated, although she continued to uphold the integrity of the Treaty of Versailles and to remain apprehensive about her protégés' safety. Germany was relieved that Cologne had been evacuated at last and that France would be unable to occupy any more of her territory as a means of enforcing reparations payments or other aspects of the Treaty, but she remained as determined as ever to undo the 1919 settlement. While France saw Locarno as a final peace, even as a reinforcement of the Versailles Treaty, Germany saw it as a step towards treaty revision. She continued to press for the evacuation of the Koblenz and Mainz zones, and to refuse any negotiation of an "Eastern Locarno" which would consolidate her frontier with Poland.

René Massigli summed up the years after 1925 when he distinguished between "le Locarno spirit, l'esprit de Locarno et le Locarnogeist". Franco-German tension never really disappeared, and despite Stresemann's success in winning evacuation of the whole Rhineland five years before the date laid down by the Treaty of Versailles, relations between the two countries gradually worsened towards the end of the decade. However it was not until after Stresemann was dead, Briand in decline and Chamberlain once more in opposition that the dispute over the proposed Austro-German Customs Union in 1931 resulted in an open enmity comparable to that of the early 1920s. The basic problems in Franco-German relations survived the Locarno Treaty, but their intensity was much diminished.

The Locarno settlement lasted little more than ten years and it had become frayed at the edges long before Hitler denounced it and remilitarized the Rhineland in March 1936. France's position was shown to be even more insecure than Clemenceau and his successors had feared, and Poincare's policy seemed to have been vindicated.

1 Shortly after Locarno Laroche suggested that, if Germany were prepared to offer an adequate sum in reparations payments, France would evacuate Koblenz and Mainz at once (memorandum by Wigram, 5 Nov. 1925, describing a conversation with Laroche, D.B.F.P., 1A. i, pp. 104-05, C14399/21/18). But nothing came of this idea.

2 Knatchbull-Hugessen, A Diplomat in Peace and War, p. 53.

3 The Locarno Treaty did not authorize France to launch an immediate attack on Germany when Hitler occupied the Rhineland, since this move was obviously not part of a German invasion of France.
Looking at the events of the early 1920s in the light of what happened between 1936 and 1940, Locarno seems to have been the right answer to the wrong question. There was never any real danger that Germany would invade France except in a war beginning with German pressure to the East - Alsace-Lorraine was unimportant in comparison with the Polish Corridor. Nor was it ever likely that, if France were invaded, Britain would stand aloof. What destroyed the Versailles system and the peace of Europe was issues such as Germany's unwillingness to accept the verdict of 1918-19, the artificial distribution of power throughout the whole period before 1936, and the vulnerability of the Eastern states. Another important factor, perhaps an essential one, was the Depression.

Locarno made little impact on such problems. Combined with the Dawes Plan it went some distance towards building up a new prosperity and reconciling Germany to her post-war situation, but the advance made was soon lost in the misery and uncertainty of the slump. Locarno tended to undermine rather than to strengthen the frontiers of the Eastern European countries. It was an act of mutual appeasement in which all sides managed to strike a profitable balance between loss and gain. But it encouraged complacency in Britain, it did not remove France's unease, it left Germany still far removed from a position of equality with the Western powers, and the concessions which followed it were too few and came too late.

Yet Locarno was more than the high-point of a period which ended with the Depression and the revival of international tensions, or, advancing several years, with Hitler and the Nazi conquests. It also marked the end of the conflicts and

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1 As well as differentiating between East and West, in theory the Locarno Treaty made it more difficult for France to protect Poland and Czechoslovakia. Before Locarno she could assist Poland under any circumstances, but after it she could invade Germany immediately only if she herself were first attacked. Otherwise she would have to await a League decision or deliberation before acting. Britain used the negotiations to display her relative lack of interest in the East and especially in the Polish Corridor - an ironic development in view of the occasion of war in 1939.

2 Britain continued her disarmament programme, so that in 1932 her land forces had not reached the limit set for them in 1923, and after Locarno air force development and shipbuilding were slowed down (Wolfers, Britain and France between the Wars, pp. 365-66).
disturbances of the post-war years and the beginning of a period of relative tranquility. As an attempt to bring about a lasting settlement or as the first step in a long-term peaceful evolution, it was a manifest failure. As an attempt to solve a serious problem which had plagued international relations for nearly seven years, it was a complete success.

This problem, the question of French security, was basically irrational, it was unreal in comparison with questions such as the extent to which Germany should be appeased or contained, or the extent to which the status quo should be stabilized or altered. France was foolish to attach as much importance as she did to the threat of a new German invasion, just as she was foolish to antagonize both Russia and Germany at the same time. But such apprehensions were natural, and the fact that they existed, influenced French policy and had a most disruptive effect, was sufficient to make them a "real" and important problem.

If the weaknesses of the Versailles system can be compared to a disease, then Locarno was a partial cure. It eliminated the symptoms of the illness, and did this so well that for a while there was hope that the patient had recovered altogether. If the illness could have been contained long enough the physical and psychological improvement resulting from the cure of the symptoms might have given the patient the strength to overcome the disease completely, but, infected by a new virus, he eventually succumbed. Yet the partial and superficial cure had been valuable. In place of the recurrent feverish crises which had debilitated him in the past, the patient was given several years of reasonably normal and healthy life.

1 This is not to suggest that Locarno was a magic formula which, if applied earlier, would have averted much of the post-war conflict. Not only were the details of the settlement less important than the mood which followed them, they were also dependent on the mood which preceded them.
Appendix: A List of Office-holders, 1918-1925.

Amery, Leopold: First Lord of the Admiralty, 1922-23; Colonial Secretary, 1924-29.


Bennett, John Sterndale: Second Secretary in Foreign Office Western Department, 1923-26.

Berthelot, Philippe: Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, 1920-22, 1925-33.


Bonar Law, Andrew: Prime Minister, Oct. 1922 - May 1923.


Brockdorff-Rantzau, Count Ulrich: German Foreign Minister, Jan. - June 1919; Ambassador in Moscow, 1922-28.


Chamberlain, Austen: Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1919 - 1921; Foreign Secretary, Nov. 1924 - 1929.

Chicherin, Georgi: Russian Commisar for Foreign Affairs, 1918-28.

Churchill, Winston: Secretary of War, 1919-21; Colonial Secretary, 1921-22; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1924-29.


Crowe, Sir Eyre: Assistant Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1912-1920; Permanent Under-Secretary, Nov. 1920 - April 1925.

Cuno, Wilhelm: German Chancellor, Nov. 1922 - Aug. 1923.

Curzon, Lord: Acting Foreign Secretary, Jan. - Oct. 1919; Foreign Secretary, Oct. 1919 - Jan. 1924; Chairman of C.I.D., Nov. 1924 - March 1925.


Derby, Lord: British Ambassador in Paris, 1918 - Nov. 1920; Secretary of War, 1922-24.

Ebert, Friedrich: German President, 1919-25.


Gaus, Friedrich: Head of the Legal Department of the German Foreign Ministry, 1923-36.

Hankey, Sir Maurice: Secretary of the Cabinet, 1916-38.


Herriot, Edouard: French Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, June 1924 - April 1925.
Hoesch, Leopold von: German Ambassador in Paris, 1924-33.
Jones, Thomas: Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet, 1916-30.
Kerr, Philip: Lloyd George's Private Secretary, 1916-21.
Lampson, Miles: Head of Foreign Office Central Department, 1923-26.
Luther, Hans: German Chancellor, Jan. 1925 - 1926.
MacDonald, James Ramsay: Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Jan. - Nov. 1924.
Maltzan, Baron Ago von: Head of Eastern Department in German Foreign Ministry, 1921-22; State Secretary, Dec. 1922 - Dec. 1924.
Marx, Wilhelm: German Chancellor, Nov. 1923 - Jan. 1925.
Nicolson, Harold: First Secretary in Foreign Office Central Department, 1920-30.
Poincaré, Raymond: French President, 1913-20; Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Jan. 1922 - June 1924.
Rathenau, Walter: German Minister of Reconstruction, May - Oct. 1921; Foreign Minister, Jan. - June 1922.
Rosenberg, Friedrich: German Foreign Minister, Nov. 1922 - Aug. 1923.
Schubert, Karl von: Head of English Department of German Foreign Ministry, 1920-24; State Secretary, Dec. 1924 - 1930.
Streesmann, Gustav: German Chancellor, Aug. - Nov. 1923; Foreign Minister, Aug. 1923 - 1929.
Tyrrell, Sir William: Assistant Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1920-25; Permanent Under-Secretary, 1925-28.
Vansittart, Robert: Private Secretary to Foreign Secretary, 1920-24.
Wirth, Joseph: German Chancellor, May 1921 - Nov. 1922.
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