

BRITAIN AND WESTERN

EUROPEAN SECURITY

1919 - 1923

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE	
I. The Coalition and the Post-War Era	1
II. The Quest for Imperial Unity	43
III. The Security Question at the Paris Peace Conference. . .	84
IV. The Reconsideration of the Security Question	117
V. Security: Lloyd George's Final Attempt.	149
VI. The Aftermath: Security Policy under the Conservatives.	184
VII. Conclusions,	213
Bibliography	220

PREFACE

I came to write this thesis on Britain and West European Security 1919-1923 out of a desire to look realistically at those influences which are the foundation for the direction of International Relations. I wrote from the British viewpoint because of my own interests and the resources available.

Security is the central theme around which this thesis is written. The definitions given of its use by the British in the period 1918-1923 are confusing. W. M. Jordan wrote that what the British wanted in Europe in the inter-war period "was not the creation of a balance of power . . . but rather a Europe whose ordering should command such general assent that the very justice of its arrangements would provide the true guarantee of their maintenance."¹ Thomas Jones took a differing point of view, stating that the British Prime Minister was worried about the "balance of power in Europe and its restoration."² Charles Mowat took yet another view. He stated that "the foundation of Lloyd George's foreign policy was conciliation, as advocated in his Fontainebleu memorandum. The war was over, and a lasting peace would follow, not from the dominance of the victors, but from bringing back the defeated and outcasts into the community of nations."³ It would be easy enough to accept any of these schemes, but in this thesis I have used security in a wider sense.

¹W. M. Jordan, Great Britain, France and the German Problem 1919-1939, (London: 1934), p. 2.

²T. Jones, Lloyd George, (Cambridge: 1951), p. 168.

³C. L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, 1918-1940, (London: 1955), p. 53.

A just analogy would be to perceive of British security in this period as three overlapping and interdependent circles. Each constitutes a form of security, with the first, Imperial security, the second, National security, and the third, Western European security. Although all three are inseparable, only the first and last rings are dealt with, with emphasis on the last. The Empire was strong and, in 1918, united, and there was peace on almost all its fringes. Britain had the world's strongest navy, while Germany, her previous major opponent, had lost hers along with her colonial possessions. It was in Western and Central Europe, where there was chaos, that there was little security and it is there, in this period that Britain needed it the most. This thesis focuses on Britain's attempts to achieve security in Western Europe, and deals with the other two forms only as they reflect on it.

For Britain, Western European security in this period meant stabilizing and rejuvenating Europe. It was hoped to create a stable European equilibrium to underpin peace, to foster trade, and to avoid British involvement in another war. Hence British security policy was a political and diplomatic policy more so than a military policy. Although there was some recognition of a potential military security threat from France in late 1921 and in 1922, it is not until the summer of 1923, with the British move to increase their air force, that 'security' was given an additional military meaning.

For Britain the notion of Western European security did not entail the concept of a balance of military power on the continent. Rather, it appears to have been assumed that France would have a military predominance

over the defeated and partially disarmed Germany. Essentially, however, it was stability that was to ensure security, after the Versailles Treaty, because it was believed that the treaty had achieved an equilibrium of economic potential within Europe. The one consistent factor of Britain's security policy was the entente with France, which kept open the avenues of involvement in Europe.

It is the British government's perception of security which provides the starting point for this thesis. The relationship of those specific individuals who were concerned with security policy will be shown, to determine the cohesiveness of the government's actions.

Although the first date mentioned in this thesis is December 1916, the real point of origin is the Paris Peace Conference. For practical purposes, security issues evolved out of the proceedings leading up to the Versailles Treaty, and hence the Peace Conference has been dealt with at some length in both the second and third chapters.

This thesis is broken down into six chapters. The first sets out the interrelationship of that group within the Coalition government particularly concerned with security policy; and shows its awareness of the contemporary situation in both Britain and Europe. The second chapter sets out Britain's struggle to maintain the unity of the Empire and also good relations with the United States. This is highlighted by the problems surrounding the question of whether or not to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The third chapter describes the form British policy took at the Paris Peace Conference, and sets out the conflict between the British and the French security policies, under the four headings of the Rhineland,

Demilitarization, Reparations and the Saar. The fourth chapter deals with the continuing post-war clashes of British and French policies from the Treaty of Versailles through to the Cannes Conference. It looks at the French drive for tangible security and the British attempts to counter the French moves and push for a moderate settlement of Europe's problems. The fifth chapter deals with the Cannes and Genoa Conferences, the climax for the Coalition Government's security efforts, and sets out the connecting reasons for their failure. The Genoa Conference was the climax for the Coalition's concept of security, i.e., a rehabilitated Germany, the reintroduction of Russia into European affairs, and hence a stabilized Europe. The sixth chapter deals with the policy of the Conservative Government, which came into office in October, 1922, and contrasts its nature to that of the Coalition government. It seeks to contrast the manner in which the two governments conducted foreign policy, and sets out the course by which the Conservative government meant to achieve success.

It should be noted that, with the aid of the historian's or political analyst's gifts of hindsight and overview, this study of Britain and the Western European security question might easily have presented the British policy as a natural progression. To have done so, however, would have been to distort historical actuality. The political actors of the time, when confronted with the real situation, were in fact ambivalent, and on occasion seem to have favoured the same policy for different reasons. They did not necessarily always think of matters dealt with in this thesis in terms of "the security question" or to have always attached very

specific meanings to such terms as pacts, guarantees, alliances, or "the entente." The object of the thesis as a whole is to examine the complex bases of British security policy, to set forth the means by which the attainment of the policy objectives was attempted, and to give some explanation of the reasons for its lack of success in this period.

CHAPTER I

THE COALITION AND THE POST-WAR ERA

The time imperatively calls for a government by a single man, assisted by the ablest experts . . . a dictatorship . . . is inevitable The logic of events must place the conduct of the war into the hands of a single man, although his supremacy may be disguised by giving him a number of colleagues who in reality should be his subordinates.

Politicus. -
Fortnightly Review, January 4, 1917.

In order to make comprehensible the West European security policy pursued by the British Government in the years 1919-1923, it is first necessary to examine briefly some aspects of the institutional framework within which it was formed. Once the relationship of the leading men within this framework has been shown it is further necessary to outline their comprehension of general European conditions.

David Lloyd George became Prime Minister of the United Kingdom on December 7, 1916. Immediately upon replacing Mr. Asquith he set about organizing his government to allow for a more efficient and dynamic way of conducting the war. In the process he was to accrue enough authority to make himself virtually a civilian dictator, and with the war's end it became very difficult to shake him loose from the power he had concentrated. For the quick, decisive, conduct of the war, Lloyd George created a war cabinet. To ensure this cabinet's ability to act quickly, a special cabinet secretariat was organized. To keep himself informed and able to act decisively, Lloyd George created his own personal secretariat.

These mechanisms enabled his Coalition government to act decisively to win the war. Their common cause was victory followed by peace and normality. Their sole point of adhesion was Lloyd George. Of these mechanisms, only the secretariats survived the end of the war and only the cabinet secretariat survived Lloyd George's downfall. Through them, Lloyd George was able to concentrate his authority, while around him was formed a small foreign policy decision-making group which sought the solutions to Britain's problems.

Lloyd George was the archstone of the Coalition government. It was the Liberal support that he brought with him that gave the Coalition their majority. Yet, although Lloyd George held the Coalition together, Andrew Bonar Law gave it much of its strength. Bonar Law could be considered Lloyd George's partner in the Coalition whereas other important persons in the Coalition were his lieutenants.¹ Bonar Law and Lloyd George worked closely together and consulted each other constantly, aided by their side by side residences at No. 10 and No. 11 Downing Street.² Robert Blake, Bonar Law's biographer, states that "throughout their joint tenure of power their friendship was never marred by a single quarrel." The fact that they

¹Bonar Law was the natural alternative as head of the Conservative Party to form a government on Asquith's downfall on December 5, 1916. Bonar Law had consented to try and form a government if Asquith would serve under him with Lloyd George. Otherwise he informed the King that he believed Lloyd George was the best choice. This led the way to Lloyd George becoming Prime Minister and cemented the close friendship and working relationship of the two men, in: Robert Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1955), pp. 336-337.

²Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey, (London: 1954), pp. 403-404.

worked easily and efficiently together was collaborated by Stanley Baldwin who at Bonar Law's death described it as "the most perfect partnership in political history."³ Their friendship survived even their campaign duels of late 1922. In the middle of the campaign Bonar Law wrote to Sir Robert Borden in Canada, that he hoped their "friendship will not be broken or even permanently impaired."⁴

Bonar Law was to be the key to Lloyd George's strength. With much of the Liberal Party, all its leaders, and all its official machinery opposing Lloyd George and his Coalition, Lloyd George's personal political base was weak. He relied for much of his strength on the Conservative Party and especially "Bonar Law and his capacity to keep in line a number of men who had little confidence in Lloyd George."⁵ Bonar Law was also to fulfil an invaluable function by defending the Coalition Government in the House of Commons. The Coalition Government that Lloyd George introduced to the House of Commons on December 14, 1916 was radically altered from the previous one. The most significant change was the creation of a War Cabinet which was solely concerned with conducting the war.⁶ The War Cabinet was an institutional change that established not only the relationship of Bonar Law to Lloyd George, but was also the structure that created

³ Ibid., p. 343.

⁴ Ibid., p. 469.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 343-344.

⁶ Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), V, Vol. 88, December 14, 1916, pp. 809-811. The War Cabinet was composed of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Milner, Curzon and Arthur Henderson.

Lloyd George's authority. The members of the War Cabinet were relieved of all departmental duties and the theory was that they were to devote all their time and energy to the central direction of the war effort, upon which the total might of the Empire was to be concentrated. All other Cabinet Ministers were outside the War Cabinet, although they attended when called, to advise on specific issues. Their function was strictly limited to their departments and the carrying out of the War Cabinet directives. As can be seen, this concentrated the policy and decision-making responsibilities in the hands of a five man cabinet, chaired by Lloyd George, which was close to a civilian dictatorship.

Bonar Law's function was to represent the government. He took over the Prime Minister's parliamentary functions and maintained support for the War Cabinet's policies. Lloyd George was to defend his innovation and at the same time describe Bonar Law's function in a speech in the House of Commons on December 19, 1916. Then, he stated, "You cannot run a war with a Sanhedrim. That is the meaning of the Cabinet of five, with one of its members doing sentry duty outside, manning the walls and defending the Council Chamber against attack while we are trying to do our work inside."⁷ The reconstruction of Lloyd George's was not popular in the House of Commons, mainly because of his long absences from the House, but with him able to give his attention solely to the day-to-day conduct of the war, the Government worked much better.⁸

⁷Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, Volume 88, December 19, 1916, p. 1342.

⁸Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, Vol. 2, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 577.

The manner in which Lloyd George organized the Coalition Government greatly enhanced his power and authority while at the same time he was virtually relieved of the necessity to defend his government's actions. Instead, that responsibility was given to Bonar Law, who besides being a master parliamentarian had the complete loyalty and support of the Conservative Party, hence the Government's policies were supported in the House of Commons. Although the War Cabinet was disbanded shortly after the war, and a normal cabinet reinstated,⁹ the relationship of Bonar Law to Lloyd George continued, and hence so did much of the independent authority of Lloyd George. It should also be noted that after Bonar Law's retirement from politics, Austen Chamberlain, the new Conservative leader, continued to act much as Bonar Law had done. Lloyd George and his Coalition government were to have the continuous support of all the major Conservative leaders until its fall in 1922.¹⁰ In fact the Conservative back-bench revolt against the Coalition would not have been successful if Bonar Law had not come out of retirement to lead the dissidents.

A second significant change which Lloyd George instituted was the creation of a Cabinet Secretariat. From the creation of the Cabinet Secretariat there evolved two distinct consequences. First, the institution became a permanent one and because of its capable leadership became

⁹ In October, 1919, the War Cabinet System was replaced by the full cabinet system, with twenty members. Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, Vol. 120, Oct. 27, 1919.

¹⁰ In 1922 the Conservative leaders Austen Chamberlain, Balfour and Birkenhead supported Lloyd George. See Ronald Butt, The Power of Parliament, (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 113. See also Maurice Cowling, The Impact of Labour 1920-1924, (Cambridge: University Press, 1971), pp. 210-213; 251-255.

an exceptionally powerful instrument by which the Prime Minister consolidated his control of affairs. Second, since Maurice Hankey efficiently and effectively ran and dominated the secretariat he became a key decision-maker, and a very powerful individual.

Under the Asquith government, there had existed a haphazard, much criticized form of Secretariat, called the Committee of Imperial Defence. With the creation of the War Cabinet, Hankey modified the Secretariat to make it much more efficient and powerful. In part he drafted rules of procedure for the Cabinet whose conclusions "would become operative decisions to be carried out by the responsible departments" as soon as initiated by the Prime Minister. He laid down "how issues should be raised to the War Cabinet by its own members or by any department; the manner in which departments would be consulted on matters which concerned them, and how they would be informed of the decisions arrived at." Furthermore, he made proposals regarding what experts should attend meetings, and on what was the responsibility of departments for keeping Cabinet properly informed.¹¹

The form the Secretariat took eliminated all the old inefficiencies, and in the process greatly strengthened Hankey's own position and influence. He directed a great deal of the war effort, and personally saw himself as the "linch-pin, more or less, of the new government. They have to turn to me on every occasion and on every kind of subject."¹²

¹¹Stephen Roskill, Hankey, Vol. 1, (London: Collins, 1970), p. 338.

¹²Ibid., p. 341.

Hankey was possibly revelling in his importance to the government, but his self-satisfaction was not unfounded. His organizing abilities were immense and as a secretary, no better man could have been found. Perhaps one of the most meaningful assessments of Hankey and his abilities came from his deputy Thomas Jones, who described him as, "The prince of secretaries . . . he was endowed with immense vitality, a prodigious memory, high organizing capacity and a gift for distilling circumambient conversation into well-ordered memoranda."¹³ This praise was to be echoed by several other of Hankey's contemporaries. Balfour was to say that "Without Hankey we should not have won the war," Asquith called Hankey "The organizer of victory", Curzon saw Hankey as one of the "builders of our national constitution," Milner acclaimed that Hankey's "contribution towards the country's victory was second to none," while Lloyd George stated that, "He was as essential to our success in the war as any man."¹⁴ They all recognized the great contribution Hankey made to the war effort and post-war government in Britain. Hankey was to become indispensable for the running of not only the government but also Imperial Defence Committees, and Conferences and the Council of Four at the Paris Peace Conference.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., p. 339.

¹⁴Lord Hankey, op. cit., the cover.

¹⁵The Council of Four met, at the outset, behind closed doors without a secretary. The story is told that Hankey realizing the problems to be encountered, sat outside the door with a stack of documents he believed would be needed. They always were and he always had them ready. It was not until after a fortnight that he was invited in behind the doors as permanent secretary. All then ran much more efficiently. See: A. J. Sylvester, The Real Lloyd George, (London: Cassell and Company Ltd., 1947), p. 31.

The Cabinet Secretariat, under Hankey and his associate Thomas Jones, was to grow quickly in power. It developed into an ancillary department attached to the Prime Minister which permeated the entire fabric of central government. Yet, while the Secretariat maintained the closest contact with every government department (assisted by ad hoc committees), it was answerable to the Prime Minister alone.¹⁶ Hankey, in personally breaking down the Secretariat's functions, placed them into two rough categories of machinery and ideas.¹⁷ The 'machinery' aspect included all the formal part of the Secretariat's work: preparing the agenda and minutes, distributing information, and putting out the decisions. The 'ideas' category referred to the selected expert staff under Hankey which "collected from the departments or elsewhere the data which the War Cabinet requires for the development of the ideas and the formulation of the wider schemes."¹⁸ The 'ideas' function of the Secretariat was to be most useful in devising policy, but the 'machinery' aspect of the Secretariat was also to become exceptionally powerful. Since the Secretariat was answerable only to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George was given exclusive power of determining the agenda and the priority of Cabinet business. This was exceptionally important in the post-war period when cabinets were conducted more as conferences of Ministers than in a more official form.

¹⁶Kenneth O. Morgan, "Lloyd George's Premiership: A Study in Prime Ministerial Government". The Historical Journal, CXXXI (March, 1970),p.134.

¹⁷Roskill, op. cit., p. 342.

¹⁸Roskill, op. cit., p. 343.

Normally, the Cabinet had been a policy-making body with all of the departmental views and concerns woven together into a unified and dominant Government policy. The ministers had considered it their major duty to partake and aid in the formation of this policy. The war had altered this function of the Cabinet. Decisions were required quickly; an active and dynamic administration was needed. Asquith had preserved the concept of a Cabinet negotiating policy and the war was being lost. Lloyd George instituted a small, authoritative War Cabinet, and decisions were implemented quickly with all authority centered upon himself. Bonar Law recognized that this might be akin to a dictatorship, as did Hankey, but it was necessary to win the war.¹⁹

Lloyd George conducted his Cabinets even in the post-war period in much the same way. Authority was centered in him, and policy was determined by him; his ministers acted more as executors of that policy. They were concerned to protect the interest of their own departments and had little correspondingly to do with any others. This can be understood as the result not only of Lloyd George's strong personality but also of the massive increase in work and size of departments during the war.²⁰ This correspondingly put much greater pressure on the heads of the departments so that in many ways they had little opportunity to worry about affairs outside their specific areas of competence. After the war the pressure

¹⁹Lord Hankey, op. cit., Chapter 56.

²⁰Hans Daalder, Cabinet Reform in Britain 1914-1963, (Stanford: 1963), pp. 27, 51, 57: see also J. P. Mackintosh, The British Cabinet, (Toronto: 1962), p. 362.

remained for a few years and it was not until 1922 that Cabinet Ministers really had time to pay attention to matters other than their own. The Cabinet Secretariat decidedly strengthened the Prime Minister's position within his Cabinet, especially in relation to foreign policy. In the controlling hands of such a forceful personality as Lloyd George, it allowed him to dominate his government in its various branches at all levels.²¹ Because Lloyd George was able to rely on Hankey to personally screen and handle all but the most major matters, the latter became an indispensable member of the decision-making process.²² From this there developed a main line of criticism against the Cabinet Secretariat, that Lloyd George with its aid was able to dominate the Cabinet. Perhaps this is true, particularly in the area of foreign affairs, in which Lloyd George had most interest. In fact it was alleged that Lloyd George by use of the Cabinet Secretariat could "conduct foreign policy without the inconvenience of Foreign Office intervention."²³ This cannot be so emphatically accepted.

²¹For an understanding of the controversy aroused by the Cabinet Secretariat see, Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 155, 13 June, 1922, 213-75; and Lord Hankey, Diplomacy by Conference, (New York; 1946) pp61-83.

²²Since its formation the Secretariat had handled efficiently a number of incongruous duties for Lloyd George, mainly because he appreciated its quickness and efficiency and Maurice Hankey. For this reason it was made responsible for all League of Nations correspondence, and also for this reason Lloyd George took Hankey instead of the usual Foreign Office Officials to International Conferences. See: D. N. Chester, F.M.G. Willson, The Organization of British Central Government, 1914-1956, (London: 1957) pp290-292. See also A. J. Sylvester, The Real Lloyd George, (London: 1947) pp29-31.

²³G. Craig, "The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain" in G. Craig and F. Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats 1919-1939, 1: The Twenties, (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 18.

It must be kept in mind that although structurally the Cabinet Secretariat gave the Prime Minister more control over his cabinet, and the administration of policy, the degree of power Lloyd George or any other Prime Minister attained from it corresponds directly to the strength of their personality.²⁴

The extent of Lloyd George's control was to be further enhanced by the formation of his own personal Secretariat to advise him and provide him with the information he required. This innovation significantly enhanced Lloyd George's power. Yet its beginnings can be seen as a natural outcome of Lloyd George's unnatural appetite for work. The normal three secretaries of the Prime Minister could not keep up with him, for "his speed of thought and adaptation was so great as to seem unnatural, and others who could not keep pace or understand what was going on attributed them to an intellectual or moral defect."²⁵ Lloyd George was a hard worker and hence he found it necessary to form around himself his own personal secretariat to handle his work load and to propose ideas to him from which he continually formulated policy. This was essential because as Hankey admitted, "the Secretariat of the War Cabinet, though it made its contribution to the stock of ideas, remained principally concerned with machinery."²⁶ The proceedings of the Prime Minister's Secretariat were considerably more unorthodox and more intimately linked with Lloyd George than those of the Cabinet Secretariat.

²⁴Hans Daalder, op. cit., p58.

²⁵Joseph Davies, The Prime Minister's Secretariat, (Newport: R. H. Johns Ltd, 1951), p. 19.

²⁶Hankey, op. cit., p. 590.

The "original purposes of the Garden Suburb were to carry out special inquiries on behalf of the Prime Minister and to arrange weekly reports for him from the various government departments."²⁷ Lloyd George was to use it in the broadest interpretation of its function.

The most influential of these specialists was Philip Kerr,²⁸ whose areas of specialization were imperial and foreign relations. His work for Lloyd George became very important. It was said of him that he was, "one of the few outstanding men in British public life who worked with Lloyd George and never quarrelled with him right up to the end."²⁹ In the diplomatic fields Lloyd George's personal belief in his own ability to solve problems directly,³⁰ plus the aid and advice he got from both Secretariats

²⁷The personal Secretariat was composed of five specialists, each of whom was to handle different areas and they all worked together in the garden of No. 10 Downing Street, and hence it earned the name of the 'Garden Suburb', K. O. Morgan, op. cit., 134.

²⁸Philip Kerr first gained distinction in South Africa where he was one of Lord Milner's 'Kindergarten', a group of promising young men whom Milner gathered about himself after the Boer War. He was also an ardent Imperialist and one of the founders and first editor of the Round Table from 1910 on. He became one of Lloyd George's personal secretaries in 1916. In the Truth About the Peace Treaties (1938) Lloyd George acknowledged Kerr's 'priceless help' and emphasized the importance of the part played by Kerr in dealing with the Dominions, India and The United States, and the significant help given by Kerr in aiding Lloyd George with affairs during the Russian Civil War.

L. G. Wickham Legg, (ed), The Dictionary of National Biography 1931-1940, (London: 1949), pp. 507-509.

²⁹J. R. M. Butler, Lord Lothian 1882-1940, (London: 1960)p.65.

³⁰Lloyd George believed, and his beliefs were doubtlessly strengthened by his awareness of the popular distrust of "old diplomacy", that the great questions of foreign policy should be negotiated not by career diplomats but by men who possessed mandates from the people and his was the strongest influence in carrying the methods which had been inaugurated at the Paris Peace Conference over into the years that followed" See: Craig and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 28.

enabled him often to ignore the Foreign Office. The degree to which Kerr's and Hankey's encroachments were noticed in the Foreign Office was underlined by Craig and Gilbert,

The two Secretariats increasingly arrogating to themselves more and more advisory and executive functions in foreign policy. The Foreign Office felt that it 'had no adequate channels of communication with the War Cabinet; that it was at any given moment imperfectly acquainted with the Prime Minister's intentions and that it could never be certain that any advice which it might have to tender on any matter would reach the Cabinet in the proper form. It relapsed more and more into the position of a rubber stamp.³¹

This was an overstatement, but it does emphasize the declining role of the Foreign Office and how independently strong a small elite and particularly Lloyd George were becoming.

Lloyd George, secure in the support of the Tory leaders and utilizing the two Secretariats, personally dominated the Government, and foreign policy in particular. He was so secure in his strength that he was able to rebuff in April 1919 a protest against his policies by 370 members of parliament. He told them that if their objections continued he would ask the constituencies to settle the matter.³² His control over foreign policy was significant for his post-war policies. He saw foreign policy as a major means for restoring peace, security and prosperity to Britain. It was by his foreign policy that Lloyd George wished to rejuvenate Britain, maintain his public support and hence his own degree of authority.

³¹Ibid., p. 19: See also J. R. M. Butler, op. cit., p.80: cf. Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, Vol. III, (London: 1928), pp. 316-317.

³²P. C. Walker, The Cabinet, (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1970), p. 93.

The Coalition Government's foreign policy elite also included the Foreign Secretary, although his influence had been limited. Prior to 1914 the Foreign Secretary had been the chief advisor to the Cabinet on foreign policy. At times when the office had been held by a strong and influential person, it had been able to act almost independent of the cabinet merely informing it of its actions. The Foreign Secretary was usually capably advised by his Permanent Under-Secretary, although this had been less the case since 1910 with Sir Arthur Nicolson as the Under-Secretary.³³ In most cases, in the pre-war period, Cabinet had accepted the Foreign Office's advice, especially when pressing matters of foreign policy were put before it.

This was altered in 1916 and the high-handed manner in which the War Cabinet acted subverted most of the Foreign Secretary's duties. During the latter stages of the war, Arthur Balfour was Lloyd George's Foreign Secretary. He was chosen for two main reasons: the coalition needed his support, for as an ex-Prime Minister and former leader of the Conservative Party, his position was of great importance,³⁴ and Lloyd George felt he would have no problem working with him. On both points Lloyd George was right. He and Balfour were able to agree to a large extent on policy, and the latter was thus not averse to letting Lloyd George conduct his

³³Sir Arthur Nicolson was Permanent Under-Secretary from 1910 to 1916, Zara Steiner, The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, (Cambridge: At The University Press, 1969), p. 121.

³⁴Blake, op. cit., p. 340.

own policy. Bonar Law thought that Balfour took office in the coalition government out of patriotic duty rather than desire,³⁵ and since he believed in Lloyd George's ability and policies, he did not mind being made subservient in the conduct of foreign policy for the general good. Balfour later, in assessing the situation said:

It's the rarest thing when the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary don't clash. That's what makes me so impatient of all this talk about Lloyd George's interfering so much. I don't say Lloyd George didn't often do things he better not have. But you can't expect the Prime Minister not to interfere with Foreign Office business. It's only when you get a combination of two men who see absolutely eye to eye and work in perfect harmony that you can avoid it The fact is that the Foreign Office cannot be a water-tight compartment.³⁶

In the period while Balfour was Foreign Secretary, the functions of the Foreign Office were being limited. Some of the reasons have already been given, but clearly one of the most important was an aspect of Balfour's own philosophy of life. Mrs. Dugdale, his niece and biographer, has pointed out that one of his basic principles was 'non-interference' with the business of others.³⁷ It was apparent that Balfour accepted the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs out of duty and from a belief in Lloyd George, and once having done so worked on the principle that "the most patriotic course appears to me to provide the man whom we do not wish to replace with all the guidance and help in our power."³⁸ Balfour's

³⁵Blake, op. cit., p. 340.

³⁶Blanche E. G. Dugdale, Arthur James Balfour, Vol. II, Years 1906-1930, (London: Hutchison & Co., 1936), p. 215.

³⁷Blanche E. C. Dugdale, op. cit., p. 267.

³⁸Letter from Balfour to Lord Robert Cecil, September 12, 1917: quoted in Ibid., pp. 184-185.

deliberate policy of "A free hand for the little man" was aptly used by Lloyd George to extend his own involvement into the field of foreign affairs and likewise transfer some of the Foreign Office's functions to the Secretariat.³⁹

Although little changed when Curzon⁴⁰ took over the Foreign Office in October, 1919, from Balfour, the level of criticism of the Prime Minister's tactics did increase. Curzon was a man of great abilities, strong convictions and intense personal pride. "It was difficult to believe that he would play the part of a mere figure head or allow the effacement of the Foreign Office to continue as Balfour had under Lloyd George."⁴¹ Yet some of the dissolving powers of the Foreign Office were a result of the public outcry against 'secret diplomacy' in the post-war period, which Curzon could do little about. This outcry benefited Lloyd George but not the Foreign Office.

³⁹Ibid., p. 241: Yet Balfour was not unimportant. He was head of the Foreign Office, the centre of Britain's Foreign relations, and Lloyd George could not afford to treat him lightly. Lloyd George's parliamentary base was weak, and dependent on the support of the Conservative leaders like Balfour. As Mrs. Dugdale points out, Balfour's policy "would not have stretched to toleration of anything really impairing to the work of his own office." This contention is open to doubt, especially when the extent and nature of the complaints of Curzon, Balfour's successor, are noted. Dugdale, op. cit., p. 241.

⁴⁰Curzon, when he took over the Foreign Office, had a wealth of experience. In 1895 he was an under-secretary for foreign affairs and from 1899 to 1905 Viceroy in India. He was a member of Asquith's war-time coalition government and when Lloyd George became Prime Minister joined the War Cabinet. As leader of the House of Lords since 1916, Curzon was also of significant influence in the Conservative Party. See also G. Smith, The Dictionary of National Biography 1922-1930. London: (Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 221-234.

⁴¹Craig and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 26.

The Foreign Office had not become attuned to the popular post-war sentiments. Sir Robert Cecil saw the situation and declared that "In foreign affairs the great mass of the people were no longer disposed to accept without question decisions of the Front Benches."⁴² The Foreign Office and its diplomats were presented with new responsibilities. The Foreign Office had to lose some of its aristocratic bearing and relate to the public or it would find itself adhering to policies it did not believe in. This was where Lloyd George had the advantage over the Foreign Office. He has been called the first modern political leader who could speak to the public in its own language about foreign affairs. His sympathies were enlisted against the class from which previous British Foreign Ministers had sprung.⁴³

The Foreign Secretaries had to change their aristocratic mould and relate the policy to the people. Neither Balfour nor Curzon was the man to do this, especially in comparison to Lloyd George.

Possibly too much has been made of the clashes between Lloyd George and Curzon. Their disagreements often flared but usually flickered out. In fact Curzon much as Balfour seems to have worked on the principle of "a free hand for the little man". He endorsed Lloyd George's French and German policies and was even to acquiesce in the end over Russia. The only persistent area of conflict seems to have been over the Near East,

⁴²Viscount Robert Cecil, A Great Experiment, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 132.

⁴³Donald G. Bishop, The Administration of British Foreign Relations, (Syracuse University Press, 1961), p. 185.

especially relations between the Greeks and Turks in Asia Minor. "Yet even here, on several occasions Curzon threw his influence behind Lloyd George's passionately pro-Greek policy". In fact, not until the Chanak crisis of September 1922 did real tensions develop. Otherwise, Lloyd George's foreign policy usually proceeded without serious challenge from his colleagues.⁴⁴

Many of the small clashes Lloyd George had with the Foreign Office were merely part of a natural transition of the duties of the Foreign Office to more logical departments. Before the war the Foreign Office had been responsible, with the Colonial Office, the Admiralty and War Office, for all matters beyond Britain's shores. During the war, with the expansion of the bureaucracy and governmental departments, the Foreign Office had lost its exclusive responsibility for certain issues. After the war, the awkward improvisation concerning the Department of Overseas Trade, which had tended to deprive the Foreign Office of its commercial and financial functions, was allowed to continue. Further, the new question of reparations was handled by the Treasury rather than the Foreign Office and there was a tendency by the Foreign Office not to consider their own policies seriously enough in the light of the reparations problem.⁴⁵ This tended merely to enhance Lloyd George's credibility.

Lloyd George was able to dominate his foreign secretaries and organize his secretariats to further enhance his position, yet it was never secure. Even after his great personal victory in 1918, Lloyd George

⁴⁴Morgan, op. cit., p. 147.

⁴⁵Craig and Gilbert, op. cit., p. 25.

was still aware of the need for the support of his senior colleagues in the cabinet and that they could not be by-passed or ignored. He never tried to deceive his Cabinet and most members seemed content enough. Some were impressed by its harmony and by the Prime Minister's tolerance in allowing debate to proceed without interruption.⁴⁶ Lloyd George's view was not always accepted, though it most often prevailed. In 1920, Lloyd George backed by his Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon was over-ruled by the Cabinet on his policy of expelling the Turks from Constantinople. He was to say that he stood alone as the pro-Greek in the Cabinet.⁴⁷ The major complaint of Lloyd George's Cabinet was not that it was being subjected to a dictatorship, but rather that it was being made irrelevant. By mid-1920 it seemed almost to have dissolved into a series of 'conferences of ministers', committees or simple 'conversations', often with shrewdly chosen personnel.⁴⁸ This was Lloyd George's own abstraction of the divide and rule principle. Lloyd George was the only minister who could be considered at the hub of all issues, while his other ministers became more and more centered in their own departments, allowing themselves to be controlled by the one man. The major concern for his parliamentary ministers was the destruction of the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility.

Most of the manner in which Lloyd George assumed authority might now seem clear. He had a great energy and capacity for good work. He

⁴⁶Morgan, op. cit., p. 147.

⁴⁷Walker, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴⁸Morgan, op. cit., p. 148.

demanding work of himself and his assistants, and he had little trust in the professionals, military or diplomatic. He believed in his own abilities, organized to use them to the best possible benefit, and then found his methods enhanced by the public outcry for open diplomacy. He was to neglect the Foreign Office, for, to a degree he did not trust it or find it useful. The House of Commons which had emerged from the Khaki Election of 1918 was also of little hindrance to Lloyd George. As a body it contained only a "handful of men who had any understanding of foreign affairs or any critical standards concerning the way in which they should be administered."⁴⁹ He was able to control his cabinet by the way he ran it, and the House of Commons through the Tory leaders who supported him. It was foreign policy he wished to dominate, and he did. Lloyd George made it clear to both Balfour and Curzon that he intended to handle the major European questions himself. He kept in touch with the Foreign Office through his trusted advisor Philip Kerr, but often excluded the Foreign Office from certain negotiations. The influence of the personal secretariat declined after Kerr left in May of 1921, and although Sir Edward Grigg filled in admirably, he did not have Kerr's contacts or influence. Lloyd George was successful in becoming the dominant person in foreign policy decision-making in his Coalition governments.

The whole trend of Lloyd George's premiership was to emphasize the drift away from the old concept of the Cabinet as the sole decision-making body in which the Prime Minister shared power with his colleagues.

⁴⁹Craig and Gilbert, Op. cit., p. 33.

In these years the decision-making pattern was more that of a cone with the Premier at the apex, depending on and supported by widening rings of advisors. The most important ring remained the Cabinet, for it was the only one with a definite publicly announced membership and the right to complain if it were not consulted.⁵⁰

What has been outlined was the nature of Lloyd George's strength, and the composition and relationships of the Coalition Government's foreign policy elite. To this select group one other man, Winston Churchill, should be added.

For the major part of Lloyd George's career one of his closest friendships was that between himself and Winston Churchill.⁵¹ It was Lloyd George who recognized Churchill's great abilities and brought him into the Coalition Government in 1917 as Minister of Munitions over the opposition of Bonar Law and most other Conservative Coalitionists.⁵² Yet there were limitations to the degree to which Lloyd George trusted Churchill's judgment. He believed that Churchill often "loses great opportunities because he is too self-centered."⁵³ Possibly what brought the two men together was that they were both somewhat alike in the political world; feared, respected and disliked. Churchill, like Lloyd George, was one of the House of Commons' true orators and he also had a commanding presence and decisive mind. A difference lay in the fervour which Churchill often

⁵⁰MacKintosh, op. cit., p. 363.

⁵¹Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, (ed.), A. J. P. Taylor, (London: Hutchinson, 1971), p. 253.

⁵²Kenneth Young, Churchill and Beaverbrook, (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1966), p. 46.

⁵³Malcolm Thomson, David Lloyd George, (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd.), pp. 16 and 20.

devoted to certain beliefs. He was labelled a reactionary,⁵⁴ for his opposition to Bolshevism, and often was someone Lloyd George had to control.⁵⁵

Churchill's energies in the post-war period could not be contained within the boundaries of his Ministries; the War Office and the ancillary post he held as head of the Department for the Air Force, and later the Colonial Office. He meddled in a whole range of affairs. Curzon had commented on this propensity by Churchill to extend his functions as early as 1916, when he commented that "the Admiralty under the enterprising direction of Mr. Winston Churchill had strayed into strange fields of activity."⁵⁶ The wide-ranging interests of Churchill were to arouse Curzon more after 1919 when he took over the Foreign Office.⁵⁷ Much of Churchill's meddling can be understood in that he had a wide range of Cabinet experience and, unlike his fellow ministers, adhered to a pre-war concept of Cabinet. This concept was one in which the Cabinet was responsible for policy and hence Churchill took an active interest in most government departments.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Thomas Jones, Whitehall Diary 1916-1925, Vol. 1, (ed.), Keith Middlemas, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 104.

⁵⁵Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, op. cit., p. 322.

⁵⁶Lord Ronaldshay, op. cit., p. 144.

⁵⁷A. J. P. Taylor, The Statesman in Churchill: Four Faces and the Man, (London: Allen Lane, 1969), p. 18.

⁵⁸It was Churchill especially who, with other Coalition Ministers, plagued Lloyd George throughout 1919 to revert to the old Cabinet System from the War Cabinet System. See: J. P. Mackintosh, op. cit., pp. 196-198.

The whole range of foreign relations was of particular concern to Churchill, and it was over the specific issues of Russian and Greco-Turkish affairs that he was to be most active.

Churchill deplored Britain's dealings with the Bolsheviks,⁵⁹ and was strongly in favour of intervention in Russia and increased aid for General Deniken.⁶⁰ This brought him into conflict with Lloyd George over the establishment of trade relations with Russia in 1920. Lloyd George was to out-manoeuve Churchill on this issue and force him to acquiesce.⁶¹

Lloyd George sought Churchill's advice over British policy towards France and the giving of a security guarantee,⁶² and as well Churchill supported Lloyd George in his policy towards Turkey and was active especially in the events leading up to the Chanak crisis.⁶³ On the whole Churchill was a very active person in foreign affairs, either as an advisor or as a critic of Lloyd George's policies.

Yet Churchill was to be important to Lloyd George for other reasons. He was one of the few important Liberal leaders who served with Lloyd George. He helped to balance the strength of the Unionists in the Cabinet.

⁵⁹Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 196-198.

⁶⁰General Deniken was General Commander of the White Russian forces and chosen to be dictator of Russia after he overthrew the Bolsheviks. See: Louis Fischer, The Soviets in World Affairs, (New York: Vintage Books, 1951), p. 105: see also Richard H. Ullman, Britain and the Russian Civil War. November 1918-February 1920, Vol. 11, (Princeton; 1968), pp. 332-334.

⁶¹Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, op. cit., pp. 197-198.

⁶²Thomas Jones, The Whitehall Diaries, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 116-117.

⁶³Kenneth Young, Arthur James Balfour, (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1963), p. 62.

Like Lloyd George, he had evolved away from many of the old notions of the Liberal Party, and was now closer to the Tories. Yet as a Conservative gone Liberal, and now slowly moving back, he was not trusted by the Tories.⁶⁴ He brought support to Lloyd George in Cabinet, some Liberal Party backing and an active and aggressive personality to aid the Prime Minister in the formation of his policies. He was also one of the corner stones around which Lloyd George tried to construct a new political party base for himself, that was, the creation of a center party.⁶⁵

What might be termed the foreign policy élite in the government of 1918-1922 might be seen more as a structural formation, evolved out of necessity. Philip Kerr certainly was in it, and is key to the understanding of much of Lloyd George's policies; as also is Maurice Hankey, the organizational genius, the super-secretary who ran the Cabinet, and sat in on virtually every major committee or conference as a secretary from 1916 on. Both these men were personal functionaries of the Prime Minister and enhanced his power. Within the Cabinet there was Balfour and later Curzon, the Foreign Secretaries, who must be considered part of the élite. Although many of their duties were subverted by Lloyd George, their acquiescence was always obtained in any major decision. Between them and the Prime Minister there were, in fact, few discrepancies in policy, with the clash with Curzon being more of a personal factor between the two men. Both Bonar Law and Austen Chamberlain played a significant part in maintaining Lloyd George's support and allowing him a free hand in his policy. Their

⁶⁴Blake, op. cit., p. 340.

⁶⁵Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, op. cit., p. 223: See also Maurice Cowling, op. cit. pp 8 and 94.

position as Chancellors of the Exchequer also gave them wide and influential powers in all matters of policy, including that of foreign relations. Churchill was the one rogue in the élite, an unmeasurable factor as was Lloyd George, but such an aggressive personality with such a wide range of experience that he was involved in a wide variety of matters beyond his formal duties. The most significant person in the élite was of course Lloyd George, who became the focal point for most policy. Although Lloyd George controlled, he did not govern alone, and although he was a great and dynamic man, he had many faults. Many of these were to become obvious when his ill-organized escapades involved him in serious problems with Polish-Russian relations, Greek-Turkish relations and direct Anglo-French relations. During his post-war premiership, he attended some 20 conferences and in truth accomplished little. Although he erected a facade of success, too often it had little substance. His dependence on his own abilities, on his mandate from the people, to conduct foreign policy was as Craig said "noticeable for the paucity of results attained by Lloyd George in diplomacy in the years from 1919-1922."⁶⁶

As with so many of Craig and Gilbert's statements there is an underlying truth, but badly overstated. The end result of the Coalition Government's foreign policy was not successful, but little fault can be found with the motivation or purpose of that policy. The decision-makers sought to rectify Britain's domestic problems, but pursued that policy in an unconventional manner. Their policy was one of power politics with

⁶⁶Craig and Gilbert, op. cit., pp. 28 and 29.

the national self-interest of peace and prosperity as the central interest. For the implementation of these goals there was a new variety of tools, not the least of which was the League of Nations and general public awareness. The world's power alignments were changed with a vacuum existing in place of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with Germany gravely weakened and with Russia seemingly impotent, but still to many a frighteningly menacing country. The new features were the predominance on the continent of France with its insecure defence mentality; the awakening of the slumbering giant in North America, her involvement in European affairs and the recognized need for her aid; and the maturing of Britain's Dominions towards full independent statehood, though this status was not formally achieved during the period here under review. Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, Hankey, Philip Kerr, Balfour, Curzon and Churchill were to compose throughout much of the Coalition Government's history, its security élite. Part of the problems they were to face have been mentioned. Yet what motivated their policies were the domestic and economic conditions of Britain and Europe, and their perception of them as a group brought them into agreement.

Lloyd George in a long speech in the House of Commons on August 18, 1919, set out the "Trade and Industrial Position" of Britain.⁶⁷ The picture he drew was in no way similar to one J. M. Keynes drew of Britain

⁶⁷Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V. Vol. 119, August 18, 1919, pp. 1979-2022.

before the war.⁶⁸ Neither did it hold much prospect of fulfilling the 1918 election slogan of "a home fit for heroes", nor of returning Britain to the normality that was so desperately desired.⁶⁹ Rather it set out Britain's problems realistically. Lloyd George attacked the prevalent sentiment "that immediately on the click of the switch of peace, everything would leap back again to the normal and be exactly as it was in 1914". Rather, he explained that of finance, trade, industry, production and labour, none had returned to normal and that "no man who imagines that can have realized for a moment the magnitude of the disturbing events of the last five years."⁷⁰ In this speech Lloyd George pointed out several

⁶⁸ Keynes was describing the economic progress of the British pre-1914, but in many ways it is an in-depth reflection of British society. He states that before 1914 "The inhabitants of London could order by telephone, sipping his morning tea in bed, the various products of the whole earth, in such quantity as he might see fit, and reasonably expect their early delivery upon his doorstep, he could at the same moment and by the same means, venture his wealth in natural resources, and new enterprises of any quarter of the world, and share, without execution or even trouble, in their prospective fruits and advantages He could secure forthwith, if he wished it, cheap and comfortable means of transit to any country or climate, without passport or formality . . . and could then proceed abroad to foreign quarters . . . (and be) greatly aggrieved and much surprised at the least interference. But, most important of all, he regarded this state of affairs as normal, certain and permanent, except in the direction of further improvements, and any deviation from it as aberrant, scandalous and unavoidable." In J. M. Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, (London: 1920), p. 10.

⁶⁹ Normality for the British is a somewhat elusive concept. Basically it appears to have been a combination of two factors: the middle-class desire for things as they were before the war, and a status-quo alignment, and the force for progressive change emanating from the working-class which desired a better life.

⁷⁰ Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, Vol. 119, August 18, 1919, p. 1981.

factors which hindered Britain's return to normality. One of the principal reasons was Britain's necessary dependence on international trade. Britain must "realize how important the international trade, the trade across the seas, was to the United Kingdom. We cannot prosper, we cannot even exist without recovering that trade and without maintaining it, I go beyond that and say without increasing it."⁷¹

Only increased production could therefore meet and solve Britain's economic problems. Yet the fact was that there was almost a "sensational decrease in output" so that Britain was in the desperate situation of spending more, earning less, consuming more, and producing less.⁷² Lloyd George went on to discuss Britain's problems in the context of labour, wages, working hours, and certain industries, particularly coal and shipping. Having set out Britain's problems, Lloyd George ended his speech by stating possible areas of solution. For the immediate future he was forced to rule out Germany, because she was crippled, and the United States because the exchange was against Britain, and acted as protection against the importing of goods. Rather he saw Britain's immediate hopes as lying with an increase of Imperial Trade, credit to continental

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 1983-1984: To emphasize this statement Lloyd George quoted some trade statistics. Britain before the war, in 1913, had an adverse trade balance of £150,000,000, the adverse balance in 1919 was £800,000,000. In the pre-war period, Britain's invisible assets offset the trade balance deficit of £150,000,000, so that on the whole balance of trade, Britain made a profit of £200,000,000. Many of the invisible assets were sold during the war for munitions, so that they are of little aid in balancing trade.

⁷²Ibid., p. 1986.

countries,⁷³ and a decrease in government expenditures. Lloyd George ended his speech by emphasizing that all Britain wanted was to settle down to her daily tasks and also let Europe settle down.⁷⁴

Lloyd George perceived the solution to Britain's problems. Britain's return to normality was intrinsically interwoven with the stabilization and restoration of Europe. Churchill also realized that the solution of Britain's problems lay with stabilizing Europe. He, like Lloyd George, saw the duality of Britain's problems. On the day of the Armistice, Churchill and Lloyd George had supper together and the conversation ran on the great qualities of the German people, on the tremendous fight they had made against three-quarters of the world, on the impossibility of rebuilding Europe except with their aid.⁷⁵ Although they recognized that Britain was tied to Europe and the solution of its problems required the stabilizing of Europe and hence the restoration of Germany, they also realized the strength of Germany and in particular its military might. Curzon saw how closely the "economic recovery of Europe depended upon the recovery of its constituent parts, and more particularly upon that of so important a constituent as Germany."⁷⁶ General Smuts of South Africa, who served in the War Cabinet and was also a Dominion representative to the Paris Peace

⁷³In particular, Lloyd George was referring to Serbia, Roumania, Poland and Austria from which there was a gigantic demand for goods, yet no credit to finance their demands. Europe as a whole, used to buy £180,000,000 of British goods. Britain, hence was very interested in stabilizing Europe and Germany was the key to that: Ibid., p. 2014.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 2022.

⁷⁵Winston Churchill, The World Crisis: The Aftermath, (London: Thornton Butterworth Ltd., 1929), p. 20: See also Harold Nicolson, Peacemaking 1919. (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1933), p. 47.

⁷⁶Ronaldshay, op. cit., p. 236.

Conference was even more emphatic in stating Britain's position. He declared that:

the brutal fact is that Great Britain is a very small island on the fringe of the Continent, and that on the Continent the seventy odd million Germans represent the most important and formidable national factor. You cannot have a stable Europe without a stable, settled Germany, and you cannot have a stable, settled prosperous Great Britain while Europe is weltering in confusion and unsettlement next door.⁷⁷

Although the public was not conscious of the importance of Europe and especially Germany to Britain, the government was. Statistics for 1913 showed that Germany in 1913 "was the best foreign buyer of United Kingdom produce and manufactures" and that also "as seller to the United Kingdom in 1913 she was behind the United States only, though far behind."⁷⁸ It was obvious to the Coalition government that only a restored and rejuvenated Europe and especially Germany could bring about the post-war economic transformation that would restore Britain to normality. The stabilizing of Europe was not the sole factor for a return to normality, but it was perceived as the most important. Hence it became central to the development of British foreign relations.

When the peace treaties came into effect, the countries that had been at war were faced with serious problems. Great Britain had not been invaded nor did it have 'devastated' areas like Belgium or France, but

⁷⁷A farewell message from General Smuts, on leaving England in H.W.V. Temperley (ed), A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol. III, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1929), p. 77.

⁷⁸J. H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. III, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1951), p. 528.

it did have problems. Britain had suffered heavy losses of human life and materials. There were industries to be converted and re-equipped, the fleet to be rebuilt, former markets to be won back, American and Japanese competition to be faced. As well, it had a heavy national debt and a threatening balance of payments.⁷⁹ These were Britain's problems, those which the Coalition elite aimed to alleviate. Yet to alleviate them the Coalition government saw that it had to stabilize and rejuvenate Europe, for in so many ways Britain's economy, as well as much of the world's was interlocked with that of Europe. Europe had to be restored not only for economic and financial reasons but also for security ones. Britain's security was directly attached to its own financial strength, as well as a balance of strengths on the continent. In 1919, France was

⁷⁹The total number of deaths of army and navy personnel from Great Britain is usually estimated at 774,000 for World War I, this amounts to 9% of all the men between the ages of 20-45. Approximately 1,700,000 were wounded, of whom 1,250,000 received disability pensions. There were civilian casualties numbering approximately 1,117 dead and 2,886 wounded by airship and airplane action over England. The war increased Britain's national debt by £7,000,000,000 to £7,800,000,000, and she had an adverse balance of trade of £800,000,000. In October 1917 the Minister of Munitions had 143 national factories in operation. All these and their workers, some 5,000,000 had to be converted at the end of the war. Britain lost some 7,000,000 tons of shipping, almost 40% of the merchant fleet. During the war many of its most important markets in the Far East, India, Canada and North America, were neglected long enough for new arrivals to become entrenched. These rivals were usually United States and Japan. See: W. N. Medlicott, Contemporary England, 1914-1964, (London; 1967), p. 73; William Ashworth, An Economic History of England, 1870-1939, (London; 1963), p. 285; F. W. Hurst, The Consequences of the War to Great Britain, (Oxford; 1934), p. 11. Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, Vol. 119, 18 August, 1919, 1981-1985.

by far the strongest power on the continent and hence it was essential that Germany be resuscitated to counter-balance France, and restore Britain's political prominence as the balancer within the system. Reconstruction seen in this light takes on additional importance for the British, but becomes of much lesser importance for the French.

Reconstruction became an immediate necessity at the end of the war. There is considerable agreement in the assessment of leading contemporary authorities about the European economic situation. Germany and Austria were starving. Herbert Hoover, the American Director-General of Relief, used the phrase "demoralized productivity."⁸⁰ His figures showed that fifteen million families were receiving unemployment allowance, and that these were being paid by the constant inflation of currency. He estimated that the population of Europe was "at least one hundred million greater than can be supported without imports, and must live by the production and distribution of exports, and then the situation is aggravated not only by lack of raw material imports, but by the low production of European raw materials."⁸¹ During the war the individual state economies were highly organized for current consumption, stimulated by patriotism. Since the war, this had been lost, and so, in Hoover's view, had been the all-important stimulus of individualism.

⁸⁰E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, ed., Documents on British Foreign Policy, Series I, Volume V, Appendix 240 to No. 17, 36 (hereinafter D.B.F.P.)

⁸¹D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 5, 26.

The war, he believed, caused a general let down, a relaxing from the physical exertion required over the last four years. This general demoralization, plus the effects of the blockade and its continuation after the Armistice, was to leave Europe starving and depleted of resources. Hoover was fearful of political, moral and economic chaos to such an extent that it might result in a drastic loss of life. All the information that Lloyd George had led him to support Hoover's analysis. He stated:

All the information I receive from military sources, indicate that Germany is very near collapse. All my military advisers, without exception have warned me that the most vital step we ought to take immediately . . . is to provide Germany with food and raw materials . . . if Germany sinks into Bolshevist anarchy she will no doubt be skinned alive, and not only will there be no indemnity, but we shall ourselves be impoverished and our trade revival will be paralyzed by the increasing disorder and ruin of the world⁸²

Keynes assessed the German situation in the same light. He saw an impoverished Germany close to collapse and noted that:

⁸²Mayer, op. cit., p. 756: One index of the state of the German population was their calorie intake. It was stated that, "the number of calories necessary to keep an average person going is 3,000 but owing to the scarcity of food, each person receives only 1250 a week," In: Parliamentary Papers, 1919, L111, 877, Cmd. 208, "Further reports by British officers on economic conditions prevailing in Germany, March to April 1919; also the number of locomotives under repair has risen from 19.3% in 1913 to 44.2% in 1919; breakdown in use of fertilizers so land barely yields half in 1919 of what it did in 1913 best shown by the decline in use of:
Nitrates - 1914 - 210,000, 1919 only 80,000 tons.
Phosphates 1914 - 630,000, 1919 only 210,000 tons.
Labour shortage in that 600,000 German farmers lost during the war, an additional 250,000 were still prisoners, and Polish and Russian labour of 400,000 men no longer available. These are merely certain indices of Germany's problems. In: Parliamentary Papers 1919, L111, 765, Cmd 52, "Report by British Officers on the Economic Conditions Prevailing in Germany."

Germany's pre-war capacity to pay an annual foreign tribute has not been unaffected by the almost total loss of her colonies, her overseas connections, her mercantile marine, and her foreign properties by the cession of ten per cent of her territory and population, of one-third of her coal and of three quarters of her iron ore, by two million casualties amongst men in the prime of life, by the starvation of her people for four years by the burdening of a vast war debt, by the depreciation of her currency to less than one seventh its former value, by the disruption of her allies and their territories, by revolution at home and Bolshevism on her borders, and by all the unmeasured ruin in strength and hope of four years of all-swallowing war and final defeat.⁸³

Several reports tried to uncover what was essential for reconstruction. One later study, in assessing the general economic situation of Europe, stated that the problem did not lie with the supply of raw material. The Consultative Food Committee, set up to advise the Allied Supreme Council, established the fact that it was not because of any insufficiency in food stuffs that the world was threatened with famine. Nor was the problem one of a shortage of sea-going tonnage or other forms of transportation, although the demands upon them were extremely heavy. Rather, its root was lack of credit.⁸⁴ Inflation was creating such great discrepancies in currencies that international exchange was impossible. Hence, the operative system of exchange was almost one of barter, with each country trying to control its available products with any international value. What was essential, the Committee concluded, was a current of credit throughout Europe and this credit could only be supplied by the Western hemisphere.⁸⁵

⁸³ John Maynard Keynes, Essays in Persuasion (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc., 1963), p. 7.

⁸⁴ D.B.F.P. I, V, Appendix 240 to No. 17, 28.

⁸⁵ D.B.F.P. I, I, Appendix D to No. 68, 846.

This credit would prop up the European economies, facilitate increased trade between countries and allow the reform of European currencies and economies, so as to give them fiscal stability. The memoranda on the European situation emphasized its demoralization, lack of energy, credit or mobility. Both reveal a faith in Europe's basic strength,⁸⁶ and a belief that the continent could be rejuvenated with but a little help from the United States.

Europe was faced by difficult times, especially during the first year after the war. Social and political unrest compounded the basic problems of food and fuel. Germany, Austria and Hungary were, in one way or another, hardest hit.⁸⁷ Most particularly, their economies were especially disturbed by the political consequences of the war and by the territorial rearrangements of the peace treaties.

Although the Allies accepted that the reconstruction of Europe was essential, the war had caused them untold suffering, and as victors they expected their enemies to pay for it and for the peace and security they wished to impose on the world. Yet even understanding that reconstruction was essential, and that this meant the rehabilitation of Germany at least to a partial extent, the Allies were determined to extract from

⁸⁶"Sixty percent of world export of manufactured articles originated from the three leading European countries in 1913." (France, Germany, and Britain); C. L. Mowat, (ed.), The New Cambridge Modern History, Vol. XII, (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1968), p. 40.

⁸⁷D.B.F.P. I, I, No. 28, 329; c.f. also Ibid, No. 3, 14.

Germany as much as they were able.⁸⁸ Germany lost her colonies, most of her overseas assets, much of her merchant marine and a large percentage of her coal production. In Europe, she lost territories of which the principal were Alsace-Lorraine and the Polish corridor, as well as the Saar for at least 15 years. Her sovereignty over other territories, notably Upper Silesia, was left to be determined by plebiscite, and in the end Upper Silesia was divided between Poland and Germany.

Others were to argue that the reparations demanded of Germany were extravagant and failed to take into account its real capacity to pay. As well, the payments had been worked out on Germany's pre-war potential, when she had a booming economy and was rivaling Britain and the United States as the world's industrial center.⁸⁹ Moreover, Germany was straddled with the cost of the Allied Armies of Occupation whose "total expenditure per month has been evaluated at little more than six million francs."⁹⁰ This attitude of 'make Germany pay' was not extended to Austria. It was fortunate since she had no means to pay for anything and, in fact, was only kept from complete collapse over the next several years through loans from London and Washington.⁹¹

⁸⁸Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law held to the view that they should not make Germany pay the whole cost of the war, but that they would extract from Germany whatever Germany was able to pay. Blake, op. cit., p. 406; also see Winston Churchill, op. cit., p. 50.

⁸⁹The unjustness of this is evident when with hindsight we see that in "straight economic terms, that there was an eight year set-back to European industrial development as a result of the war." C. L. Mowat (ed.), op. cit., p. 54.

⁹⁰D.B.F.P. I, I, Appendix A to No. 68, 840.

⁹¹D.B.F.P. I, II, No. 27, 358; also Cab. 46 (22) of 14 August 1922, Cab. 23/30.

There were many notable assessments of the European economic situation, and proposals for restoring it in the post-war period. Perhaps Keynes' views were the most widely read and accepted.⁹² Before the war much of Europe had been composed of several large territorial states. These states, after the war, were divided, allowing for the creation of many small national identities. What this did was destroy the organization and an economic efficiency of the former large territorial states. Now each of the new states was protected by tariffs, and most currencies lacked stability in trade that was so essential for European reconstruction. Keynes, perceiving this problem, called for a "Free Trade Union . . . of countries undertaking to impose no protectionist tariffs whatever, against the produce of other members of the Unions."⁹³ Another major problem was that of inter-allied indebtedness. During the war, massive sums had been loaned. The attempts to repay them in total would severely strain the international financial system and unbalance trade. Their forgiveness or

⁹²John Maynard Keynes was an economic adviser to the British Government at the Peace Conference. His plan for the rehabilitation of European credit and for financing relief and reconstruction was accepted by Lloyd George in April 1919, but was turned down by President Wilson. Keynes' scheme called in particular for the restoration of German credit in order to stabilize European trade. Although Keynes resigned in June 1919, in protest against the peace terms, his ideas appear to form the basis of some subsequent policy. It is difficult to establish direct links between Keynes and Lloyd George and he certainly did not make policy. Keynes' opinion continued to be sought by some in official circles, and as his biographer notes, even while he was being castigated by journalists for letting down the British ministers; the Ministers in question were seeking his advice. See also P. M. Burnett, Reparation at the Paris Peace Conference, Vol. I, (New York), documents Nos. 287 and 288, and R. F. Harrod, The Life of John Maynard Keynes, (New York); 1969), p. 294.

⁹³Keynes, op. cit., p. 25.

at least scaling down, would call for generosity by the British, and especially the Americans, but would relieve the world and international trade of a heavy financial burden.⁹⁴ If the debts were adhered to, there would be an inflationary tendency within each debtor country. Currency was an essential factor for the restoration of trade and Europe needed a massive loan of it merely to restart her production.⁹⁵ There were countless problems Europe had to face. Keynes suggested several solutions, whose merits do not have to be examined here. What was important was that his underlying analysis of the problems was perceptive. Trade units were much smaller and more protective; all countries were straddled with war debts complicating their economic rehabilitation, and there was little immediate capital after the war to restart production. Hence it was essential for Britain to scale down German reparations to aid in reconstruction.

There were innumerable good reasons for reconstruction. One of the reasons the British pushed for it was that they feared a German-Bolshevik alliance. General Malcolm, Commander of the British Occupation Force, advocated that Britain, if necessary alone, reconstruct Germany by buying into industries and supplying capital and raw material. He also pressed for the modification of Articles 227 to 230 demanding the surrender of war criminals to an Allied tribunal, so that they could be tried in neutral course. This would relieve some of the tensions causing the social

⁹⁴Keynes, op. cit., pp. 31-39.

⁹⁵Keynes, op. cit., p. 39.

unrest.⁹⁶ Even the opposition in the House of Commons realized that "any steps that you take or propose must be of such a kind that whatever you ask or whatever you seek to enforce shall be such that it does not destroy, or even paralyse the economic life of Germany and thereby undermine the whole fabric of international trade."⁹⁷ There was also fear of the manner in which reparations were paid. They should not end up harming the Allies' industries or home markets. Britain was constantly differing from her allies over the whole question of economic reconstruction.⁹⁸ From the beginning Britain strove to prevent her allies from weighing Germany down too heavily. For Britain the process required the restoration of German credit in order to obtain reparations, and that restoration of credit required a certain liberty of action for Germany and a moratorium during which recourse to pledges and sanctions must be avoided. "France, Italy and Belgium on the other hand thought that if Germany was in a difficult situation, it was through her own fault that Germany was not solvent, but that she would only yield to pressure. If then, it was necessary to accord a moratorium, it should be accompanied by the securing of certain pledges which if suitably chosen, should not affect German credit."⁹⁹ There was a fairly clear division in how the Allies wished to handle Germany with

⁹⁶D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 31, 40-45.

⁹⁷Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, Herbert Asquith, 13 February, 1923, Vol. 160, 31.

⁹⁸W. F. Newman, The Balance of Power In The Interwar Years, 1919-1939, (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 65.

⁹⁹F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant, (New York; 1966), p. 186.

the continental countries continually fearing German's resurgence and hence her becoming a threat to peace once again. Britain little feared Germany's resurgence, rather desiring her as an economic market for her exports.¹⁰⁰

Reconstruction, as a policy for Europe, was the primary issue for British governments in the ten years following 1919. Britain's domestic problems were her own, but due to the very nature of Britain and her needs for trade, Europe's problems were hers also. Britain was aware of the dangers of rehabilitating Germany, but made her own problems her primary concern. The security issue of a strong Germany was lost in the need for a strong, revitalized Britain. As always, Britain believed it could act as the decisive balance in the security sphere of European politics. Germany was to be controlled, it was disarmed, and could be maintained that way. Economically strong, Germany would only be an asset to Europe and the world. Lord Kilmarnock, British Chargé d'affaires in Berlin, in a memorandum to Lord Curzon of February 10, 1920, gave the closest insight into the awareness of Britain, of Germany and her strength and of what was to be expected in the future as well as the British concept of justice and fair treatment, when he set out the divergence between British and French viewpoints concerning German affairs:

¹⁰⁰ According to R. B. Sayer "In terms of rate of increase Europe was one of Britain's less healthy markets, but even a slow rate of increase in a big market (as Europe has long been) meant quite a useful increase in absolute terms. In fact, Europe was growing so fast that despite her relative advanced industrialization and the competitiveness this implied . . . right down to 1914 the growth of European wealth remained on balance a stimulant to British export trade and so to Britain's own prosperity." R. B. Sayer, The Vicissitudes of an Export Economy: Britain Since 1880, (Sydney; 1965).

It is perhaps true that there may be eventual danger in a resuscitated Germany. If she is allowed to revive her industries and reorganize her national life, her people, with their capacity for hard work, may conceivably--slowly and painfully--rebuild the shattered edifice of her economic power. With their strong sense of nationality and order, they may weld themselves into a nation which may again prove formidable to the world. It is more than doubtful whether they have learnt the lesson which the war should have inculcated. Trained as they have been for a century in the tradition of obedience with a peasantry conservative in instinct, and the majority of their so-called socialists disciplined to a docile acceptance of the orders of those they have placed in power, it is by no means improbable that a strong Government may be established, which even though democratic in form will be autocratic in essentials, and there are woeful few signs that such a new Germany would show a regenerated spirit. The above are possibilities which it would be foolish to ignore, though the present exhausted state of the country guarantees that for a considerable period of years no fresh aggression is to be feared.

The alternative policy which would definitely remove such dangers in this direction as may still exist, is a crushing of Germany such as will render any chance of recuperation impossible for a generation or more. This doubtlessly can be done and the nation can be reduced to a state of starvation and despair which will render all talk of a future German menace out of the question. But the price of this achievement cannot be overlooked. If Germany is economically ruined past recovery (as it already nearly is) this cannot be without its repercussions on Europe as a whole. All possibility of reparation must vanish, all chances of a stable equilibrium. Will not the already sorely tried finances of France and other countries be shattered in the final catastrophe? The choice is one of extreme difficulty but we stand now at the parting of the ways.¹⁰¹

The choice was between reconstruction and its inherent insecurities, or destruction with its stupendous consequences. Both Lloyd George's Coalition government and the later Conservative governments under Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin opted for Kilmarnock's first alternative. They sought a cordial security through Germany by favouring her rehabilitation which had the added economic advantage of stimulating world trade, which

¹⁰¹D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 38, pp. 57-58.

was Britain's mainstay. Unlike France which feared German 'revanchism' and felt that it could not disarm physically until Germany disarmed morally, the British attitude was more to leave the past behind and return to normality. To achieve this end the Coalition and Conservative governments followed distinct security policies. Yet for both of them the importance of the various ingredients - a troubled Britain, a troubled Europe, the Empire, America, France, Germany and Russia - did not appreciably change.

CHAPTER II

THE QUEST FOR IMPERIAL UNITY

'It is the fact' Lloyd George added, 'that the Dominions and India have come in . . . with the whole of their might and strength . . . which has turned the scale in this great struggle.'

Lloyd George, War Memoirs, I

The war had shown that it was the contribution of the Empire that had given Britain the strength to fight on towards ultimate victory. Inherent then for Britain within this lesson of the war was that the strength to pursue her future security policies lay also in a united Empire. This chapter will look at the attempt to maintain this unity from the Imperial War Cabinet through the British Empire Delegation at Paris, the Imperial Conference of 1921, the Washington Conference to the Imperial Conference of 1923. It will also look at the two major problems in this period which reveal the ultimate splintering of the policy of Empire unity: the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the question of a security guarantee pact to France.

British security policy in the pre-war period was based on the simple contention that she could look after herself and also her Empire. The general security system that had evolved was referred to as the 'pax Britannica'. This concept was based on Britain's great sea power and financial strength which gave to the Dominions such a degree of security that they worried little about external policy. A general harmony was thus maintained between the interests of the Dominions, rooted in their

local situations, and the world-wide commitments of Britain.¹

There had been tentative cracks in this philosophy before the war; especially when Britain involved her Dominions in some aspect of her European policy, the funding of the naval race with Germany, but never was there any major sign of a challenge to Imperial unity. So strong was it in fact, that all the Dominions quickly committed themselves, but there was some hesitation by minorities within the Dominions against involvement in an European war. This was the case especially in South Africa, where there was civil war, and in Canada, where the French Canadian population did not wholeheartedly commit themselves to a European War for the security of the motherland. The savagery, fury and total commitment that the first World War elicited were to change the facade of Imperial Unity.

What had formerly been almost a dictated policy from Whitehall went through an evolutionary change during the war. As the necessity of greater Dominion commitments in men and material was realized, the Dominions took a share in policy making. Shortly after Lloyd George came to power in 1916, he informed the House of Commons that the Government proposed to summon an Imperial Conference "at which the whole position would be put before the representatives of the Dominions and to take counsel with them on further action."²

It should be noted that although Hankey gave Lloyd George the credit for calling the Imperial War Cabinet, he could have been influenced

¹Gwendolen M. Carter, The British Commonwealth and International Security, (Toronto, 1947), The Ryerson Press, p. 15.

²Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, LXXXVIII, 1355.

by such close friends and ardent Imperialists as Lord Milner and Philip Kerr.³ Lloyd George desired that the formality of the ordinary Imperial Conferences should be done away with and preferred that the meetings be held so that the whole situation on foreign policy and defence could be discussed without reserve. To accommodate this desire of Lloyd George's, which in truth was more of a practical necessity imposed by the Dominions war commitments, it was arranged that

the representatives should attend a series of special and continuous meetings of the War Cabinet. For the purposes of these meetings the Prime Ministers of the Dominions were to be members of the War Cabinet. The object was to consider urgent questions affecting the prosecution of the war, the possible condition on which, with the agreement of our Allies, we could assent to its termination and the problems which would then immediately arise.⁴

Herein lay a recognition of the change that was taking place in British Imperial relations. Britain had been brought to a point where she was dependent upon the massive Dominions and India military forces for its security. The Dominions were committed in a titanic struggle in Europe for Britain, and now were being granted a say in policy. For the remainder of the war this close cooperation was to continue, with the Imperial War Cabinet looking after the wider conduct of the war while the British War Cabinet dealt specifically with the British War Effort.⁵

³John F. Naylor, "The Establishment of the Cabinet Secretariat," The Historical Journal, Vol. XIV, 4, December, 1971, pp. 792-793.

⁴Lord Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914-1918, Vol. II, (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1961), p. 657.

⁵Ibid., p. 816; the Imperial War Cabinet greatly facilitated close cooperation between Britain and her Dominions but it only met twice, once in 1917 and once in 1918, each time for little more than a few months; for the nature of the Imperial War Cabinets see George L. Cook, "Sir Robert Borden, Lloyd George and British Military Policy, 1917-18," The Historical Journal, XIV, 2 (1971), pp. 371-395.

Hence for the last two years of the war the Dominions were actually cognizant and involved in the wide range of war policy making. Recognition of this fact had come easily enough within government circles, but the only concrete result to take form on British Imperial relations during this period was 'Resolution IX'. This was a statement made in 1917 that the Imperial War Conference was

of the opinion that the readjusting of the relations of the component parts of the Empire . . . while thoroughly preserving all existing powers of self-government and complete control of domestic affairs should be based on full recognition of the Dominions as autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth and of India as an important part of same, should recognize the right of the Dominions and of India to an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations; and should provide effective arrangements for continuous consultations in all important matters of common Imperial concern, and for such necessary concerted action founded on consultation as the several governments may determine.⁶

Resolution IX was partially a statement of independence but also a distinct agreement to joint action. Imperial relations after the war were hence in a state of flux, with the next stage in Imperial ties still unclear.

The Dominions, obviously enough, were not as 'fond' of the 'pax Britannica' security systems as they were prior to the war. They desired a return to normality, but now the question of security was more open to debate. Was the security of the individual Dominions to be found in reliance upon Britain, upon the Empire as a whole, or upon the League of Nations, or on some combination of these? Was it to become regionally based; or was it to rest upon the Empire's aloofness from international entanglements?

⁶Parliamentary Papers, 1917, XXIII, 319 Cmd. 8566, "Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings and Papers laid before the Imperial War Conference 1917," Resolution IX, p. 61.

The most prevalent emotion common to the Dominions, as to almost every other nation, was the fear of involvement in another war.⁷ This fear made each of the Dominions attune itself to its own particular security needs; and complicated the general security system.

Hence arose the paradox of Britain post-war security policy. The potential strength of Germany was evident. It had taken three major powers, Britain, France and Russia to stalemate Germany's military force for three and a half to four years, and at the end of that Germany was still fighting and gaining the upper hand. It was only the timely intervention of the United States of America on the allied side that threw the bone of victory to them. Germany was defeated, but not decimated, and although there was no legitimate reason to fear Germany in the near future it still remained a great power.

Britain had been gravely weakened by the war, and to revitalize herself she had to strengthen her Imperial ties and reconstitute a devastated Europe with whom she held the greatest percentage of her economic ties. Britain was tied to Europe, but new technical advances in modern warfare made her much more vulnerable to attack. For Britain to be able to act to stabilize and bring security within Europe, she had to maintain both the strength of her Empire, and its determination to aid her at any crucial point.⁸ These, plus the necessity of American goodwill, were

⁷G. M. Carter, op. cit., p. 17.

⁸Lord Milner, according to one of his biographers, believed that the United Kingdom could not continue as a great power of the first rank, but that a 'Greater Britain', an integrated Empire, could remain at the head of international affairs forever. A. M. Gollin, Proconsul in Politics, (London; Anthony Blond, 1964), p. 107.

essential tenets of British foreign policy.⁹

The need for Britain to maintain her traditional ties was obvious, as her own interest lay within Europe. In an economic, geographic and to a greater extent than ever before, military sense, Britain's primary interests lay there. It was generally agreed in informed circles that the restoration of pre-war prosperity in Britain was dependent on the re-establishment of trade relations with both Germany and Russia. In 1913 Germany had been Britain's largest single customer, accounting for no less than eight per-cent of her total exports.¹⁰

Britain's commitment to Europe was based on numerous factors, but the factor of Dominion unity was to be most significant in her political prestige. Herein lay a series of paradoxes, for the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth when faced with the unattractive options of either a return to the pre-war inter-Imperial system or fragmentation of the Empire in the post-war period, followed a middle-way which would be not only functionally effective but also politically feasible. They believed they

⁹Mr. Massey, Prime Minister of New Zealand, expressed these sentiments in his opening speech at the Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions, and India, held in June, July and August, 1921, when he said "the question that must occur to each and everyone of us would be 'Could Britain have been successful?' I doubt it. With all the confidence I have in the might and power of Britain and the patriotism of her people . . . I doubt if by ourselves we could have stood up against the powers of Central Europe and have come out successfully during that war." (Cmd. 1474, Appendix I, Opening Speech of Mr. Massey, p. 28-29.)

¹⁰Cmd. 7827 (1915) "Statistical Abstract for the British Empire in each year from 1899 to 1913."

could devise consultative machinery which would enable them to jointly formulate British foreign policy even if their consultation did not result in concerted action. Yet the basic problem could not be spirited away-- how to reconcile the diplomatic unity of the Empire, in the sense that the British government and its accredited representatives would continue to act on behalf of the whole Empire in foreign countries, with the practical though not legal autonomy of each self-governing dominion. How also could a foreign policy be established in the early 1920's when Britain was concentrating her efforts on reconstituting Europe, needed the Dominions' support, but found the Dominions with little or negative interests in Europe. The idea that the Dominions should appoint a resident minister in London to aid in the construction of an Imperial foreign policy was particularly attractive to Lloyd George.¹¹

On this issue, Lloyd George was not to have his own way. Jan Christian Smuts of South Africa had different ideas on an Imperial constitution, as had most of the other Prime Ministers. Smuts supported the notion that the foreign policy of the empire should be determined in broad outlines by the Prime Ministers at annual conferences in London. Once these general guidelines were set he was content to leave all the details, including policy execution, to the British Government and the Foreign Office.¹² Neither Smuts nor Hughes, the Prime Minister of Australia,

¹¹Lord Hankey, op. cit., p. 833.

¹²W. K. Hancock, Smuts, Vol. I, 'The Sanguine Years', 1870-1919, (Cambridge: University Press, 1962), pp. 430-431.

liked the implicit commitment of support inherent in Lloyd George's notion of resident ministers or consultation. Their notion was that where there was unanimous agreement on policy, Britain could act for her Dominions, where not, an independent position could be adopted according to their national interests.¹³ This was a contentious issue that in the post-war period continually caused dissension.

In 1919 the melding of Imperial unity was continued. Even before the Armistice, the Dominion Prime Ministers, led by Borden, had pressed their demand for separate national representation at the post-war peace conference.¹⁴ This presented a major problem for the British government. On the one hand it had the obligation to honour a promise that the Dominions would be given a voice in determining the terms of peace,¹⁵ and on the other, granting their promise meant, in appearance at least, the abandonment of the principle of the diplomatic unity of the empire. Also Britain could not afford to alienate the Dominions with the peace unsigned, and the latter having four full divisions in Europe. Lloyd George's government took a sensible middle course, actively supporting the Dominions' separate representation while at the same time securing from them acceptance of a 'united front' strategy as regards foreign policy in order to co-ordinate the policies of the several countries. The Imperial War

¹³ Cab. 23/41; I.W.C., No. 26, July 23, 1918, p. 5.

¹⁴ For a comprehensive account of these negotiations see: K. C. Wheare, The Empire and the Peace Treaties, 1918-21, Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. III, pp. 645-666.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 646.

Cabinet was to be reconstituted in Paris as the British Empire Delegation, an informal association of the Prime Ministers constituted to reconcile divergences in national policy in order to avoid formal splits.

The B.E.D. was the first post-war attempt at the creation of a structure to maintain empire unity. It was a successful cooperative venture, which presented to the world the image of Empire solidarity. In total the B.E.D. met on thirty-five different occasions, secretly, to decide and co-ordinate their policy positions.¹⁶ They were aided by a special Empire Secretariat under Hankey but organized by Clement Jones and composed of representatives from each of the Dominions.¹⁷ Lloyd George acted as chairman of the Delegation whenever possible, and served as the vital channel of communication through which the B.E.D. kept up with the deliberations of the Council of Four. Within the B.E.D., as in the Imperial War Cabinet, Lloyd George usually achieved his own ends, both because he was the British Prime Minister and because of his own potent influence within the Council of Four. Hence there was usually little need for the unanimous vote because Lloyd George's will prevailed. The Dominions' only position of influence was through Lloyd George. Hence it was a weak position, but still better than that of other small powers at the conference. And, however weak their position, the fact remains that the efforts at policy co-ordination within the B.E.D. appear to have been successful.

¹⁶Cab. 29/28, B.E.D., Nos. 1-35.

¹⁷Lord Hankey, The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference 1919, (London; George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), p. 27.

Throughout the Peace Conference, Dominion and British personnel interchanged as diplomatic representatives of the Empire. In February, 1919, Borden sat with Balfour on the Council of Ten.¹⁸ On the special commissions established by the Conference to make recommendations on specific issues arising out of the peace settlement, British and the Dominion representatives were able to work in unison; Cecil and Smuts on the Commission on the League of Nations; Sumner, Cunliffe and Hughes on the Commission on Reparations; Harold Nicolson and Borden on the Commission on Greek Territories.¹⁹ By these improvisations and because the British also included representatives of the Dominions and of India on a panel system in the five men delegation of the British Empire,²⁰ a 'united front' was maintained on the vast majority of issues arising out of the peace settlement.

However, as in all consultative machinery, there were flaws. Several issues aroused division within the delegation, and, significantly enough, they were issues that concerned Britain's European strategy.

One of these issues was over the question of reparations, and the manner in which Lloyd George preserved Dominion unity showed the extent to which he desired it, and also the obvious dominance of the British delegate within the Delegation. The crisis arose over how much was Germany

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

¹⁹ Cab. 29/28, Clement Jones, "The Dominions and the Peace Conference." This paper is useful for an appreciation of organizational detail of the Dominion involvement in the Conference.

²⁰ Hankey, Supreme Control, p. 36.

to pay. The British 'Khaki election' of 1918 had aroused the popular fervour to make Germany pay, but this popular notion was somewhat tempered in the government executive circles. Although Lloyd George was not willing to fix any limit to the amount of reparations, he was for moderation so as to enable Germany to restore her economy, and therewith stability in Europe.²¹

When the interrelated issues of the war costs and reparations were first brought up in the B.E.D. on March 3, 1919, the Australians declared that what they wanted was an arrangement which would prevent the economic recuperation of Germany.²² Milner, who was in the chair at that time, was rather taken aback, and stated "that he did not think the people of the United Kingdom would agree to cease all trade with Germany."²³ In this belief he was not alone. Churchill, when discussing the report of the Inter-Allied Commission on Reparation, of which Hughes was a member, emphasized the effect that a huge indemnity would have on the budget of the ordinary working man in Germany.²⁴ The rest of the Dominions did not support Hughes' demand; Borden, because he was trying to maintain Canadian outlooks closely in harmony with those of the United States; and Smuts because he felt a harsh peace settlement would sow the seeds

²¹Lloyd George later stated that he had been 'definitely of the opinion that we were committed by the Armistice terms not to demand an indemnity which would include the cost of prosecuting the war.' The Truth about the Peace Treaties, II, p. 490.

²²Cab. 29/28, B.E.D., No. 12, 3 March, 1918, p. 3.

²³Ibid., p. 3.

²⁴H. Duncan Hall, Commonwealth, (London: 1971), p. 240.

for yet another European War.²⁵

Unfortunately, Hughes continued to push his claim and the necessity of unanimity within the B.E.D. put Lloyd George in a difficult position. The manner in which Lloyd George handled Hughes exemplified the inferior negotiation position of the Dominions.

Lloyd George appointed Hughes to the Commission on the Reparation of Damages where he ardently argued his cause against the Americans, led by John Foster Dulles.²⁶ All the time that Hughes was arguing for Germany to pay the full war cost, Lloyd George publicly supported him, while proceeding with separate negotiations. Lloyd George made a secret arrangement to drop the demand for payment of the full war costs, and to insert in its place a demand for the cost of war pensions and separation allowances, under the heading of compensation to members of the civilian population for damages sustained by them.²⁷ This all led to the British Empire Delegation meeting on April 11, when Lloyd George faced Hughes with a 'fait accompli'. Hughes of course was bitter and willing to fight to the end for full war costs, at which Lloyd George warned him that he would be wrecking the Peace Conference, for Wilson would leave. Hughes gave in, but not gracefully.²⁸ British economic policy for European

²⁵Hancock and van der Poel (eds), Selections From Smuts Papers, IV, (Cambridge: 1966), pp. 215-221.

²⁶H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 241.

²⁷See: Lloyd George, Truth about the Peace Treaties, I; pp. 494-497 and Northedge, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

²⁸Cab. 28/28, B.E.D., 19a, April 11, 1919, pp. 1-5.

restoration was saved a damaging blow and the Dominions in general received an insight into the possible consequences of independent action, which would have adverse results on Britain.

On questions of distinct national importance the Dominions often acted independently. Borden, for instance, saw Wilson on unsolicited occasions to smooth over Anglo-American relations²⁹ and Smuts and Hughes often arranged private meetings with different powers to talk over their points of view. The British government was strongly opposed to these meetings but virtually powerless to prevent them.

There were other occasions at Paris when the B.E.D. splintered, e.g., over the mandate policy. There were times, too, when it had direct influence upon British policy such as in the discussions over intervention in Russia. Despite the imperfections of the delegation in Paris, the B.E.D. was regarded by the participants as a successful experiment in intergovernmental cooperation. Its success was to establish the view that the Commonwealth association had become a concert of mutual convenience. The Dominions would benefit by the influence they now had in world politics, and their current and up-to-date information on world affairs. Yet Britain gained most of all, for she benefited by the renewal of strength which she needed to maintain her world position. As Duncan Hall puts it,

²⁹C. P. Glazebrook, Canada at the Paris Peace Conference, (Toronto: 1942), p. 9.

the war had accentuated the relative decline of Britain as a great power. It needed in peacetime no less than in war the strength it could draw from its association with its daughter states overseas.

He goes on to suggest that Lloyd George sensed this factor and was acutely conscious of the need to preserve intact during the Peace Conference the wartime unity of the Empire. The support of the Dominions in Paris was vital to his leadership.³⁰

Empire unity had been maintained throughout the negotiations at Paris. The facade had been erected, the belief was that Britain spoke for six nations in foreign policy. As has been shown, this facade was a necessity for British security but in its creation there had been gaps left unattended. Unity was hardest to preserve when the issue was Europe; British defence of a moderate reparation settlement had been achieved against only one Dominion. When the Dominions were united or in the majority, Lloyd George had a much harder time in obtaining consent for his policy.

The most significant issue over which Britain desired to maintain Empire unity during the Peace Conference was 'the proposed British guarantee of France against any act of unprovoked aggression by Germany for a period of fifteen years'. Lloyd George wanted it to be an Empire commitment, but the Dominions felt the necessity for their commitment was not so clear.

Several noteworthy factors have to be taken into consideration when this security guarantee is looked at from the British point of view.

³⁰Hall, op. cit., p. 237.

Recent technological developments menaced Britain herself. Two of the most significant weapons of the First World War were the aeroplane and the submarine, Both of these weapons destroyed any British policy based on 'splendid isolation'. There were, further, the economic ties to consider. Britain's hope for security lay in maintaining her strength to intervene in the balance of power in Europe. Yet it was also obvious that the war had altered the traditional means by which Britain could assume this role. Circumstances, in fact, seemed to call for new departure in foreign policy if Britain was to continue to have influence in Europe. In 1918 the Foreign Office had recommended to the government the negotiation of a treaty of permanent alliance between Great Britain, France and Belgium.³¹ This suggestion of a permanent commitment of Britain in Europe was a radical change from former British policy. Yet on the whole, the British Cabinet, including Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Balfour and Curzon accepted it, rather as an unpleasant alternative, but a necessary one nevertheless in view of the new international environment.

With the concept of a security guarantee to France firmly implanted in British policy, Lloyd George tried to broaden the base of its support. He entered into talks with President Wilson to make the guarantee of French security a joint one with the United States.³² Lloyd George was wary of Clemenceau winning a wavering Wilson to his side on the negotiations of the Rhineland settlement. Lloyd George's proposal was the security guarantee

³¹Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, I, p. 33.

³²Charles Seymour (ed), The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, (Cambridge: 1926), IV, p. 360.

in exchange for a renunciation of French demands for a separate Rhineland State: Lloyd George won Wilson to his side, and both came to an agreement with Clemenceau who accepted the quid pro quo for the security guarantee on 26 March 1919. For Lloyd George now, the most difficult part was to win Dominion support. The announcement of the guarantee was to be made on 6 May, although some hint of it was given in the Fontainebleu Memorandum of 25 March. Lloyd George presented it to the B.E.D. on 5 May.³³ It was obviously a tactical manoeuvre by Lloyd George who hoped to present the delegates with a 'fait accompli' and force it through. The manoeuvre failed for Lloyd George did not secure the desired unanimous support for British policy by the Dominions. In fact there was an even division, as was to happen frequently from this time on: Canada and South Africa against Australia and New Zealand. On May 6, Clemenceau was to discover at the Plenary meeting of the Preliminary Peace Conference that the guarantee supposedly in the name of the British Empire was in fact solely a guarantee by Great Britain.³⁴

³³Cab. 29/28, B.E.D. 30, 5 May, 1919.

³⁴Lloyd George in his March 25, Fontainebleu Memorandum, stated that the 'British Empire' and the United States ought to give France a guarantee, although it is suspected that he did this without consulting the Dominion Premiers. Maurice Hankey stated that the guarantee offer "had been reported to and approved by the British Empire Delegation," but this at most was that Canada and South Africa were acquiescing in a guarantee given by the United Kingdom, on the understanding that their countries were not committed unless their Parliaments agreed. What is certain is that the Treaty in its final form as signed at Versailles had in Article 5 the specific statement that, "The present Treaty shall impose no obligation upon any of the Dominions of the British Empire unless and until it is approved by the Parliaments of the Dominions concerned." See: David Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, Vol. I, (London: 1938), p. 403, Sir Maurice Hankey, The Supreme Control at the Peace Conference (London: 1963), p. 144, United Kingdom Treaty Series, No. 6 (1919), cited in H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 262.

The lack of Empire support was to sincerely worry Lloyd George. He had recognized that Britain was tied to Europe; but he wanted this link to be based on a position of strength that would itself derive from the support of the Dominions. There was as yet no question of Britain unilaterally binding herself to guarantee France, a fact that was to become increasingly obvious in the succeeding years as both countries sought an alliance through differing forms of commitments and security pacts.

The basis for understanding the policy adopted by Lloyd George perhaps lies in a memorandum written by General Botha the day after the fateful British Empire Delegation meeting of May 5. He indicated that it would be most dangerous for the British Empire to bind itself unless the Senate of the United States ratified the Treaty and the United States was thus bound by it.³⁵

The Canadian position was much akin to that of Botha. They were more concerned with their relations with America than involvement in Europe. Their support for the British guarantee to France would have been significantly influenced by American ratification of it. The fact that Sir Robert Borden saw little hope of American ratification of the guarantee treaty led him to procrastinate on the issue, rather than raise a matter of such contention unnecessarily.³⁶ This, plus the fact that South Africa was not even deliberating the case, led the Foreign Office to believe that South Africa definitely, and Canada more than likely, would not support the British government in its European policy.³⁷

³⁵F. O. 608/172, File 511/1/3.

³⁶Henry Borden (ed.), Robert Laird Borden His Memoires, 2 vols., (Toronto: 1938), p. 996.

³⁷F.O. 608/172, File 525/1/6.

In the period between the ending of the Paris Peace Conference and the Imperial Conference of 1921 some two years later, the general direction of British foreign policy reverted almost entirely into the hands of the British government. There were several reasons for this; the Dominions' own internal concerns; the absence of a practical machinery for consultation; and the inadequate dissemination of information from Whitehall to the Dominions. Duncan Hall suggests that at Paris the Dominions had ordered for themselves the giant's robes of their new status, but once at home, away from their close contact with Britain, they were unable to wear them.³⁸ Perhaps he is right, but it is also possible that the Dominions sincerely felt that Britain could, for the most part, act in their best interests, that their rights had been established and that they preserved them by signing the additional peace treaties. In the immediate post war period there were few issues to activate intense Dominion concern, and hence the image that the British Empire Delegation had presented at Paris as a model for Empire unity was preserved. The separate governments followed their own national interests, but not until the issue of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance arose did they all take a concerted look at British foreign policy. In the interim period Britain had conducted foreign policy with the tacit understood support of the Dominions, and hence had been able to act from the vantage point of the Empire's strength, even in her general European policy.

³⁸J. Duncan Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

Before dealing with the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, it should be noted that the British government did not look with pleasure upon this virtual break down of the inter-Imperial consultative system. It was feared in Britain that a breakdown in the consultative system would lead the Dominions into believing that they had no obligations as members of the Empire. The factor of Dominion unity was so essential to British security that she vehemently opposed Canada's placing a Minister in Washington. This would have allowed for direct consultation between the two governments, leaving Britain uninformed and thus dealing a severe blow to the prestige of the Foreign Office as the exclusive source of the diplomatic representation of the Empire. In the end a compromise was reached, with a Canadian minister to be appointed to the British Embassy in Washington who could report directly to the Canadian government.³⁹ Again the vital factor for Britain, that of Empire unity, was preserved.

With such pressures as this developing within the Dominions, Lloyd George pressed for the creation of a better consultative machinery. Yet throughout 1920, it proved impossible to get the Prime Ministers together because of elections in the Dominions, and so matters continued to drift. On 13 October, 1920, Lloyd George sent a personal message to the Dominion Prime Ministers expressing his discontent.

I have been anxious for some time that we should renew that personal consultation between Prime Ministers which was productive of such good results in the last two years of the war and at Paris. In the absence of such consultation and of some machinery for giving

³⁹Documents on Canadian External Affairs, Vol. 3, 1919-1925, L. C. Clark (ed.), (Ottawa; Department of External Affairs, 1970), Nos. 9 and 10.

it more continuity, I fully realize that the British Government must inevitably tend to take upon itself the responsibility for settling many urgent questions of foreign policy which arise from day to day, and require immediate decision, but which yet often involve consequences vitally affecting the whole Empire. This is neither fair to Great Britain nor to the Dominions. There are also many matters, I know of common interest which call for decision and consultation. I have received a telegram from the Prime Minister of Australia in which he urges a meeting of the Imperial Cabinet next year and expresses similar views.

Therefore I would suggest that we should hold a meeting of the Imperial Cabinet not later than June next year, on the lines of the Imperial War Cabinet meetings in 1917-1918.⁴⁰

By this personal message Lloyd George expressed his own anxiety over the breaking down of the Imperial consultation system. It appeared that Lloyd George never considered allaying the decay of the consultation system by greatly increasing the inadequate flow of information from the British government to the Dominions. But the need to curb the centrifugal force pulling the Dominions away from Britain was clear enough.

At this stage, it is necessary to refer very briefly to the British view of the overall international situation, and this may be conveniently done by referring to a memorandum written in February 1921 by Sir Eyre Crowe, Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office. England, so Crowe wrote:

had not been fortunate enough to gain or retain the effective good will of any European Powers; her relations with America are far from satisfactory; Anglo-American tension reacts upon our position both in South America and in the Far East; and in the Near East and Middle East we are seriously threatened from the dangers arising from the influence of Bolshevism or Russian hostility. If we could at this juncture reconstitute or if possible fortify the solidarity of the

⁴⁰ Document on Canadian External Affairs, III, No. 206, "Colonial Secretary to Governor General," London, October 13, 1920.

Entente with France, the whole situation would materially change to our advantage. The stabilizing effect of settling on a strong basis of common action and policy Anglo-French dealings with Germany cannot be over rated. It would probably settle the attitude of the French Government definitely for a long time to come, it would make for peace and harmony among all the new States made or enlarged by the Treaty of Peace. Our relations with America could only be improved if the United States Government was definitely deprived of any prospect of using divergencies between French and British policies for putting pressure upon England; and a solution of the Eastern question in a sense favourable to British interests and political aims would clear the atmosphere in all the regions extending from the Balkans to Central Asia and India.⁴¹

In this highly classified document Crowe emphasized not only the need for a British commitment in Europe, but also the desirability of good relations with the United States. Crowe also pointed out that involvement in Europe was still the key to the security for Britain and her Empire. In particular a cordial Anglo-French entente would have resolved Britain's security problems and also those of France, thus leading to general stability.

Coming into the Imperial Conference of 1921 three factors are then obvious. British ties to Europe were as strong as ever and were becoming much more important. There was a need to neutralize growing American anti-British hostility, especially over the question of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Thirdly, there was the need for Empire unity - more so now than ever, since there was little chance of gaining an American guarantee to back the British guarantee of French security. Imperial support was essential. The Imperial Conference of 1921 was the key in determining Britain's future foreign policy, especially towards Western Europe.

⁴¹Memorandum by Crowe, February 12, 1921, F.O. 371/5843.

The minutes of the Imperial Conference held in London from June 20 to August 5, 1921, show that it was possibly the height of post-war inter-Imperial co-operation.⁴² Lloyd George in his opening speech to the Conference, when talking on the mutual relationship of the states within the Empire, set the tone for the Conference by declaring that "the British Dominions have now been accepted fully into the community of nations by the whole world . . . they have achieved full national status, and they now stand beside the United Kingdom as equal partners in the dignities and the responsibilities of the British Commonwealth."⁴³ He went on to describe the communication difficulties of the Empire. Because there was no consultative machinery within the Empire-Commonwealth, Britain enacted its decisions without official Dominion support. He saw this as a major fault, and then as if to emphasize the British desire for Dominion participation in foreign policy making, Lloyd George provided the Prime Ministers with copies of the confidential Foreign Office reports daily given to the Cabinet. It brought about an immediate change. The Prime Ministers settled amongst themselves many of the Empire's problems and set out a general policy outline. In the case of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance they even determined how policy was to be implemented. The conference was a success from the viewpoint of Imperial unity. The candor and honesty

⁴²Cab. 32/2, Minutes of the Meeting of the Imperial Conference, June 20-August 5, 1921.

⁴³Parliamentary Papers, 1919, XIV, I, Cmd. 1474, "Conference of Prime Ministers and Representatives of the United Kingdom, the Dominions and India, held in June, July and August, 1921, Summary of Proceedings and Documents."

with which issues were discussed enabled this, but these same qualities were to show the basic division in the Empire over Europe. We can now look at these two questions, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the proposed security guarantee pact to France from the viewpoint of the Dominions and West European Security.

The Crowe memorandum of February 12, 1921, emphasized the state of British relations with America and brought out that a cardinal point of British policy was to have the United States as a friend, and certainly not hostile. The Empire-Commonwealth could not afford a naval arms race with America. Yet the United States Naval Act of 1916, which aimed at a navy 'second to none' was pushing it upon them.⁴⁴ In the same strain Japan had responded to the American naval building by adopting a policy of naval equality with the United States. Naval building on this scale, backed by half the budget of Japan and the more or less unlimited resources of the United States would cripple the United Kingdom.⁴⁵ A solution was needed quickly, for the potential problem to Britain was tremendous. Not only could it lead to enormous costs, but it could also create a split in the Dominions and help to alienate America from Britain. These results were not factors which would enhance Britain's power and prestige, nor give it the strength to carry on its security policies, especially its commitment to Europe.

⁴⁴H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 447.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 447.

The original alliance with Japan had been made in 1902 when Britain was excluded from any European security arrangements and was in need of an alliance to help give her Empire a measure of security. Originally that security had been sought against the expansion of Russia in Asia.⁴⁶ In 1911 the treaty had been revised by Article IV so that no third party treaty should make the other go to war.

Now Britain's fear was that she might become involved in a war against the United States while fulfilling her treaty obligations to Japan. The Treaty had allowed Britain to concentrate on Europe, and indeed the Japanese had been very faithful allies. It was plain that the Japanese wished to renew the alliance or at least if it could not be maintained in the form of a treaty, they would prefer "a mere agreement or a joint declaration to nothing at all."⁴⁷

The problem as the Foreign Office saw it existed in that the United States and Japan appeared to be irreconcilable,⁴⁸ and yet it was essential that Britain work out a Far Eastern policy jointly with both of them, because of her naval weakness in the Pacific. Unfortunately, all matters seemed to revert to the question of Commonwealth relations with the United States. Japan appeared to be the obvious Pacific ally, especially since it was feared that if Britain left Japan alone she would quickly drop into

⁴⁶D.B.F.P. I, VI, Alstron to Curzon, 1 January 1920, No. 598, 857.

⁴⁷Cab. 41 (21) of 30th May, 1921, Cab. 23/25.

⁴⁸D.B.F.P. I, XIV, No. 162 and H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 440.

the arms of Russia and Germany.⁴⁹ The solution had to be, for Britain at least, a three way relationship, for there was a real fear by the Japanese of Anglo-American combination against them in the Pacific, and if Japan were excluded it would have to find other powerful allies.⁵⁰ A Tripartite Pact was in fact what one of the earliest Foreign Office memoranda on the subject proposed.⁵¹ Also, through feedback from the British Ambassador in Tokyo, Sir C. Eliot, it was ascertained that Japan would not be adverse to such a tripartite agreement.⁵² Although informal consultation on this continued throughout 1920 and into 1921, it was decided that no decision could be taken on the matter without prior consultation with the Dominions. This was to be at the June, 1921, meeting of the Imperial Conference. In the interim period the British Foreign Office and Governmental opinion seemed to have shifted definitely behind the idea of a Tripartite Treaty as the only means of placating the Dominions, the United States and Japan, and hence of maintaining and enhancing Britain's external strength and influence, enabling her to conduct her European policy from a position of strength. The British government had determined its policy and all seemed set except for one factor. Arthur Meighen, Prime Minister of Canada, was strongly against the renewal of the Alliance in any form. It has been

⁴⁹D.B.F.P. I, VI, No. 598, 857. also see D.B.F.P. I, XIV, No. 52, 45.

⁵⁰D.B.F.P. I, VI, No. 617, 880.

⁵¹D.B.F.P. I, XIV, No. 261, 274.

⁵²D.B.F.P. I, XIV, No. 52, 47.

suggested that he was influenced in this stand by an American lobby.⁵³ Meighen was opposed, as strongly, by Prime Minister Hughes of Australia. In the consideration of the Pacific Dominions, Japan was to loom as large as the United States did for Canada, although they did recognize the American apprehensions.

The sentiments of the respective political figures was fairly well known at the beginning of the Imperial Conference. For Smuts the Alliance was of marginal significance, but close relations with America were of the utmost importance. He believed that the scene of world troubles had shifted from Europe to the Pacific, and hence what was of most importance was "that the only path of safety for the British Empire is a path on which she can walk together with America."⁵⁴ Smuts' emphasis thus lay on maintaining good relations with the United States.⁵⁵ Massey, for New Zealand, supported renewal of the Alliance. His reasons were numerous, not the least of which was that New Zealand was a weak Pacific nation. Yet he also mentioned the Japanese support for the Empire during the War, and made this a solid basis for his arguments for the renewal.⁵⁶

The general attitude within the British government was for the renewal of the Alliance with some alterations to meet American suspicions. Curzon pointed out the support for its renewal: The War Office and the

⁵³Stephen Roskill, Naval Policy between the Wars, I: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism, 1919-1929, (London: 1968), p. 293; see also: Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen, Vol. 2, (Toronto: 1963), p. 75.

⁵⁴Cmd. 1474. Appendix I. Opening Speech by General Smuts, op. cit., pp. 24 & 25.

⁵⁵G. Carter, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵⁶Cmd. 1474. Appendix I. Opening Speech by Mr. Massey, op. cit., p. 30.

Admiralty favoured renewal, with changes to meet American suspicions. Balfour mentioned that the Committee of Imperial Defence favoured renewal from the point of view of the strategic interests of the Empire. On the whole, Curzon added, The British Cabinet was in favour of renewal for a term of years. France and Holland favoured renewal.⁵⁷

The support for the renewal of the Alliance in some form, albeit as a Tripartite Treaty, or with clauses to allay American fears, was overwhelming. The only true opposition was from Meighen. The only reason not to renew the alliance seemed to be because the United States was against it. Even this argument was suspect. Some members of the cabinet, most notably Curzon, felt that American apprehensions over renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance were being sustained only as a convenient pretext for continuing a massive ship building program.⁵⁸

By the manner in which the debate in the Imperial Conference developed, it appeared as if the only alternatives were to choose between the alliance with Japan, and friendship with America. This was because it was believed they were debating whether to renew the treaty. This changed when Lord Birkenhead, the Lord Chancellor, announced that the Treaty had not been renounced and must run until denounced and for a full year afterwards. Hence the Treaty stood. Meighen back-tracked slightly and suggested that all he desired was a tripartite conference, before any decision was taken to renew the treaty, and the controversy was ended.⁵⁹

⁵⁷H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 452.

⁵⁸Cab. 23/25, 42/21, 30 May, 1921, p. 15; for the build-up of the American navy see A. J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow, Victory and Aftermath, Vol. V, (London: 1970), pp. 224-226.

⁵⁹H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., p. 455.

The question of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had thus been satisfactorily if temporarily resolved and a policy determined for the whole Empire. To this point the issue had been discussed and solved on a joint consultative basis. Yet the manner in which the policy was carried through at Washington set out a different image. There the unity of the Empire was kept only by the adherence to the jointly decided Imperial policy. The operation of the delegation and its decision-making process at Washington was a devolution from the consultative position which the Dominions had apparently established at Paris.⁶⁰

It was Curzon who was to make the arrangements for the Imperial solution to the problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. He began these as early as July 5. His proposal was that the American government invite the British government to a conference of Pacific Powers to be jointly held with one on naval disarmament.⁶¹ Originally there was no urgency in the request, but the pressure Lloyd George was under from the House of Commons placed him in the position of having to make a public statement on Imperial proposals about the Alliance by July 11. President Harding made a preliminary statement proposing such a conference on the morning of July 11,⁶² enabling Lloyd George to defend himself in the

⁶⁰British representation at the Washington Conference was to be based on the precedent established by the British Empire Delegation at Paris in 1919. No decision by the Delegation was to be made unless it was agreed to by all. For a discussion of the complexity of the Dominions' proposed representation and the American attitude towards it, see: H. Duncan Hall, *op. cit.*, pp. 460-463.

⁶¹The Ambassador in Great Britain (Harvey) to the Secretary of State, London, July 8, 1921, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1921, pp. 19-21.

⁶²The Ambassador in Great Britain (Harvey) to the Secretary of State, London, July 11, 1921, 11 p.m., Ibid., pp. 25-27.

House of Commons. This was done to give the appearance that the initiative for the conference was coming from President Harding. The idea of a preliminary conference between Britain and her Dominions fell through. The formal invitations were issued August 11 for a conference to convene in Washington on November 11. Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan and China were invited.⁶³

The Imperial Conference thus concluded with a consolidated policy, the Empire united and the prospect of better relations with the United States, and massive budget cuts in the future. These factors plus the maintenance of good relations with Japan were the goals of the Washington Conference. In this light the success of the Washington Conference can be seen as a highlight of the consistent foreign policy Lloyd George directed. Anglo-American relations since the Versailles treaty had not been good. There were numerous causes of friction, most of them small, but all of them able to arouse a great deal of public sentiment in America. One factor was Britain's war debt, some £850 million. Britain was owed £1300 million and wished to repay the United States out of these payments, if necessary, for their debts automatically became entangled with reparations. The Americans took the attitude of 'they hired the money didn't they', forced the issue and Britain made a settlement for some \$600,000,000 payable over sixty-two years.⁶⁴ In addition there was the issue of the naval race, as foolish as it was becoming serious.⁶⁵

⁶³The Secretary of State to the Charge in Britain (Wheeler), Aug. 11, 1921, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1921, I, pp. 56-58; see also H. Duncan Hall, op. cit., pp. 460-463.

⁶⁴Mowat, op. cit., p. 231.

⁶⁵Roskill, op. cit., p. 222, also supra footnote 59.

More significant though, for Anglo-American relations was the question of Ireland. There was a strong Irish lobby in the United States, of which in all matters pertaining to Britain in the period 1920-1922, the election-conscious American politicians had to take heed.⁶⁶ Only after December 16, 1921, when the British parliament approved the Bill creating the Irish Free State did anti-British sentiments begin to diminish.⁶⁷

Another major issue was the question of Dominion representations in the League of Nations. The majority of the Republicans were opposed to the League, and in combating President Wilson's policy throughout 1919 had accompanied their campaign with anti-British propaganda. To the Americans it appeared as if Britain was giving itself six votes in the League.⁶⁸ The issue received quite a bit of notoriety because the Presidential election campaign seemed almost centered on the issue of entry into the League of Nations. The general anti-British attitude of America aided by the Irish agitation was to reach serious proportions.

As can be seen Anglo-American relations had deteriorated since the end of the war. The British contingent when it arrived in Washington led by Balfour was faced with a none too receptive public. This only made their work at the conference more important, and enhanced their accomplishments.

⁶⁶D.B.F.P. I, V, 981.

⁶⁷Taylor, op. cit., p. 158.

⁶⁸D.B.F.P. I, V, 980-986.

One of the objectives of the Washington Conference was to improve the sorely tried Anglo-American relations.⁶⁹ Yet there were other factors to consider. The attempts to meet the direct costs of the war and the difficulties of adapting to new patterns of trade were making the economic situation critical in Britain.⁷⁰ There were strong sentiments throughout Britain and the United States in favour of disarmament. In England there had been pacifist organizations before the war and after 1919 there was the League of Nations Union; arbitration societies, and other bodies trying to promote support for a new international order. Many of these groups tried to channel widespread revulsion against war into concrete demands and disarmament in the post-war period became their leading goal. Because the forthcoming Washington Conference would make disarmament a matter of practical politics, it won the enthusiastic support of the peace movement.⁷¹

The Conference was conducted in a glare of publicity and in the end the British had managed to replace the Anglo-Japanese Alliance with a Four

⁶⁹Sir Austen Chamberlain, Down the Years, (London: 1935), pp. 232-238.

⁷⁰D. S. Birns, "Open Diplomacy at the Washington Conference of 1921-1922. The British and French Experience" in Comparative Studies in Society and History, XII, No. 3, (July: 1970), pp. 298-299. Balfour stated to the Cabinet on 17 February, 1922, that, they (Britain) were faced with both a naval peril (retention of one power standard) and a financial peril. To him the naval peril was secondary to the financial. Cab. 11(22) of 17 February, 1922, Cab. 23/29.

⁷¹D. S. Birns, op. cit., p. 303.

Power Pact,⁷² strengthen relations with America,⁷³ and greatly reduce American anti-British sentiments, while yet maintaining the unity of the Empire, and keeping Japan moderately happy and guardians of British interests in the Pacific.

The disarmament clauses of the Washington Treaty in the first instance were to appear highly successful. Based on tonnage, the Americans proposed forty percent cuts in the size of their fleets to 500,000 tons.⁷⁴ The British were shocked but in the end, along with the Japanese, French and Italians, accepted. The ratio agreed on was 5, 5, 3, 1.7, 1.7 thousand tons for Britain, the United States, Japan, France and Italy.⁷⁵ A further agreement was reached over fortifications in the Pacific. Specifically this applied to the halting of the building of all naval bases and fortifications in the Philippines, Guam, Hong Kong, which in effect insured the Japanese mainland against naval attack from any possible base within convenient operational distance.⁷⁶ The outcome of the Conference was a brilliant success for Lloyd George's government foreign policy, not only in its results, especially the economic saving, but in the manner it was carried out. The success of the Washington Conference was acclaimed

⁷²D. S. Birns, op. cit., p. 307.

⁷³D. S. Birns, op. cit., p. 307.

⁷⁴This was in recognition of the naval parity between the United States and Britain already conceded by the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Lee of Farnham.

⁷⁵Roskill, op. cit., p. 311.

⁷⁶Mowat, op. cit., p. 355.

in most circles including for the most part the British Labour Party.⁷⁷ The only Labour fear was that out of the Conference might come some movement towards a closer Anglo-American alliance and a watering down of the League.⁷⁸

Max Beloff has suggested that the thesis of many Conservatives was that instead of a European balance of power system, supported by the collective power of the League of Nations, Britain should follow a semi-isolationist policy in which the nineteenth century Pax Britannica would be replaced by close Anglo-American cooperation.⁷⁹ Donald S. Birns has drawn attention to much the same divergence in public opinion:

The public discussion in Britain . . . revealed a widespread tendency to view disarmament and Anglo-American cooperation as alternatives to the frustrating and complex tasks of European settlement. From the left came the exaggerated hopes for direct disarmament as a panacea which were often to be heard in later years; from the right came hopes on far reaching cooperation with the United States as a possible way out of commitments required for an adequate European security system.⁸⁰

Lloyd George often spoke of a basic axiom of British foreign policy being good relations with the United States.^{79a} Certainly the Dominions avowed it and Japan feared such an Anglo-American alliance. If for any reason Britain was forced out of Europe, or isolated, or for any reason

⁷⁷L. S. Amery, My Political Life, (London: 1953), p. 217.

⁷⁸Birns, op. cit., p. 307.

⁷⁹Max Beloff, "The Special Relationship: An Anglo-American Myth", in M. Gilbert (ed), A Century of Conflict, (London: 1966),

^{79a}E.g., Lloyd George stated at the Imperial Conference of 1921 that, "Friendly cooperation with the United States is for us a cardinal principle." Cmd. 1474, p. 13.

⁸⁰Birns, op. cit., p. 307.

redirected away from Europe, the move towards an Anglo-American cooperative pax Britannica form of security policy would not be so far-fetched.

The end of the Washington Conference had brought success. In the fight to improve Anglo-American relations even the French had helped, however unwittingly. It was they who broached the very touchy subject of American aid to re-construct Europe. Their failure only enhanced the British image; as did another subject, that of submarines.⁸¹ Anglo-French relations deteriorated, yet possibly out of this came renewed British efforts for an Anglo-French security pact. However France's unwillingness to limit her submarine fleet reflected its unwillingness to disarm, and was seen in direct contrast, in American eyes, to British willingness to do so.

The Conference had been specifically a British success. It had ended the debate and division over the question of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. It had replaced it with the Four Powers Pact which had left all concerned reasonably contented. In the end, Empire unity had been maintained and it was shown that agreement on certain 'common' foreign policy issues could be reached. British relations with the United States were greatly improved.

Naval standards were set among the nations, ending any present further threat of an expensive naval race; and in fact, the disarmament clauses allowed for large immediate budget reductions. The maintenance of the Four Power Pact with Japan was a curb to Bolshevik expansion in

⁸¹D.B.F.P. I, XIV, No. 443, 497.

Asia, and Britain, feeling secure about her Empire, was left free to pursue an European policy.

Lloyd George expressed his feelings about the Washington Conference when he was describing the purpose of the Genoa Conference. There he said:

That is what we are doing to restore peace. As the Washington Conference is establishing peace in the great West, I am looking forward to the Genoa Conference to establish peace in the East, until they will be like the two wings of the Angel of Peace, hovering over the world.⁸²

But it was essential to look at the cost of what was considered a success in 1922.

From the point of view of immediate Imperial policy, unity had been maintained at Washington but the more crucial issue, for long range unity, of constitutional reform had been sacrificed. This was shown outright by the Dominions' representation at the Washington Conference. The Dominions were not parties to the Washington Conference in their own right, but participated as members of the one British Empire Delegation. They also were represented in the B.E.D. only by prominent individuals and not by Prime Ministers, so, unlike at Paris, they lacked the power to make decisions. This had been inherent in the original composition of the B.E.D. Both these actions showed a devolution away from the precedents set at the Paris Peace Conference. The symbol of unity was maintained, the King ratified the group of Treaties on behalf of the whole Commonwealth and on August 11 they were deposited. Yet in effect the principle of that unity had been let down in the final stages at the conference. The King's

⁸²Quoted in J. Saxon Mills. The Genoa Conference (London: 1922), p. 21.

signature, as H. Duncan Hall says, was "the culmination of fourteen months of consultation and joint action in which Commonwealth unity had been maintained at a high level."⁸³ This was true, yet Hall also pointed out that a month later came the breakdown at Chanak.⁸⁴ The seed for the Dominion response in this case was sown much earlier at the Imperial Conference of 1921.

At the Imperial Conference in 1921, the question of the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had been one of the first discussed. On it an Imperial policy was determined and the means to carry it out arranged' and this was carried through into the Washington Conference and successfully completed. Also all the Dominions were agreed that good relations with the United States were essential. Later in the conference, after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance question had been settled, the question of a guarantee of security to France was brought up. Over this issue the Dominions were to split, yet the fact of this split was not to alter the already determined Anglo-Japanese policy. The issue of a guarantee of security to France was to bring about a split in Dominion attitudes which was to be directly reflected in their response at Chanak.

⁸³H. Duncan Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 469: In the relations between Britain and the Dominions the Chanak crisis proved to be a lesson learned on both sides. Henceforth there were to be no more attempts to dictate foreign policy from London. Significantly the first treaty signed between a Dominion and a foreign power (Canada-U.S.A.), was signed in March 1923. David Walder, The Chanak Affair, (London: 1969), p. 353.

The argument for the guarantee to France was presented by Curzon.

His basic thesis was that:

the economic revival of Germany was dependent on the Empire restraining France and that the only way of restraining France at that time was to act in concert with her.⁸⁵

This argument was directly in line both with the policy embodied in the first plan for the joint guarantee of French security by Britain and the United States at the Paris Peace Conference and with the Crowe memorandum of February 1921. In its defence, Curzon stated that this was the only possible policy and that

. . . a policy of splendid isolation is no longer possible, is not possible for a country like Britain, situated as we are Our position in Europe makes it impossible for us to sever ourselves from European politics. If we did so, whatever happened to others we should sink in a few years to the insignificance of Spain or the impotence of Portugal.⁸⁶

With convictions so firmly held, it was obvious why Lloyd George and the Foreign Office fought to maintain Empire unity, why the issue of good relations with America were essential and hence why there had to be a positive solution to the problem of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Within their eyes Britain needed to bend all her resources towards reconstructing and playing a dominant role in Europe in order to maintain her great power status.

Curzon did not go unchallenged in his statements. General Smuts reacted strongly to committing the Empire to Europe. He enunciated his view during his opening speech on June 20 when he claimed that though the

⁸⁵Cab. 32/2, E. 4., June 2, 1921, p. 2.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 5.

centre of world affairs was shifting from Europe to the Pacific, "our temptation is still to look upon the European stage as of the first importance. It is no longer so; and I suggest we should not be too deeply occupied with it." He further stated "Therefore, not from feelings of selfishness, but in a spirit of wisdom, one would counsel prudence and reserve in our continental commitments, and that we do not let ourselves in for European entanglements more than is necessary, . . . and avoid any partisan attitude in the concerns of the continent of Europe."⁸⁷

In opposing Curzon's argument he went further and alleged that France would not want the guarantee because it immediately necessitated some control by Britain of French policy. The second point of his argument was that "alliances such as that contemplated between the British Empire and France were contrary to the spirit of the League of Nations."⁸⁸ His solution was based on his opening day arguments and was that Britain should maintain a strong independent posture in world politics, while seeking to act in the closest possible association with the United States. He believed that the best approach in restraining France was for the British Empire to make it clear that it was opposed to any action designed to retard the economic revival of Germany.⁸⁹ Prime Minister Meighen of Canada supported Smuts' arguments.⁹⁰ The lack of Canadian interest in

⁸⁷Cmd. 1474, Appendix I, Opening Speech by General Smuts, op. cit., p. 25.

⁸⁸Cab. 32/2, E.6, p. 10.

⁸⁹Cab. 32/2 E.7, June 27, 1021, p. 3.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

being committed in Europe was clearly underlined by her attack on Article X of the Covenant of the League of Nations, in the first Assembly of that body.⁹¹

The issue caused a rupture in Lloyd George's plans. He had been successful in maintaining unity over one issue, but over the question of West European security the Dominions were divided. Australia and New Zealand would support Britain; the New Zealander Massey in fact to the extent where he was proposing a share cost of naval building,⁹² but Canada and South Africa it seemed impossible to count on.

Although the division was visible to the Empire/Commonwealth countries, it appeared not to have been to any other. The division was quite obvious, Canada was to display it openly in the League of Nations over Article X while the other Dominions did so in their own ways. Yet for some reason the facade of Imperial unity remained, and Britain continued to follow her European orientated policy. In fact, however, the Dominions' divided attitude became a factor of British policy that had to be taken into account. In late 1921, when the French ambassador in London, the Count de Saint Aulaire, approached Curzon about a possible security pact, with a guarantee against indirect aggression, Curzon turned him down

⁹¹Article X of the Covenant reads: "The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression, or in case of any threat of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which the obligations shall be fulfilled." For the Canadian attitude at Geneva see F. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, (London: 1952), pp. 257-268.

⁹²Cmd. 1474, Appendix I, Opening Speech by Mr. Massey, op. cit., p. 29-30.

because the "enormous undefined responsibilities would probably be unacceptable to the British Parliament and definitely unacceptable to the British Dominions."⁹³ Curzon went on to say that British foreign policy was now not Whitehall's, but the Empire's, formed with Dominions' attitudes.⁹⁴ Now Dominion attitude was used as a tool within British diplomacy. The breakdown of Imperial unity over European involvement did not prevent Lloyd George continuing his foreign policy, and the fact of the division seems not to have been noticed or accepted. There was little change in the policy, but the strength behind it was now no longer as great as was needed or perceived. This was to become more than obvious when the Chanak crisis occurred in October 1922.

The role of the Dominions in British security policy underwent great changes from 1914 onwards. What had in the pre-war years been a united policy, because Britain conducted it, was greatly altered by the war. First there was the need to create a structure to better involve the Dominions in the war effort. This had been the Imperial War Cabinet, and was still dominated by Lloyd George and Britain, but its child, the British Empire Delegation had contained more independent minded representatives from the Dominions. The small fracture in the unity of the Empire at Paris had been created by the British security guarantee to France. This had grown until it was a major cleavage, and at the same time Imperial unity had had to evolve a facade which became more of a

⁹³Cmd. 2169. France No. 1, (1924) 'Papers respecting negotiations for an Anglo-French pact' pp. 109-12.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 112.

sieve. In most cases a common foreign policy was preserved but that was only because the separate national interests of the Dominions could be reconciled. There was division when the interests conflicted. Lloyd George talked of the Dominions as 'separate equal and autonomous' and they were. Their problem was that they did not realize their division was irreconcilable, and their Prime Ministers being rational men continued to attempt to structure a common foreign policy. It was not till the 1923 Imperial Conference that the basic cause of the disunity of the Empire-- the national interests and constitutional arrangements of the Dominions was put in writing officially. At that time Canada's William Lyon MacKenzie King had put on record the statement that:

this conference is a conference of representatives of the several governments of the Empire; its views and conclusions on Foreign Policy are necessarily subject to the action of the Governments and Parliaments of the various portions of the Empire, and it trusts that the results of its deliberations will meet with their approval.⁹⁵

King's statement did not imply that the cooperation of the Dominions with Britain would cease, but they now gave up the attempt to create a structure to allow for a common foreign policy. They realized that the basic national interests of the Dominions were divergent and not always reconcilable. The Dominions recognized their ties to Britain but would not lend their strength to her own forward machinations, unless they felt it was in their own common interests. Yet in the fact that the Dominions recognized their tie to Britain it was fairly certain that they would come to her defence.

⁹⁵M. Ollivier, (ed), The Colonial and Imperial Conferences 1887-1937, 3 vols., (Ottawa: 1954), Vol. III, p. 9.

CHAPTER III

THE SECURITY QUESTION AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

It was in Europe that for Britain the core security issues lay. She might now have to rely on her Dominions or the United States for aid and strength, but it was with Europe that Britain's future was. The only way in which Britain could maintain her security and restore her strength was to bring peace and stability to Europe. For practical purposes the stabilization of the continent involved in the first place the economic rehabilitation of Germany. An essential precondition for this was to relieve France of fears of a revanchist Germany. These considerations formed the basis of Britain's post-war European policy. The manner in which this policy was executed at the Paris Peace Conference is the subject of this chapter.

The history of British security policy indicated several traditional points. Since Britain's economy was inexorably linked with Europe and to a large extent dependent on Europe, Britain could not allow anyone power to dominate Europe. She also had to maintain ease of access to the continent, hence the channel ports had to be in friendly hands, accounting for the 1839 guarantee of Belgium neutrality. Britain's defensive position as always rested upon the Royal Navy.¹ The Navy had allowed Britain to maintain an aloofness from Europe, with a potentiality of a naval blockade catering to Britain's general anti-militaristic mentality. This

¹G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, ed., British Documents on the Origin of the 'War'. 1898-1914, III: The Testing of the Entente 1904-1906, (London: 1967), p. 402.

force plus Britain's financial strength had traditionally allowed her to act as the 'balance of power' in Europe.

The problem that had been created in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was that the major European powers, especially Germany, Russia and France, were getting too strong and expansionist, and also Britain's pre-dominance as the greatest sea power was being challenged by Germany, Japan and the United States. It was no longer easy or perhaps even feasible for Britain to improvise her arrangements for intervention on the continent after a crisis had been generated; instead she was forced to choose between a policy of long-term isolation and a policy of committing herself to relatively permanent alliances in advance.² Britain for a time found herself isolated from the continental alliances, because France and Russia tended to be anti-British and if Britain supported the German alliance it would be too overwhelming.

This led to a change in Britain's traditional security strategy. Without any powerful friends within the regional security system at a time (1900) when strong rivals were ignoring her vital interests, Britain sought out a security pact with Japan, to protect her Asian Empire.³ With this achieved, Britain was able to concentrate on Europe, to help readjust the power inequalities forming on the continent. This led to her entente with France, which in turn led to long-range planning to counter the threatening situation in the regional environment.⁴ War came and Britain

²William B. Wilcox, Star of Empire, (New York: 1950), pp. 267-274.

³I. H. Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, (London: 1963), p. 373

⁴Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., p. 403.

found herself totally involved, and for the first time technology produced weapons--the aeroplane and submarine--which Britain had to fear. In the end, an external ally, the United States, had to be drawn into the war to tip the balance in favour of Britain and her partners.

British security policy in the immediate post-war period was bent on creating a new balance on the continent so that she could once again operate as a balancer. Such an objective commits a country's leaders to a flexible policy, one which does not entangle them with commitments of automatic guarantees. This meant the avoidance of underwriting large scale commitments within the framework of the League of Nations. In security stratagems the role of balancer of power has, for a small, highly-industrial island state with its numerous links to the continent and limited resources, the greatest possibility of success. To be operable as a successful strategy, the conditions for it have to prevail on the continent. This meant that there would have to be at least two power groups, or to be even more workable, as the classical case study of the early nineteenth century shows, there should be at least four major actors on the continent.⁵ Since the conditions for a balance of power system did not exist, Britain would have to create them. Hence within the security, as well as the domestic framework, it was in Britain's interest to restore Germany's economic potential. Germany should act as a counterpoise, vis-a-vis France. To achieve this, Britain needed to influence France and at the same time prevent any military resurgence of Germany. This led to the

⁵Rosenau, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

natural position within British policy of looking for a permanent alignment with France.⁶ Through it, Britain could negotiate and work for the economic restoration of Germany while at the same time maintaining, through the Entente, the military predominance to guarantee her security. In the interest of achieving this policy Britain wanted a moderate peace settlement to restore peace and stability in Europe.

Lloyd George hoped to achieve this security at first through the negotiations for the Versailles settlement and in the second instance through a series of Conferences meant to rectify the peace treaty's faults and resolve new problems.

The conditions on the continent were not beneficial to the British desire for a balance of power system, for France had emerged from the war as the predominant power and was concerned solely with her own external security. At Paris it was to take all of Lloyd George's and Woodrow Wilson's ability to limit France's desired control over Germany. France's primary fear was of being invaded by Germany once more and hence she focused her energy in external relations upon Franco-British and Franco-German relations to improve her security. In negotiating the peace settlement with its wartime allies France set out as its basic premise that Germany must be made incapable of starting another war against France. The means by which France aimed to achieve this can be best seen in France's war aims. France desired:

⁶ See above, p. 57.

- 1) Alsace-Lorraine to be restored to France;
- 2) The frontiers are to be extended at least up to the limits of the former principality of Lorraine and are to be drawn up at the discretion of the French government so as to provide for the strategical needs and for the inclusion in French territory of the entire iron district of Lorraine and the entire coal district of the Saar Valley.
- 3) The rest of the territory situated on the Left Bank of the Rhine outside French territory was to be constituted an autonomous and neutral state and was to be occupied by French troops until such time as the enemy states have completely satisfied all the conditions and guarantees indicated in the Treaty of Peace.⁷

The fall of Russia in 1917 meant some assumptions had to be revised. It now was imperative to create a strong Polish state on Germany's eastern frontiers. With the end of the war one other significant condition was added to France's war aims: that was the issue of reparations. Through it France believed that it was possible to carry on economic warfare against Germany for the next two generations.⁸ By reparations, France hoped to even out their economic position, if not develop a lead. Aiding in the French attempt to limit Germany's economic potential was the assurance that Germany should be deprived of several industrial areas. The iron-ore fields of Lorraine were naturally returned to France. The Saar basin with its important coal mines was placed under French control for a minimum of fifteen years. The first draft of the peace treaty gave the entire Upper Silesia industrial region to Poland but Lloyd George successfully pressed for the holding of a plebiscite there. Although the argument that he had then adduced dealt with the necessity of getting

⁷"Note from the Russian Foreign Minister to the French Ambassador at Petrograd, 1 February, 1917" in Cmd. 2169, France No. (1924), Papers Respecting Negotiations for an Anglo-French Pact, p. 7.

⁸D.B.F.P. I, X, No. 174, 267.

Germany's signature to the Peace Treaty,⁹ it was difficult to escape the conclusion that he was mainly concerned with the economic viability of Germany and with her place within a rehabilitated Europe.

French security interests were obviously contrary to those of the British, who sought stability and recuperation for Europe, a moderate peace, and a direct reproachment with France to achieve these conditions.

Although these were the interests of both France and Britain, the conditions under which the Allies tried to determine the peace treaty were Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. They were to serve as the basis for the armistice negotiations with Germany, but it appears that the European allies did not expect them to serve as the definitive basis for final terms. The problem of how to deal with Germany was still open when the Paris Peace Conference was convened. The problems of the European settlement can be traced to a statement Clemenceau was reported to have made on the very day of the Armistice: "We have won the war, now we must win the peace."¹⁰ Neither Lloyd George nor Woodrow Wilson were prepared to let him, and the net result was only to highlight the conflict of interests between France and Britain.

In the following pages four major incidents that occurred at the Paris Peace Conference, and which show the divergence of French and British viewpoints, will be examined. These incidents are the ones

⁹Cf. Northedge, op. cit., p. 114.

¹⁰Cited in G. Tabouis, The Life of Jules Cambon, Trans. (London: 1938), p. 317.

concerning the Rhineland, disarmament, reparations and the Saar.

France's policy of making Germany impotent was based in a fear that, given the opportunity, Germany meant to over-run her. This was a fear based on Germany's militaristic character, and the fact that the country's form of government had changed to a republic in no way mitigated France's fear.¹¹ After all France had suffered greatly during the War,¹² and had needed Allied intervention to defeat Germany. She wanted to achieve concrete security measures to weaken Germany's 'potential de guerre' and also desired to consolidate her wartime alliances.¹³ All and any proposals that France believed would limit Germany's power were advanced. There were several major proposals. One of the most significant, where the British attitude came into direct conflict with French policy, was over whether the Rhenish provinces should be constituted into an independent state and whether there should be an Allied occupation of the Rhine bridges.¹⁴

The question of the Rhineland had been a much discussed point almost from the beginning of the war. From 1915 on, numerous books were published in Paris stressing the need for France to extend her boundaries to the left bank of the Rhine or at least demanding that Germany's borders end at the

¹¹Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 9, p. 20: see also, for an explanation of the founding of the German Republic, W. M. Jordan, Great Britain, France and the German Problem, 1918-1939, (London: 1943), pp. 8-10.

¹²Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 10, p. 49.

¹³Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 9, pp. 10-24.

¹⁴Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, p. 59.

Rhine's right bank.

At first these views did not need to be taken as representing the official policy of the French government. They were however given at least semi-official status in July 1917 when Paul Cambon, the long-term French Ambassador to Britain, acting on instructions, communicated them to Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary.¹⁵

Balfour felt that the French wished to erect a 'buffer state' and said nothing to encourage 'this rather wild project'. Indeed he doubted whether Cambon himself had much belief in it.¹⁶ As if to corroborate Balfour's view, the French did not press the matter any further. The issue came before the British parliament in February, 1918, when the Bolsheviks revealed a secret agreement between the French and Russians on war aims.¹⁷ Balfour was questioned about it in the House of Commons. He insisted that the British Foreign Office knew nothing of it, and had never encouraged any such schemes. He stated emphatically that a scheme for separation of the Rhineland to create a buffer state "was never part of the policy of His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government were never aware that this was seriously entertained by any French statesman"¹⁸

¹⁵Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 2, pp. 2-3: The French Foreign Minister Briand stated in a memorandum of January 1917 that: "More important than a glorious but precarious gain is the creation of a state of things which will be a guarantee for Europe as well as for ourselves, and serve as a rampart to our frontiers. In our view Germany must henceforth have but one foot across the Rhine."

¹⁶Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 3, pp. 3-4.

¹⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 1, p. 7.

¹⁸Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 4, p. 5.

Thus in 1917 the British chose not to take the French Rhineland proposals seriously and the French did not force them to. This changed in late 1918 for even before the Armistice, French and British military men were clashing over the question of the Rhineland. Foch and Petain insisted that the Germans evacuate as far as forty kilometers back from the Rhine on the right bank and that the Allies occupy the strategic bridgeheads. Douglas Haig, British Commander-in-Chief, supported by Lloyd George, opposed them, but General Pershing of the American forces was on the French side. The British feared that the occupation would lead to the Rhineland's separation from Germany but without American support were forced to give in. The agreed Armistice terms gave the French additional leverage in their attempt to create some sort of special regime for the left bank of the Rhine.¹⁹

Yet the divergence of opinion between the British and French was not quite as pronounced as it might have appeared. Marshal Foch was pushing for an independent Rhineland with an allied occupation of the strategic bridgeheads. His attitude was representative of the military and of rightist political opinion. His arguments were strategically set, noting the Germans' greater numerical strength over the French, their militaristic nature, that the Rhine was a natural boundary, and that all previous German invasions of France had been staged from the Rhine's left bank.²⁰ If the Allies controlled the Rhine's bridgeheads, the right bank was demilitarized and a separate demilitarized Rhineland State created,

¹⁹H. I. Nelson, Land and Power, (London: 1963), pp. 68-84.

²⁰Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 10, p. 47.

guaranteed by the Allies, it would be impossible for Germany once again to invade France. In fact, Foch believed that this would leave France economically, politically and militarily stronger than Germany.

Foch was asking also that the independent Rhineland be included in an economic and military security scheme. Lloyd George saw this as tantamount to territorial annexation and would have nothing to do with it, or with any permanent occupation of German territory by Allied forces.²¹ Although this was at best not clear, there was in fact room for negotiation with the French political moderates and leftists supported by many important officials of the Quai d'Orsay and represented at the peace conference by Clemenceau and André Tardieu.²² Opposed to the French were also the Americans. On February 9, President Wilson's closest advisor, Colonel House, noted in his Diary that "the French do not seem to know that to establish a Rhenish Republic against the will of the people would be contrary to the principle of self-determination."²³ Wilson was equally hostile. American hostility to the French claims was based on the principle of self-determination, while Lloyd George's opposition was that of his fear of creating another perennial trouble-spot--like Alsace-Lorraine. This was to be a constant theme with him, and accounts for much of his policy with regard to the Saar and especially Upper Silesia.

²¹Lloyd George, The Truth about the Peace Treaties, (London: 1938), I, pp. 132-134.

²²Tardieu was a French Delegate to the Paris Peace Conference.

²³C. Seymour, The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, (London: 1928), IV, p. 356.

Despite this opposition from the Allies Clemenceau decided to take a strong line. The first official statement of French policy was drawn up by Tardieu, on Clemenceau's behalf, on February 25. It indicated quite fully the French attitude to the Rhineland question. "Because of the geographical position of France", the memorandum states, "we have two aims equally imperative: the one is victory, the other is protection of our soil . . ." France in other words wanted assurances that any future war would not be fought on French soil, and the only way that could be achieved was by France holding the Rhine. Tardieu went on to remind the United States and Britain that both of them were gaining protection for themselves by the naval and colonial clauses of the Treaty, which envisaged stripping Germany of her colonies, navy and most of her merchant marine. France, Tardieu insisted, deserved as much on land: and he then summarized the official French position on three points: fixation at the Rhine of the Western frontier of Germany; occupation of the Rhine bridges by an inter-allied force; and no annexation.²⁴ The left bank was never to be returned to Germany, even if granted autonomy.²⁵ Thus Clemenceau and Tardieu were advocating the creation of a permanent buffer state. Whether they really believed they could obtain this is uncertain. Perhaps they were merely trying to appease hard-liners like Foch, and as well establish a strong bargaining position.

A deadlock was reached and agreement seemed very far off. However, during Wilson's brief visit to the United States, a committee was set up

²⁴André Tardieu, The Truth About The Treaty, (Indianapolis: 1921), pp. 154-166.

²⁵Ibid., p. 170.

to work out definite proposals. Its members were Tardieu, Philip Kerr of Britain and Dr. Meres of the U.S.A. Its sessions, initially at least, turned into a confrontation between Kerr and Tardieu. The discussions opened with Tardieu reiterating the French demands for an independent Rhenish state and maintaining again that "the Rhine was the defensive frontier of the Western Liberal countries".²⁶ Kerr countered that "there would be no difference of opinion as to the necessity of drawing the military frontier of Germany to the east of the Rhine", but went on to point out "that the strongest objection would be raised to any proposal for the permanent maintenance of British forces in German territory." Such a situation would only lead to numerous little incidents which would aggravate public opinion. Rather, in Kerr's view, France's security "lay in maintaining a complete understanding with Great Britain and America." Since the three powers had already defeated Germany once, their solidarity should be all the security that France would need in the coming years. The only real danger that Kerr saw was the estrangement between France and Great Britain "because the settlement imposed too great burdens on Great Britain or committed it to obligations such as the permanent separation of the Rhenish provinces from the rest of Germany against their will, which might offend its sense of justice and fair play."²⁷ This was a strong indication that France might be forced to choose between Allied solidarity and her plans for the Rhineland; that she might be forced to decide which of these best protected her security.

²⁶Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, p. 60.

²⁷For the above, see Ibid., loc. cit.

Kerr's assessment of the whole peace negotiations was that the most important thing was to concentrate on making this "guarantee of European peace effective, and not to weaken it by introducing features which might be objectionable to English opinion."²⁸ These were conciliatory ideas, very much reflecting Britain's interest. They assessed the security situation through the British domestic attitude of non-involvement. The motive behind this thinking was to align the three major allied and associated powers in a close relationship in order to maintain peace in the post-war world. It was a conciliatory policy towards the Germans in that it moderated French attitudes, simple in its outline for French security, and closely adhered to the presumed popular sentiments in Britain.

Tardieu, faced with Kerr's onslaught on the first day of this two day committee, made one strategic retreat from his memorandum of 25 February. He was willing that the Rhine provinces might decide their own fate by plebescite after an unspecified period. Kerr did not see this as a very meaningful concession and continued to oppose any separation and occupation. British public opinion was averse to military commitments in Europe longer than a very short period, and "the Dominions did not want to become involved in European affairs."²⁹ Throughout the Peace Conference, the British were to continue to use the Dominions as a means to moderate the French. The French were continually reminded that Britain was more than a European power, and that she had other interests to consider. This time, however, the reminder had no effect on the French. Tardieu repeated the demand for a separate Rhineland for a period as long

²⁸ Ibid., loc. cit.

²⁹ Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, p. 62.

as Germany had four million men with military training. For ten, fifteen or twenty years some practical form of security was necessary. As on the previous day, Kerr hinted at another form of practical security. If necessary, he said, "Britain could be on the battlefield within three weeks and the Americans within two months." Tardieu was not satisfied. British and American troops would not arrive soon enough, he felt.³⁰ Yet the idea propounded by Kerr soon became the basis of the Allied compromise.

Lloyd George, on 12 March, had an informal talk with Colonel House in which he stated his concern about the French and their Rhineland scheme. He was willing, he said, to give them security in other fashions. He would be prepared to say "that in the event of an invasion the British would come at once to the rescue."³¹ The idea was not new to the British. It had been proposed during the war, and the necessity for some such agreement was recognized by the British government by 1918.³² Nevertheless Lloyd George's proposal in March, 1919, was a fresh and promising element in the Allied negotiations. Wilson returned to Paris on March 14 and immediately agreed to offer the same security pact to France. Yet they were to use it as a negotiating point. They approached Clemenceau and informed him that they could not consent to any occupation of the Rhineland except for a short period as a provisional guarantee for payment of the

³⁰Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, pp. 64-65.

³¹C. Seymour, op. cit. p. 403.

³²See above, p. 57.

German debt. They went on instead to make a formal offer of "their immediate military guarantee against any unprovoked aggression on the part of Germany against France."³³

The British attitude in negotiating with France was consistently one of limited formal involvement and close adherence to public sentiment. The British position was clearly stated in several Command Papers. She believed France had more than adequate guarantees of her security, if the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty were adhered to, and if the Allies maintained solidarity and a degree of preparedness at least equal to that of Germany. Adherence to the treaty's military clauses could have been enforced easily through the newly created League of Nations. As Kerr pointed out, Allied solidarity within the League of Nations, if maintained, would be a more than adequate guarantee of France's security.³⁴

Clemenceau did not immediately react to the Allied offer. Instead he consulted several of his advisors, notably Tardieu, Foreign Minister Pichon, and Louis Loucheur, the Minister for Industrial Reconstruction. As Tardieu stated, two conclusions were reached, "the first is that a French government which receiving such an offer under such conditions would allow it to escape, would be guilty of a crime. The second, that a French government satisfied with this and nothing more would be equally guilty."³⁵

³³Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 14, p. 69.

³⁴Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, p. 64.

³⁵Tardieu, op. cit., p. 177.

Hence on March 17, Clemenceau rejected the joint security offer while also stating that "the French Government fully appreciate the great value of a guarantee of this nature which would introduce an important modification into the international situation, but, to be effective, the guarantee must be completed and precise."³⁶ He then went on to suggest the possible bases of agreement. He no longer insisted on the political separation of the Left Bank from Germany, but instead called for a thirty year period of occupation. This corresponded to the proposed time limit of the reparations settlement. He called for the total demilitarization of the Left Bank of the Rhine and of a 50 kilometre zone on the Right Bank, including prohibition of recruiting and arms manufacturing. This was a very rigid demilitarization plan, which Clemenceau wanted to have supervised by a permanent inspection commission. Furthermore German entry into the demilitarized zone was to be considered an act of aggression under the guarantee. An additional point stated that an attack against Belgium was to be considered an act of aggression against France.³⁷

The British reply to Clemenceau's demands was to be the Fontainebleu memorandum of 25 March, 1919. Its basic premise was that only a peace based on justice could endure. "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 extracting retribution from her conquerors." Lloyd George also warned that

³⁶Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 15, p. 74.

³⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 15, pp. 75-76.

an unjust peace might lead not only to German revanchism but to German bolshevism: "The greatest danger I see in the present situation is that Germany may throw in her lot with Bolshevism . . . this danger is no mere chimera." Lloyd George wanted a settlement to prevent future wars and Bolshevism because it would "command itself to all reasonable opinion, as a fair settlement of the European problem." Specifically he opposed placing millions of Germans under alien governments--in Silesia as well as in the West. He opposed any separation of the Rhenish provinces from Germany, though he accepted their demilitarization. As a substitute for a French military frontier on the Rhine, he called for the British and American guarantee.³⁸

In a meeting of 27 March, Wilson gave in partially to the French demands, agreeing that there would be no fortification or military workings on the Right Bank of the Rhine for fifty kilometers. This ban included strategic railways and troop manouvers.³⁹ Wilson was also willing to regard any violation of this as a "hostile act" but not necessarily as a "casus belli," though others might take such a view. This did not meet Clemenceau's conditions of March 17, but he decided to accept the guarantee treaties. He did not, however, abandon attempts to get supplemental guarantees in the Rhineland. The final compromise was not reached till April 14. Clemenceau then informed House that he would accept the terms on the guarantee and demilitarized zone, "providing the President would agree to let the French occupy three strata of German territory for

³⁸Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 16, pp. 76-81.

³⁹Mantoux, Les Deliberations du Conseil des Quatres, 2 vols. (Paris: 1955), 1, p. 50.

fifteen years." He added that even with the fifteen years he would have to fight Foch and his other Marshals.⁴⁰

The next day Wilson accepted the compromise. Lloyd George, who had been in London, was faced with this American-French fait accompli upon his return to Paris. Although he states that he tried to change Wilson's mind, it was to no avail, and on April 22 he reluctantly agreed to it.⁴¹

The issue of the Rhineland and the supplemental guarantee was to bring out all the pronounced differences in British and French security policy. These same stances were to be the basis for the conflict of interest over the questions of the Saar, Silesia and reparations. In virtually all cases the British were to win at least partially their way, but in all cases the French were able to gain some measure of further control over Germany. For the British the Rhineland settlement was to be basically a victory. They had followed a conciliatory policy and in gaining it had made France more dependent upon Britain, hence leaving Britain room to negotiate over Germany. German sovereignty over the Rhineland had been severely limited but not denied; and France had been thwarted in any imperialistic intention she had, whose attainment might have drastically altered any operative balance of power. It was a major step in Britain's attempts to reconstruct Europe for it stabilized relations and allowed for concentration on economic redevelopment.

⁴⁰Seymour, op. cit., p. 422.

⁴¹Lloyd George. The Truth about the Peace Treaty, 1, pp. 425-427. Lloyd George suggests that Wilson gave in in return for the end of French press attacks on him.

Unfortunately the American Senate's failure to ratify the Versailles Treaty or the security pact broke the stability in Europe, especially since Britain had made its guarantee dependent on an American one.⁴² Agreement over the Rhineland remained but it was subject to extension under Article 429, which allowed the occupation to be prolonged beyond 15 years should Germany not fulfill her Treaty obligations. France's security was left dependent on the alliances she could form,⁴³ her own military powers and preparedness, and the degree to which she could weaken Germany further through certain articles of the Versailles Treaty. The American rejection of Europe did not make France co-operative in a moderate policy in Europe.

Clemenceau had yielded over the issue of the Rhineland State, and in the final analysis so had Lloyd George. Wilson, however unconsciously, had mitigated the Anglo-French conflict and brought about a compromise. Without Wilson a compromise solution would have been nearly impossible, and the breach between the two countries would have greatly widened. As it was, allied unity was preserved for the moment. On other issues which were as integral to France's security much the same happened.

Over the question of disarming Germany, Britain and France were in agreement in principle, but differed as to the method. Marshal Foch and his military advisors had wanted a short term conscript army of 200,000 men for Germany. Lloyd George on the other hand favoured an army of 100,000 men based on a long-term service period. Lloyd George was to win

⁴²America's rejection of a guarantee of France's security brought the same results from Britain which had made the agreement conditional on the United States support. D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 239, 799.

⁴³Tardieu, op. cit., p. 211.

his way,⁴⁴ but it is suspected that he had the support of French moderates like Tardieu.⁴⁵ Lloyd George's reasoning was that Foch's scheme would train four million Germans in twenty years. Foch's fear was that the professional cadre that Lloyd George wished to maintain could easily become the nucleus of a vast army.

Once the form and size of the German army was set, it was given till April 1920 to conform. This was possibly a little too hasty for it was almost impossible to properly supervise either the demobilization or the demilitarization demanded of Germany. The true extent of German disarmament was to be unclear, for the Allied Inspection Commission ceased to function properly after 1923, and the extent of its supervision before this was limited.⁴⁶ Over demobilizing the German army the British wished to proceed cautiously, especially after they had control of the German navy. This was mainly because they feared a Bolshevik revolution in Germany and/or a German-Bolshevik alliance;⁴⁷ in either case the conservative force of the army was thought to be the most significant preventive factor.

The whole question of the demilitarization of Germany was to elicit differing responses from both France and Britain. The British wanted to

⁴⁴Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference. (Washington: 1943), IV, pp. 183-184, 216-19, 263-264, 295-303.

⁴⁵Tardieu was to write of France's protection from Germany's armament that she was not only able to have the arms severely limited in size, but also such strict controls were put on the German armament industry that it felt that it would be impossible for Germany to increase her armaments significantly without detection. Tardieu, op. cit., p. 143.

⁴⁶Arnold J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1920-1923, (London: 1927), p. 107.

⁴⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 15, 78.

slowly de-escalate German forces to maintain the internal security of the country; General Foch, according to Lloyd George, wanted a fairly significant German force maintained (200,000) to justify France maintaining her huge military establishment. Lloyd George contended that Foch was only too aware of the British attitude that German disarmament was only a prelude to a general disarmament and desired a justifiable argument to publicly counteract the British intentions.⁴⁸

A crisis over the disarmament of Germany was reached with the outbreak of the Ruhr crisis in March 1920.⁴⁹ A communist insurrection appeared for a short time to be successful, largely due to the great amount of arms that had not been turned over to the Disarmament Commission. The Ruhr crisis led to the partial occupation of the Ruhr by French troops. This incident which will be dealt with later changed the nature of the Entente to less than a cordial one. When the danger of the Ruhr crisis had passed, Britain pushed for an immediate decrease of German forces to 100,000 men and the removal and destruction of all excess war material. The Ruhr crisis had destroyed the tranquility carefully nurtured between France and Germany; it had brought instability, and given the French a strong case for actions such as occupation. Britain favoured a prosperous, integral Germany, not one divided by occupation and hatred, with a strong military party and the economic dislocations that went with occupation.

Perhaps the most decisive force France had to wield in developing her security, and hindering Britain's European policy, was reparation.

⁴⁸Jordan, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

⁴⁹D.B.F.P. I, IX, Preface V.

In this instance France seemed to achieve much of what she desired. As a security issue, France's reparation aims could be simply stated; her intention was to cripple the German economy, and in doing so, commit the allies for a long period to interference in Germany's internal affairs. Yet where the question of the Rhineland had been a direct confrontation between the British and French security policies, the reparation question was not to be so distinctive. In fact, for much of the debate over the question of reparations it might have seemed as if France and Britain were aligned against the United States in pushing for larger reparation sums. Lloyd George's push for the addition of war pensions to the reparations total sum has been seen as the selling of his soul to placate his supporters in Whitehall.⁵⁰ It could also be seen as a diplomatic move to placate support in Britain, conciliate the French at least partially, while leaving the reparations settlement open to be decided in the cooler light of the post-war period where reasonableness and sanity could prevail to establish a just settlement which would allow for European reconstruction. Favouring this point of view was the fact that Lloyd George had great faith in his own ability to manoeuvre others and that he was also a person who held power so tenaciously that he little expected, nor should he have, to give it up in the immediate post-war period.

⁵⁰See: J. M. Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, (London: 1920), pp. 124, 133, 186-191: se also J. M. Keynes, A Revision of the Treaty, (London: 1922), Chapter V: for the history of the negotiations to include war pensions into the reparation categories, see P. M. Burnett, Reparations at the Paris Peace Conference, from the Standpoint of the American Delegation, Vol. I, (New York: 1940), pp. 62-65.

Unlike the Rhineland, reparations had been discussed throughout the war. The Treaty of London of 1915 which brought Italy into the war, called for an indemnity by the Central Powers, of which Italy was to get her fair share. In June, 1916, in Paris, the Allies declared "their common determination to ensure the re-establishment from acts of destruction, spoilation and unjust requisition." This declaration reflected the fact that Germany was systematically devastating coal mines and factories in occupied France.⁵¹ By 1916 the question of whether Germany would be made to pay was settled. Then the only question left was how much.

In considering this question there were three reports that cast suspicion on Lloyd George's motives. One was a November 1918 report by the Board of Trade, which pointed out that there was no useful purpose in claiming the total cost of the war. It suggested that reparation claims could not be less than forty milliard gold marks,⁵² but went on to say that such a sum could only be acquired over a long period of time enforced by long-term occupation.⁵³ In December of 1918 Keynes presented a Treasury report stating that the total could not be over sixty milliard gold marks.⁵⁴ Hence the British Board of Trade and the Treasury were for

⁵¹Lloyd George, The Truth About The Peace Treaties, I, pp. 441-444; Tardieu, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

⁵²There were 20 gold marks to a pound sterling.

⁵³Lloyd George, The Truth About The Peace Treaties, I, pp. 449-451.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 454-455. In Keynes' view this was the 'extreme upper limit' of what Germany should pay, and was in fact probably beyond her capacity. J. M. Keynes, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, (London: 1920), pp. 103-124, 147, 186.

a settlement of basically the same magnitude. The third report came from a committee appointed by Lloyd George, headed by Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England, and containing W. M. Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister.⁵⁵ Its purpose was to set guidelines for the government's policy at Paris. Yet it did not dampen expectations. Rather it estimated that the total reparation should be in the neighborhood of 480 milliard marks, and saw no reason why Germany should not be made to pay at least 24 milliard gold marks a year as interest on this amount, when normal conditions were restored.⁵⁶ This fantastic sum was immediately rejected by Bonar Law, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lloyd George.⁵⁷ The confusion in the British ranks was obvious. The government placed much of its hopes of rejuvenating Britain on the reconstruction of Germany. Yet the government was also answerable to its public, whose support it had won in the 1918 election, by the pledge to 'make Germany pay'. The dilemma for the government was how to maintain its public support while also obtaining a moderate reparations settlement. It should be noted that Bonar Law and Lloyd George had made unsuccessful efforts to limit the election campaigning on the theme of 'make Germany pay'. Both had tried to clarify that by their pledge they had meant "within Germany's capacity to pay."⁵⁸

⁵⁵See above, p. 54.

⁵⁶Lloyd George, The Truth About The Peace Treaties, I, pp. 458-461; see also Burnett, op. cit., I, p. 11.

⁵⁷Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties, I, p. 461.

⁵⁸Blake, op. cit., p. 404.

Many Conservative M.P's were not so clear on the issue during the election.⁵⁹

Throughout the ensuing weeks at Paris the British led by W. H. Hughes fought with the French against the Americans for the total cost of the war. But, while Hughes was ostensibly presenting Britain's case, Lloyd George was secretly negotiating for a more moderate position. His diplomatic guise was twofold. First, because the Allied negotiations had reached deadlock, he agreed to the omission of the total reparation figure from the treaty.⁶⁰ Now that the assessment of the total reparations was postponed till the post-war period when Lloyd George could personally apply his talents to achieving a just sum, he was ready to make his second diplomatic move. He pushed for the inclusion of war pensions among the reparations categories. This was an emotion-clad issue of deeper significance to Britain and her Dominions than to any other nation. With pensions included, Britain could claim a larger share of the total vis-a-vis France or Belgium, and public and parliamentary opinion would be placated. Surprisingly, the French supported the British contentions, probably because they too could not allow such an emotionally charged category to go untended.⁶¹ It can be justly surmised from a study of the post-war negotiations over reparations that Lloyd George had little intention of letting

⁵⁹Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties, I, p. 563.

⁶⁰Mantoux, op. cit., pp. 59-61.

⁶¹Burnett, op. cit., pp. 61-62; see also E. M. House and C. Seymour (eds.), What Really Happened at Paris, (London: 1921), p. 271

France alone gain a massive reparation settlement. He in fact succeeded in dislodging the Americans from a position hostile to that of their allies, pleasing the French who were to feel that they could gain more reparations if the fixed sum was to be determined when Germany's economy was partially revitalized, and also placating the rising hostility of his own public and parliament. It might appear as if Lloyd George's position on reparations at the Conference was in sharp contrast to his moderation on territorial questions. After all, he rejected a fixed sum in the treaty and fought for the inclusion of war pensions. It might seem that he was influenced by the 1918 Khaki elections, but it was also obvious that in that election he was opposed to unjust reparations from Germany, and his post-war conduct on the reparations issue leads one to discern different motives in his conduct on the reparation issue at Paris.

All through the early twenties there were conferences at which the reparation problem was always brought up. After the London Conference of 1921 the issue was considered partially settled and reparation payments were on the basis of what was known as the London Schedule of Payments. Total liability was set at £6,600 million, split into three bond issues, the third of which, it may be suspected, was never intended to be issued.⁶² The settlement was a relief for the British. They had become convinced, as had the Americans, that the absence of a "settlement of the indemnity question was having a harsh effect upon trade, commerce and industry throughout the world."⁶³ During all discussions of reparation, the

⁶²Northedge, op. cit., p. 174.

⁶³Lloyd George, The Truth About the Peace Treaties, I, p. 563.

British government held firmly to the view that Germany had to live in order to pay her way and that she must not ruin her trade competitors through developing an excessive export surplus. As Lloyd George put it,

She must pay her indemnity in such a way as not to damage the industries of the Allied countries, and it is a very difficult problem to find means for extracting an indemnity in a way which will not injure the industries, the essential industries, the vital industries of France, of Great Britain, of Italy and of Belgium.⁶⁴

Linked to this idea was Lloyd George's fear that too harsh terms might force Germany and Russia together.⁶⁵ France, on the other hand, had little genuine interest in international trade and was enjoying boom conditions.⁶⁶ She felt that even if the allies did lose potential German trade by crippling her economy, it was essential for France, because the less the economic potential of Germany the greater would be France's external security. Bonar Law, Curzon and Lloyd George had not seen the extraction of reparations as a trial of strength between France and Germany but rather as part of the total world economic problems of the 1920's to which they saw no solution save stability in the leading European component--Germany.⁶⁷ The conflict of opinion remained and so did the instability of the European economic picture.

One other problem that arose at the Peace Conference and shows the basic conflict of interest between France and Britain concerned the Saar.

⁶⁴Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 174

⁶⁵Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 16, p. 98.

⁶⁶Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 192.

As early as February 21, 1919, American and British experts had agreed that France was entitled to exploit all or most of the Saar's coal production. This was because Germany had deliberately and systematically flooded and damaged the French coal mines in the Northeast.⁶⁸ Tardieu found an additional reason for France's exploitation of the Saar's coal in the close relationship that existed between the Saar basin and Alsace-Lorraine. The two formed one great industrial complex and he felt this should continue. Also, France needed the coal to remain independent of Germany. These arguments, although sound, merely led up to the French demand for political control of the Saar, the basis for which was in itself weak.⁶⁹ Both Britain and the U.S.A. opposed the French political claim. Lloyd George used his favorite theme, that British public opinion would not accept the creation of a new Alsace-Lorraine, while Wilson argued that the Allies must not violate the principle of self-determination. The French idea was thus squarely met.⁷⁰

Clemenceau was to argue that the Anglo-Saxons states did not understand the French or their situation. France needed moral reparations for the suffering she had undergone, and felt that her allies should forget

⁶⁸C. H. Haskins and R. H. Lord, Some Problems of the Peace Conference, (London: 1920), pp. 139-142. For a detailed account of the work of the experts on the Saar question, see Nelson, op. cit., pp. 249-281.

⁶⁹Historically France had claim only to a small part of the Saar which was included in the French frontier of 1814. Most of the Saar was undeniably German by history and language. Tardieu himself was to admit later that France's historical claim to the Saar soil was weaker than her economic claim to the sub-soil. Tardieu, op. cit., p. 250; see also Haskins and Lord, op. cit., pp. 132-139.

⁷⁰Mantoux, op. cit., I, pp. 67-69.

their false belief that Germany could be made to cast aside dreams of revanche.⁷¹ Lloyd George countered that there should be no annexation, but he was willing to give the mines to France and to create an autonomous state. Wilson objected to even this, believing it still violated the principle of self-determination.⁷²

In the end it was Clemenceau who was forced to abate his demands. Wilson remained obstinate that Germany should not lose her sovereignty over the Saar, and Lloyd George supported him. The final compromise reached entailed French ownership of the mines for a period of fifteen years. This would be accompanied by the League of Nations administration of the Saar basin. This involved no outright loss of sovereignty by Germany and yet allowed dual external controls of the Saar's economy and political life. At the end of fifteen years a plebescite was to be held and Saarlanders could choose to join France or Germany.⁷³ In the event of the Saarlanders then opting for Germany, the coal mines were to be repurchased by the latter, hence there would be no conflict between economic and political control of the basin.⁷⁴

⁷¹Ibid., p. 69.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 70-72.

⁷³A third choice existed basically to accord with Lloyd George's wishes: The Saar could become an independent autonomous state under the protection of the League of Nations.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 211-212; also Nelson, op. cit., pp. 279-280, and Haskins and Lord, op. cit., pp. 146-150.

The Saar question was not one where Anglo-French conflict was at its greatest. Lloyd George opposed outright French annexation, but otherwise seemed amenable to the French demands for a political regime which would assure economic exploitation of the mines. Nevertheless the Saar debate indicated once more the differing views of France and Britain regarding Germany. Clemenceau insisted that Germany could probably seek revenge no matter what the Allies did. This made him less concerned than Lloyd George about minimizing the potential sources of trouble between France and Germany. While Lloyd George believed that the Allies could write a treaty which might satisfy both sides, Clemenceau seemed to feel it was only possible to satisfy the victors.

These four issues, the Rhineland, disarmament, reparations, and the Saar, bring out the divergent manner by which the French and the British desired to maintain security. France's fear was always of a revanchist Germany; Britain's desire was for a restored, stable Europe. On the whole, Lloyd George was able to maintain Britain's interests while giving up a minimum of concessions to France. Yet France's drive to increase her security at the expense of Germany was to be a constant concern of the British government.

None of these four major conflicting issues have been extensively dealt with here, but it has been made clear that the British leadership responded to its domestic conditions and its traditional security policy position, in trying to stabilize the European situation and to rejuvenate Germany to a degree of power to counter-balance that of France. In this process it attempted to limit French means of control over Germany while

also relieving France's fears. America's rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and of the guarantee pact destroyed the security complex that had been built during the Peace Conference. Yet the situation might have been partially alleviated if Britain had been willing to give France a unilateral guarantee. There was much to be said for a step of this nature. It would help France maintain her sense of security and might keep her from taking isolated action against Germany. In addition it would probably give Britain greater influence on French policy towards Germany. But the attitude the British government took merely hardened French public and governmental resolve to find other means of security. The official British attitude was stated by Bonar Law in the House of Commons on 21 November, 1919, when he said that "As far as any obligation is concerned, it is contingent on the United States Government taking the same obligations," although he added that a changed situation might lead to a re-assessment.⁷⁵

On 4 December, 1919, several French newspapers stated that in fact negotiations were taking place in London to make the British guarantee independent of the American one. There was no truth in this but it did reflect the anxiety and desire of the French for such a guarantee.⁷⁶ Lloyd George, unfortunately, did not ease the French anxieties but rather, when discussing the problem of the American ratification in the House of

⁷⁵Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, Vol. 121, 21 November, 1919, p. 1284.

⁷⁶D.B.F.P. I, V, Derby to Curzon, 5 December, 1919, p. 892.

Commons on 18 December, 1919, he repeated that a British guarantee was subject to an American one. "If there should be such a possibility as the United States not ratifying that compact, undoubtedly we are free to reconsider our decision. No undertaking has been given by the Government on the subject." This statement was clear enough and held out hope, yet he went on to say that "we cannot contemplate that the United States of America would dishonour the signature of its great representative in Paris. Therefore it would be a mistake to discuss the subject on a supposition of that kind."⁷⁷

These optimistic words could have ended Lloyd George's statement, but he chose instead to reassure the Commons that Britain would not rush into any unilateral guarantee "for Great Britain alone to undertake that charge would be a very serious obligation. It would be in many respects a new departure, certainly since the days when we had a Continental frontier." It would be the first time that Britain was called upon to guarantee protection "standing absolutely alone. All that will be taken into account when we consider what our final decision will be"⁷⁸

Lloyd George was quite evidently not enthusiastic about a unilateral guarantee and he assumed the Commons shared his doubts. No reasons were given for this British course of action, but some were apparent. Dominion unity would not be preserved over the issue of a unilateral guarantee; general public sentiment was felt to be against involvement or commitment to Europe; and Lloyd George also realized that a security guarantee was a

⁷⁷Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, Vol. 123, 18 December, 1919, p. 862.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 862.

strong bargaining point from which to elicit moderate action from France in respect to enforcing the Treaty. The wisdom of Lloyd George's action must be balanced against the nature of the French response. The French press was extremely disappointed with Lloyd George's speech. All the papers expressed the regret that no definite statement was made on the subject of Britain's commitment to France. Le Figaro and Le Temps emphasized that the guarantees had been given in exchange for the measures advocated by Marshal Foch. Lord Derby, the British ambassador to France, wrote that there was sufficient press unanimity "to draw the conclusion that the comments are the reflex of public opinion generally in this country."⁷⁹ Obviously the French were questioning the value of the Entente as it was then interpreted. While, for Britain, the problem became that of maintaining the moderate peace settlement in the face of France's fears for her own security.

⁷⁹D.B.F.P.I, V, Derby to Curzon, 21 December, 1919, p. 934.

CHAPTER IV

THE RECONSIDERATION OF THE SECURITY QUESTION

The basic premises for British security had by the end of 1919 become evident. The most obvious and the first achieved was the removal of the German naval and colonial threat. A second premise, less obvious and much more involved, was to reconstruct Europe; and in the process evolve some form of equilibrium on the continent. Most of the reasons for such a policy lay within Britain, and its traditions and in its domestic situation. The only way Britain could restore its strength and control the European system was to rejuvenate the latter so that it was not continually dominated by France.

Britain's policy was one of national self-interest, that was, the maintenance of peace, the restoration of normality, and the prevention of French hegemony. Peace was to be maintained without conflict, but by conciliation. France's security interests were the opposite to Britain's; Britain was interested in stabilizing Europe, France was interested in dominating it. Throughout 1920-1921 Britain was continually at odds with France over the issue of security. It is specifically with this conflict and as well with the importance of the League of Nations and Belgium in Britain's attempts to resolve the security question that this chapter will deal.

It is not intended here to deal at any length with the League of Nations. The subject is far too large, and further there is little mention of the League of Nations in the British documents that deal with the

security question during this period. Considerable popular sentiment in favour of some form of super-national organization--a League of Nations--to preserve peace had developed in Britain during the war. By the end of the war there was a strong League of Nations pressure group demanding that the government support Wilson's desires for the establishment of such an organization. The most widely favoured concept of a League was one which conceived it as a body whose major function would be to serve as an instrument for the peaceful settlement of international disputes.¹ Still, despite some popular pressure, the setting up of the League can be viewed as a concession to Wilsonian principles and designed to keep the United States actively involved in Europe. Both Britain and her Dominions, who were members of the League in their own right, wished to stay out of the entangling alliance politics of Europe. Unlike France, they believed in conciliation rather than enforcement and Lloyd George, in accepting the idea of the League, adhered closely to the concept of the League as a conciliatory system. In a speech in the House of Commons on 16 April, 1919, he stated that "we are setting up machinery capable of readjusting and correcting mistakes."² When the Treaty of Versailles was brought before Parliament in July, he described it as "not perfect," but he "looked forward to the organization of the League of Nations to remedy, to repair and to redress--the League of Nations will be there as a Court of Appeal

¹ Henry Winkler, The League of Nations Movement in Great Britain 1914-1919, (New Jersey: 1952), p. 256.

² Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 1919, 114,p2937.

to readjust crudities, irregularities, injustices."³

The British approach to the League was a reflection, not only of traditional British policy, but of attitudes throughout the Empire.⁴ To the British, the purpose of the League was to prevent the compulsion to war which had taken hold of Europe in 1914. The League was a means to delay action, allow room for consultation and possible conciliation, and at the best, get the concerned parties together. It was also to have a service function, not only for mandates but, as Philip Kerr pointed out, for control of plebiscites, and functions like observing the maintenance of the military terms of the treaty.⁵ The concept of the League of Nations as a conciliating organization was accepted by most of the British government. Balfour declared himself in favour of it,⁶ as did Bonar Law.⁷ The only possible major opponent was Winston Churchill who declared that "a League of Nations . . . is no substitute for the British fleet." Yet even Churchill accepted a form of the League of Nations as long as it did not involve Britain in unnecessary conflict.⁸

The French wished the League of Nations to be a rather stronger organization.⁹ The League to them was to be an international safeguard

³Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 1919, 118, p. 1054.

⁴Gwendolen M. Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 12, p. 64.

⁶Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 107, 1918, pp. 710-714.

⁷Lloyd George, *op. cit.*, p. 634.

⁸Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁹Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France between Two Wars, (New York: 1940), p. 154.

against aggression, implicitly German aggression. The French thus saw the League as a super-force, with powers of enforcement to override national sovereignty. France was motivated in her foreign policy almost entirely by a fear of a revival of Germany's war potential. Hence the League was meant to be another instrument of foreign policy to contain Germany.¹⁰ The truth of this may be seen in the fact that although France made numerous pacts of assistance with other countries in Europe, she had not thought of genuine disarmament (one of the basic premises of the League) and never really felt motivated towards aiding other countries against external aggression.

In the end it was the British concept of the League of Nations that proved functional. The League of Nations set out six basic articles which acted as sanction articles. Of them, Article X seemed the most significant, stating that:

The members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat of or danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which the obligations shall be fulfilled.¹¹

The problem with Article X was that it called for action and it could not be regionally limited, so Britain might find herself at war defending Poland. Article XI of the Covenant was closer to the British concept of the League. It allowed for intervention and arbitration of all disputes.

¹⁰George Bernard Noble, Policies and Opinions at Paris 1919, (New York: 1968), p. 103.

¹¹Report by a Group of Members of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, International Sanctions, (Oxford: University Press, 1938), Appendix I: See also F. P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, (London: 1952), pp. 48-49.

Co-ordinated with Articles XII through XV, which made arbitration compulsory and provided the machinery for a preliminary enquiry, the role of the organization was changed from that of a preventative device to a conciliatory one.

The League emerged possessed of no real powers, especially in a supra-national form or even in a strict governmental sense. It had little more than the bare outlines for a constitution and was therefore free to develop as experience dictated. In the original Wilsonian concept it was intended to be an association of sovereign states pledging themselves to co-operate with each other for specific purposes, and its effectiveness depended on those pledges being honoured. The League in reality, was much akin to the Concert of Europe, a meeting place with machinery set up to advise and aid but not to act without collective agreement. As such it was a tool with which the British government might help reconstruct Europe. It was an intermediary device between Britain and France, it helped to stabilize and normalize diplomatic relations, and it functioned to solve some of Europe's economic and social problems.¹² As a security organization, its value was limited, and hence it has not been dealt with at great length; but as a tool by which both Britain and France attempted to advance their policies, it served an excellent mediating function.

The question of Belgium, for Britain, was a very involved one. Britain had guaranteed the neutrality of Belgium since 1839, but in guaranteeing it had also made neutrality compulsory for her. This was a

¹²Walters, op. cit., pp. 204-209.

distinct limitation of Belgium sovereignty and had been the justification for giving Belgium weak borders in 1839. This system of neutrality collapsed in 1914, and Belgium wanted no more of it. The main original justification for Britain's guarantee had been her long-standing desire to see the channel ports in the possession of friends so that no invasion could be launched from them against Britain. It had been her only consistent direct involvement with Europe, apart from the Anglo-Portuguese relationships, and it had been the stated reason for Britain becoming involved in the World War. By the time of the Peace Conference, Prussia, Austria, and Russia, three of the five powers that guaranteed Belgium's neutrality in 1839, were no longer in the position of guaranteeing her neutrality again, while France and Britain joined with Belgium in considering revision essential. The question that remained was how to revise it.

France wanted to co-ordinate the Belgian and Dutch defences against any eventual renewal of German aggression. This was merely an extension of the French concept of a security frontier. The British attitude was not as positive, and her lack of commitment was to lead to a Belgian alignment with France. Because Belgium was France's neighbor and had been the scene of the 1914 invasion route, the question of her security was of major significance in the West European security question. From a legalistic point of view, Britain's guarantee of Belgian neutrality was in force only as long as Belgium remained truly neutral.

On September 9, 1919, the Belgian government, through its ambassador in London asked whether Britain would be prepared to join with France in giving Belgium an interim guarantee of security until some arrangement

could be worked out under the League of Nations. M. Gurney emphasized that Belgium did not desire an alliance with France, probably out of fear of excessive control.¹³ Curzon's reply was an indication of the problems Belgium was to have, and also emphasized the nature of British policy. He stated that:

I should be reluctant to express a definite opinion upon it without a great deal of reflection; but I had an instinctive feeling that whatever might be the sympathies of the British Government, British Parliamentary opinion, and still more British public opinion, would be rather suspicious of any more territorial guarantees. The proposals with regard to France had indeed been accepted without demur in this country as a political and military necessity of the first order, but without any great enthusiasm. . . I had to warn the Ambassador that . . . he must not be surprised if serious difficulties were found to exist.¹⁴

No further developments occurred for another month, but on October 17, 1919, the British were informed that the "French Government would be disposed to join with His Majesty's Government if necessary in guaranteeing integrity of Belgium until conclusion of Agreements foreshadowed under auspices of League of Nations."¹⁵ A week later, Belgium formally requested such a guarantee before the commission on the revision of the 1839 settlement.¹⁶ The situation had now reached a point where Curzon felt it necessary to issue a memorandum on the subject. In it, he stated "although

¹³D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 122, Sept. 9, 1919, 490-491.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 491.

¹⁵D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 193, Oct. 17, 1919, 684.

¹⁶D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 213, Oct. 28, 1919, 754.

a guarantee of any kind to Belgium is not likely to be popular here, and would probably be criticized in Parliament, it might be possible to defend an interim guarantee" To emphasize how difficult this would be he went on to state that it should be offered "in no case for a period longer than five years."¹⁷

On 15 November, 1919, the French agreed to the wishes of the Belgians and gave them an interim guarantee of security, and then asked the British government to accede also.¹⁸ The British government made a very candid reply three days later, in which they stated that "It was felt undesirable to join in any such guarantee until our own obligations as regards defence of French territory have been fully determined."¹⁹ It would seem that Britain now recognized that a guarantee of Belgian security would be tantamount to giving a guarantee of France's because the only logical way to invade France from Germany was through Belgium. A guarantee of Belgium would then be the same as a unilateral guarantee of France so that if the American guarantee of France was to fall through, Britain would still remain bound.

On 19 November, the American Senate rejected the Treaty. On the same day the French passed to the British a memorandum which explained their position. As they saw it, if the 1839 settlement was not revised, then it would remain in force and Britain would remain committed. A

¹⁷D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 228, No. 10, 1919, 781-784.

¹⁸D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 235, Nov. 15, 1919, 796-797.

¹⁹D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 239, Nov. 19, 1919, 799-800.

guarantee "for a limited period until other measures can be taken by the League of Nations" would not therefore "incur any fresh obligations."²⁰

On 1 December, Curzon put another memorandum before the Cabinet, stating that they could not wait for American approval of the French security pact, and that they should accept the French position, the only difference being that "in so far as our guarantee under the 1839 Treaty was conditional on the perpetual neutrality of Belgium . . . this will now disappear with the abrogation of the 1839 Treaty."²¹ Curzon saw this as a fine point yet the Cabinet was to use it, apparently with Lloyd George's approval,²² to exploit the situation. On 2 December, Curzon instructed Sir E. Crowe, Head of the British Peace Delegation in Paris, to inform the French that:

His Majesty's Government are prepared to join French Government in giving an interim guarantee of not more than five years to Belgium pending future guarantee by League of Nations provided that as long as the new Anglo-French guarantee lasts the Belgian Government will give a guarantee for the neutrality of Belgium. These were the reciprocal features of the Treaty of 1839, and we feel that we cannot fairly be asked to renew the obligations without receiving the corresponding security.²³

Sir F. Villiers, British Ambassador to Brussels, foresaw that this offer would probably be rejected for the "matter excites very strong and

²⁰D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 247, Nov. 19, 1919, 826.

²¹D.B.F.P. I., V, No. 274, Dec. 1, 1919, 876-877.

²²Curzon told the Belgians that while he himself was in favour of the interim guarantee, Lloyd George and Balfour were opposed. See Ch. de Visscher and F. Vanlangenhove (eds), Documents Diplomatiques Belges, 1920-1940, Vol. I (Brussels; 1964), No. 18, p. 85.

²³D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 281, Dec. 2, 1919, 882.

very general feelings."²⁴ The Belgian government's reply was that they could not "return to a state of complete neutrality even for five years;" further, it was asked how could Belgium "as a neutral power be in occupation of German territory as she is in fact now."²⁵ The French, too, were "much agitated over the decision of the cabinet,"²⁶ possibly because they now saw little hope of getting their own guarantee from Britain. Over the remainder of the month there were successive efforts by the French, especially in collaboration with Sir E. Crowe, to reach some solution amenable to both Britain and France. All of these were to be rejected by the British. Ultimately on 31 December, 1919, the Belgian Ambassador "surprised and relieved" Curzon by stating that Belgium "would prefer to dispense with the territorial guarantee altogether rather than give any assurance as to their own conduct in return for such a guarantee." Curzon rightly understood this pronouncement to mean that "the Belgian government did not expect the matter to be pursued,"²⁷ and this was confirmed on 9 January, 1920, by the Belgian Government.²⁸

Lord Hardinge, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office, was to minute this final despatch "for us it's a satisfactory way out."²⁹

²⁴D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 283, Dec. 3, 1919, 883.

²⁵D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 286, Dec. 4, 1919, 885.

²⁶D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 335, Dec. 5, 1919, 889.

²⁷D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 335, Dec. 31, 1919, 947-948.

²⁸D.B.F.P. I, V, No. 343, Jan. 9, 1919, 966-968.

²⁹Ibid., 968.

This abrupt end leads one to question the motives of the British policy, and whether it was indeed a satisfactory way out. Obviously it left Britain unhindered to pursue its European policy, and by not guaranteeing Belgium the government avoided giving France a unilateral guarantee. Britain also averted any problems that might have arisen five years later when the interim guarantee might have come up for renewal, or the possibility that it might have become permanent. They avoided any public or parliamentary outcry against a guarantee, which was very important to Lloyd George. Yet by not giving a guarantee, Britain might also be seen as committing a colossal blunder. Belgium, from this point on, was to be more influenced by French rather than British views, and France now was very much concerned with rebuilding her own security since it was apparent that Britain would not aid her. French resentment against Britain was aroused and that went hand in hand with harshness towards Germany. It was in Britain's interest to use co-operation with France as a means for achieving moderation towards Germany. Hope for this was slowly and surely being destroyed.

Although this phase of the Anglo-Belgian negotiations had ended in unsuccessful negotiations, the Belgian Government did not let the matter drop. Rather, throughout 1920 the Belgians acted in the form of an intermediary between Britain and France in trying to promote a security alliance. Their first advances however on the 20 April, 1920 were met with a firm rebuff, following as they did Belgian support of the French seizure of German cities earlier that month.³⁰ Curzon berated the Belgian Foreign

³⁰See below p. 132.

Minister when the latter approached him about a security pact with both France and Belgium. He "did not propose to dispute his contention as to the common interest of the two countries, which had been abundantly demonstrated in the recent war. I did, however, feel considerable surprise at his coming to me with this proposal at the present moment, which seemed to me a singularly unfavourable one, for asking the British Cabinet to enter into any negotiations of the kind . . . a more inopportune moment at which to present to the British Cabinet a request that Great Britain should enter into fresh and serious military obligations in the interest of an Ally, who had treated her in such a way, could not well be conceived. Hymans tried to defend Belgian participation in the Ruhr crisis but the British record states that, "the interview ended without any attempt at a reconciliation of the divergent views expressed having been successfully made."³¹

The Belgian Foreign Minister however thought that Curzon was merely venting his irritation and that he was not in principle opposed to British participation in Franco-Belgian military talks.³² At the end of May the Belgian Ambassador was instructed to reopen with Curzon, "the question of the military entente, which Belgium wished to conclude with France and Britain."³³ However, Lloyd George told the Belgian Prime Minister in July 1920 that Curzon stood alone in favouring Britain's participation in

³¹Cab. 4/7, Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) Miscellaneous Papers, pp. 235-329, Vol. 7, No. 240-B, Curzon to Villiers, 20 April, 1920, San Remo, No. VIII, p. 6.

³²Doc. Dip. Belges, 1, No. 113, pp. 286-288.

³³Ibid., No. 158, pp. 374-375.

staff talks with Belgium and France, while the rest of the ministers including himself were opposed.³⁴ As Churchill told the Belgian Ambassador, even military misunderstandings could not help but have a predominately political character, as Britain's experience in 1914 had shown.³⁵ The Belgians continued to express the hope that the Imperial General Staff would talk with the Belgian General Staff to concert defensive measures against unprovoked German aggression,³⁶ but the British evaded this request,³⁷ until finally the Belgians desisted.

Previous to the guarantee offer to France by Britain and the United States (on March 14, 1919), France's concept of security had been based around securing the Rhine as its eastern boundary. Marshal Foch was quoted as saying "Quand on est maitre du Rhin, on est maitre de tout

³⁴Docs. Dipl. Belg., I, No. 172, pp. 398-399, Lloyd George's statement was not in fact true, for on 28 June, 1920, Austen Chamberlain, in a paper entitled, "Our Future Relations with Belgium" had proposed that Britain's "military authorities should join those of France and Belgium in considering plans for resisting unprovoked aggression upon the latter country on lines similar to those adopted by France and the United Kingdom prior to the war." He stressed that "such a treaty protecting as it would a vital national interest of which at this moment our people are more widely aware than at any time during my life, would do more than anything else to secure national unity of the emergency against which it is directed again arose, and in the meantime it would serve as a navigation mark in the conduct of foreign affairs, and as a guide to the character of the military and naval force which it might be necessary for us at any time to maintain." Cab. 4/7, op. cit., No. 246-B, "Our Future Relations with Belgium," 28 June, 1920, p. 130.

³⁵Docs. Dipl. Belg., I, No. 174, p. 404.

³⁶Ibid., No. 185, pp. 422-423 (Sept. 15, 1920), for the text of the Franco-Belgian Military Accord, see, Ibid., No. 175, pp. 405-408.

³⁷Ibid., No. 187, p. 425.

le pays. Quand on n'est pas sur le Rhin, on a tout perdu."³⁸ This mentality regained its former prominence with the failure of the United States and subsequently of Britain to ratify the guarantee treaty with France. The failure of Britain to offer a unilateral treaty of security to France and the abrupt termination of the security negotiation with Belgium at the end of December, 1919, only strengthened France's fears for her own security. Not till December 1921 was the question of a direct British security guarantee again discussed. In the interval, the British and French concepts of security continually clashed. While Britain tried to moderate the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and sought solutions for the problems remaining after the Peace negotiations, France sought tangible guarantees.

The lack of recognition of France's true fear of German revanchism and desire for her own security was to be one of the major faults of Britain's security policy throughout 1920 and most of 1921. The British government saw the major foreign policy problems as the conclusion and implementation of a peace treaty with Turkey, and question of relations with Bolshevik Russia and particularly the Russian-Polish dispute, and the disarming of Germany and the settlement of the reparation problems. These problems, all relics of the war, Lloyd George confronted through the over ten international conferences that he convened that year.³⁹

³⁸Ministere Des Affaires Etrangeres, Documents Relatifs aux Negociations Concernant des Garanties de Securite Contre Uni Agression De l'Allemagne (10 Janvier 1919-7 Decembre 1923), Paris: 1924, No. 13, p. 54.

³⁹Records of these conferences are to be found in, D.B.F.P. I., Vols. 7 & 8.

All these conferences reflected Britain's desire to solve the remaining problems of the Paris Peace Conference. They did not reflect the understanding that Europe could only be stabilized and rejuvenated by a guarantee of French security. This was not to be explicitly stated until Sir Eyre Crowe's memorandum of 12 February, 1921.⁴⁰ Rather, the economic boom conditions within Britain throughout most of 1920 kept the British government concerned with extending its internal economic prosperity. The government was faced with massive strikes and the Irish problem, and for the moment European stability seemed less important.

'Security' throughout 1920 might thus have lost some of its importance for Britain but not for France. Immediately on the loss of the security guarantee from the United States and Britain, France sought redress. On 2 February, 1920, Millerand, Premier of France, received permission from the Conference of Ambassadors to make a formal demand to Germany for execution of the coal protocol.⁴¹ To back up his demands the French Premier proposed the use of sanctions at the London Conference on 13 February. He stated that Germany was not making sufficient deliveries to the Allies, even though she was exporting coal to Holland.⁴² He went

⁴⁰ See above, pp. 62 and 63.

⁴¹ D.B.F.P. I, X, Derby to Curzon, 2 February, 1920, 183. The Conference of Ambassadors met in Paris and consisted of the Ambassadors of Britain, Italy and Japan chaired by the French diplomat Jules Cambon. The United States Ambassador sat in on the early meetings and the Belgian Ambassador was often invited to join. It dealt with the day to day interpreting of the Treaty and had no authority to depart from the letter of it. See G. P. Pink, The Conference of Ambassadors, (Geneva: 1942), pp. 24-25.

⁴² D B.F.P. I, VII, Appendix 2 to No. 4, Allied Conference, Feb. 13, 1920, 32-36.

on to state that, "considering the situation as it now existed, the French Government thought that the Ruhr should be occupied, and that the right of the Allies could not be questioned." He cited several precedents and then stated that "France had no ambition whatever to cripple Germany."⁴³ Lloyd George was able to deter Millerand, by shuffling the issue onto the Reparation Commission for further examination, but French ambitions were clearly stated.

France's attempt to occupy the Ruhr was thwarted, but the British suspected that this was a temporary respite. Curzon wrote to Derby of Millerand's efforts at the conference: "It did not come off in this case, but they are more than likely to try it on again in others. You are doubtless already on your guard, but it will be useful to you to know of what happened here, as an example of the sort of questions which might inspire the French to reset their little trap."⁴⁴ The next little trap the French set, successfully, occurred in March 1920 and resulted in the French occupation of Frankfurt.

The crisis in Germany was a result of the Kapp Putsch in Berlin on 13 March, 1920, and the call by the legally constituted Bauer government for a general strike to combat it.⁴⁵ This led to a workers' insurrection in the Ruhr. The Kapp government petitioned the Military Commission for permission to increase the number of troops in the demilitarized zone

⁴³D.B.F.P. I, IX, Chapter I, passim.

⁴⁴D.B.F.P. I, X, No. 120, Curzon to Derby, Feb. 19, 1920, 196-197.

⁴⁵See correspondence and Memoranda concerning the Kapp Putsch, D.B.F.P. I, ix, Chapter II, 13-17, March, 1920, No. 91-146, 134-168.

beyond the 17,000 allowed there until 10 April, 1920, but was refused.⁴⁶ Derby was anxious about the situation and cabled Curzon that "it is evident French wish to occupy Ruhr Valley to forestall any attempt of Germans to do so."⁴⁷

The Kapp government quickly collapsed but the crisis in the Ruhr did not ease, for the Communist captured many industrial centers, including Essen.⁴⁸ The restored Bauer government now requested that it might use more troops to put down the insurrection, but Millerand again vetoed this. He was backed up by Foch who, however, suggested that the Allies should consider whether they themselves should not restore order in the Ruhr.⁴⁹ This request by Germany and France's response presented the Entente with its greatest challenge before the Ruhr crisis of 1923.

The tension within the Entente was brought about by the clash of British and French views as to the best way of dealing with the situation in the Ruhr. British official policy was that it was best if the rebellion were suppressed by German rather than by Allied troops. Consequently they wished to help the Bauer government by every means in their power and felt that the proposals for a temporary German occupation might be accepted, subject to strict guarantees on the nature and duration of the opera-

⁴⁶D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 130, Derby to Curzon, March 17, 1920, 158-160.

⁴⁷Ibid., 160.

⁴⁸D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 157, Stuart to Curzon, March 18, 1920, 187; D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 186, Kilmarnoch to Curzon, March 21, 1920, 211.

⁴⁹D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 147, Meeting of the Conference of Ambassadors, March 18, 1920, 170-176; D.B.F.P. I, IX, Derby to Curzon, March 18, 1920, 181-183.

tion to be determined by Foch. Curzon also pointed out that all delegates at the London Conference except Cambon accepted this.⁵⁰

To circumvent the British, Millerand proposed to Derby on March 21 to let German troops enter the Ruhr, but only if the area of Allied military occupation was extended, though not necessarily into the Ruhr.⁵¹ The British could not accept this proposal. They believed it would weaken the German government, and they also suspected that the French would unilaterally prolong their occupation as a means of enforcing other clauses of the Treaty.⁵² Hence there was a deadlock with the French refusing to allow German troops into the Ruhr except under conditions unacceptable to the British.

The French broke the deadlock by independent action. On April 1 the British Foreign Office learned that Millerand was negotiating with the Germans as to the conditions under which Germany might send more troops to the Ruhr. The terms were that the French could reciprocate by occupying Frankfurt and Darmstadt plus some other German cities.⁵³ Curzon was furious and warned Cambon that Millerand could not arrogantly speak for the Allies as a whole, and that Britain "might consider whether we should not withdraw altogether from the occupied area, and decline to share the responsibility for actions, concerning which we were not even consulted."⁵⁴

⁵⁰D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 154, Curzon to Derby, March 18, 1920, 184-185; See also D.B.F.P. I, VII, No. 64, Allied Conference, March 18, 1920, 543-547.

⁵¹D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 187, Derby to Curzon, March 21, 1920, 214-215.

⁵²D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 195, Curzon to Derby, March 22, 1920, 221-222; D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 218, Curzon to Derby, March 24, 1929, 247-248.

⁵³D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 245, Curzon to Derby, April 1, 1920, 276-278.

⁵⁴Ibid., 278.

Curzon's threat did not prevent Millerand telling the Germans that he agreed to their action providing Germany consented to an Allied occupation of five more Rhineland towns if the Ruhr was not evacuated in two or three weeks. Then, after Millerand's permission for Germany to enter the Ruhr had been announced by the German Chancellor in the Reichstag, the French Premier withdrew it again.⁵⁵ Unfortunately German troops were already moving into the Ruhr. France turned to Britain for support and Bonar Law suggested that the Allies give the Germans a definite time limit before acting.⁵⁶ Millerand was unable to accept this, for French public opinion was demanding action, and decided that 'France could not wait.'⁵⁷ On April 6, the French occupied Frankfurt and Darmstadt.⁵⁸ Awareness of the British government of the situation was summarized by Bonar Law when he remarked that he thought it was "probably the first time since the war broke out, that one of the Allies had in an important matter acted in a manner contrary to the expressed wish of another Ally."⁵⁹ Now the British problem was how to respond to the independent French action.

Sir Eyre Crowe summarized the British position and pointed out the alternatives. Britain could "let things go to a definite breach or open

⁵⁵D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 252, Derby to Curzon, April 1, 1920, 285.

⁵⁶D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 292, Conversation summarized in Curzon to Grahame, April 5, 321-322, also note 2, 322.

⁵⁷D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 289, Grahame to Curzon, April 5, 1920, 317-318. Grahame also reported that Millerand was obviously deeply influenced by Foch, No. 289, 317-318.

⁵⁸D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 294, Robertson to Curzon, April 6, 1920, 323.

⁵⁹D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 298, Conversation summarized in Curzon to Derby, April 6, 1920, 324-325.

quarrel between the two governments and decide in the future to go her own way" or, as Crowe preferred, Britain could make "the most of the fact that the French have put themselves in the wrong and that we have the right and the power to make things very disagreeable for them in consequence." Crowe felt that the incident would remind the French of the need for British co-operation, that the Ruhr crisis might prompt better relations thereafter, and that the British should use all possible ingenuity "to enable the French to save their face in their present false position."⁶⁰ To this Curzon minuted that "after so flagrant a case as this . . . I am not very enthusiastic about kissing again with tears,"⁶¹ and Philip Kerr attacked the French through an interview in the Nation,⁶² but on the whole the government followed Crowe's advice. The only noticeable reaction was that Derby stayed away from some of the meetings of the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris. Certainly some of the reasoning behind the British moderate response was the recognition of Millerand's domestic problems and also those he had with Foch. Furthermore, some of the strength of the British outrage was lost when Belgium, to preserve Allied unity, sent a battalion to aid the French.⁶³ Above all it appears as if Britain's response was designed to maintain Allied unity. Curzon stated to Cambon that the Prime Minister and Cabinet "remained as convinced as ever" of

⁶⁰D.B.F.P. I, No. 301, Memorandum by Crowe, April 6, 1920, 327-328.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 328.

⁶²See the Nation, Vol. 27, 17 April, 1920, p. 57.

⁶³D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 333, Curzon to Villiers, April 9, 1920, 359-360.

this need.⁶⁴ Also, the San Remo Conference, set for 19 April, 1920, at which Lloyd George wished to fix the German debt, would be impossible unless Allied unity was maintained. Hence the Ruhr incident had to be closed.

Millerand suggested that a statement be read in both countries to the effect that "if a divergence of opinion as to means of ensuring execution of the Versailles Treaty has arisen, they recognize more than ever the necessity of maintaining intimate and cordial agreement for settlement of the grave questions confronting them in Germany and elsewhere."⁶⁵ The British agreed, and Bonar Law read out such a statement in the House of Commons on April 12.⁶⁶ The incident was formally closed and French and German troops withdrew a month later.⁶⁷

The whole affair brings out some startling points. First there was the obvious divergence of British and French policy regarding Germany. Second, there was the obvious influence of Foch and the rightwing elements in French politics over Millerand. Third, there was the eagerness of the French to use military sanctions against Germany, and just as important, France's willingness to oppose her Allies on major issues and to carry out an independent action. This last point also indicates the extent of France's fear of a revanchist Germany and her desire for security.

⁶⁴D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 318, Curzon to Derby, April 8, 1920, 342.

⁶⁵D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 357, Derby to Curzon, April 11, 1920, 382.

⁶⁶Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 127, 12 April, 1920, p1382.

⁶⁷D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 468, Curzon to Kilmarnock, May 14, 1920, 481; See also D.B.F.P. I, IX, No. 472, Gosling to Curzon, 17 May, 1920, 484.

All of these factors were to abode ill for Lloyd George who had to contend with them if he wished to maintain the British policy of flexibility towards Germany and also to gain France's approval for an early reparation settlement. Lloyd George should have been aware at this point that only a British guarantee of French security would allow for a European settlement yet this fact was not to re-enter into Anglo-French negotiations until December 1921.

On the contrary, France's independent action greatly increased the tension between the two countries and as has been shown in the case of Belgium, ended any immediate hope of Britain giving any form of security pact on the continent. A none too cordial Entente was preserved, with a great deal of distrust between the two countries which was not properly alleviated until the Locarno Pact of 1925. Britain continued to push for a moderate solution to Europe's problems, while France continually looked for the opportunity to manoeuvre the Allies into the occupation of the Ruhr. The first meeting of the Supreme Council after the Ruhr crisis took place at San Remo on April 18. Again the Allies' views clashed. On the opening day, Lloyd George stated that the German government was without much authority or prestige, and needed to be supported. Millerand took the contrary view, insisting that the Allies must be prepared to take vigorous action to enforce the Versailles Treaty, particularly the coal and disarmament clauses. Millerand wanted immediate action to prevent another attempted military coup.⁶⁸ His opinion was that if the German

⁶⁸There were rumors in Berlin of another reactionary coup. See: D.B.F.P. I, IX, Kilmarnock to Curzon, 14-16 April, 1920, 406, 410, 412.

Government would not carry out its obligations, then regardless of its good will "the Allies would have to take guarantees. The French troops would voluntarily evacuate Frankfurt and Darmstadt and the Allies would take a 'gage' in the basin of the Ruhr" Millerand also pointed out that the recent French occupations demonstrated that such measures of the Allies "did not involve a national reaction in Germany."⁶⁹

Again at the Second Supreme Council meeting, the French premier called for occupation of the Ruhr, ostensibly as a means of enforcing the Treaty. Lloyd George immediately made it clear that he did not feel occupation would be of much use, and in turn proposed that the Allies should "have a straight talk with the Germans."⁷⁰ Lloyd George won his way but only before two additional pledges were secured. Millerand received an Allied undertaking "to take all measures even to the extent, if necessary, of the occupation of further German territory" as a sanction to use if Germany did not carry out the decisions of the conference.⁷¹ Lloyd George received a pledge that France would not annex any territory.⁷² This pledge that Lloyd George received was the point he stressed to reassure British opinion, that he was not committing Britain to Europe.⁷³

⁶⁹D.B.F.P. I, VIII, No. 2, Conversation Between Lloyd George and Millerand, April 18, 1920, 6-7.

⁷⁰Ibid., 7.

⁷¹D.B.F.P. I, VIII, No. 18, Meeting of the Supreme Council, April 25, 1920, 199-200.

⁷²D.B.F.P. I, VIII, No. 14, Conversation between Lloyd George and Millerand, April 24, 1920, 144.

⁷³Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V, 128, 29 April, 1920, p1463.

The San Remo Conference set up the Spa Conference, which the Germans attended. Before Lloyd George was to bring it to a semi-successful conclusion by working out an agreement over coal deliveries, there was to be a point where the Allies were to agree on the need for occupation.⁷⁴ The French policy had almost succeeded.

On certain occasions throughout the year, the idea of a military security pact with Belgium and France was revived. On the 30 June, 1920, the Cabinet reached the conclusion that, "a British guarantee, which might some day become necessary, shall only be given in return for some great reciprocal stipulation, such, as for example, the adoption of a reasonable attitude by France and Belgium towards the revival of Germany."⁷⁵ Yet, the distrust of the French motives since the Ruhr crisis was ingrained and took a while to overcome. By October, 1920, British official opinion had travelled so far that a Committee of Imperial Defence survey of "The Naval Military and Air Obligations of the British Empire" could pose the question "Will it be the policy of Great Britain in the future to support France, Belgium or Holland in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany?" and leave it unanswered.⁷⁶

While Britain thus virtually ignored the question of a security guarantee, France continued to push for the occupation of the Ruhr as the only means by which she could achieve security. A crisis arose over the

⁷⁴D.B.F.P. I, VIII, No. 71, Allied Conference, July 14, 1920, 597-602.

⁷⁵Cab. 23/21, Cab. 38(20) of 30 June, 1920.

⁷⁶Cab. 4/7, op. cit., No. 257-B. "Survey of the Naval, Military and Air Obligations of the British Empire", October, 1920.

disarmament question in December 1920, with the British fearing that France wanted to occupy the Ruhr to enforce disarmament.⁷⁷ In reaction to this persistent attitude of the French, there was a hardening of British opinion. Besides Lloyd George, both D'Abernon and the General Staff were certain that an occupation of the Ruhr would be disastrous.⁷⁸ Briand again brought up the issue on April 30, 1921, when it appeared certain that Germany would not make her May 1 reparation payments. Briand was under strong pressure from Poincaré to take vigorous action, such as the occupation of the Ruhr.⁷⁹ Lloyd George refused to take immediate military action and Briand gave way to preserve Allied unity.

All the time that Britain had been attempting to control France's security ambitions on the Rhine, she had also been trying to achieve a moderate settlement of Europe's problems. Both France and Britain were meeting with little success in their aims. At the same time as these policies were being pursued both countries were also aiming to improve their security by other means.

France maintained and furthered her security by maintaining her massive military forces, and supplementing them with a series of military defensive alliances with the countries on Germany's eastern frontiers.

⁷⁷D.B.F.P. I, X, No. 345, Kilmarnock to Curzon, 29 December, 1920, 470-471.

⁷⁸D.B.F.P. I, X, No. 325, Abernon to Curzon, 23 November, 1920, 448-449.

⁷⁹Poincaré, Chroniques, III, 15 April, 1921, p. 58.

These alliances were called the "Little Entente."⁸⁰ Britain for her part looked to means by which she could restore her international trade, and convened an Imperial Conference in June, July and August of 1921 which restored Empire unity, out of which emerged the Washington Conference which resolved Britain's problems in the Pacific and improved her relations with the United States.

The only security factor that was not strengthened in this period was the most significant one, relations between France and Britain themselves. Not only had both countries continually opposed each other for the previous year and a half, increasing tensions, but also several major issues had arisen to test the Entente. Although it is not intended to deal with these crises here, it should be noted that the Anglo-French conflict over Upper Silesia, Turkey, and finally, submarines at the Washington Conference brought Entente relations to a new low. This sincerely worried both sides and was to lead directly to the renewal of the negotiations between the two countries for a security pact.

During 1921 the British government came to the view, so different from that of the previous year, that a commitment to Europe was essential. This change began early in 1921 and the Crowe Memorandum of 12 February was instrumental in awakening the British to their security needs. The

⁸⁰The Franco-Polish Treaty was signed on the 19 February, 1921; Poland was linked up with Rumania by the Treaty of the 3 March, 1921, the structure of the 'Little Entente' between Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia and Rumania was completed by the Rumanian-Jugoslav Treaty on the 7 June 1921. A. J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924, (London: 1926), p. 5.

Upper Silesian crisis also led the British Cabinet to begin searching for solutions. In Cabinet, on the 24 May, 1921, there was a review of Anglo-French relations. All regretted the serious deterioration of Anglo-French relations, and the suggestion was made that Britain's "relations with France could best be established on a permanent satisfactory footing by giving a guarantee to France on the lines of the joint Anglo-American guarantee." Churchill, in his review of Anglo-French relations, came out strongly for "a written undertaking that we would come to her aid in the case of unprovoked attack by Germany." Churchill also wanted to inform the Germans of this arrangement in order to stabilize European affairs. The Cabinet was in favour of the proposal, but because strong evidence was adduced to show that it would probably not only be wrongly interpreted by the French Government, but resented, it was decided that the "time was not ripe for action."⁸¹

It seemed then that an alliance with France, or at least a guarantee, would be reconsidered in the summer of 1921. Precisely what happened next is still unclear. Saint Aulaire, the French Ambassador in London, claimed that the British cabinet favoured an alliance, and that Lloyd George alone opposed it. He added that Crowe actually prepared a draft of the treaty and offered 'condolences' to the ambassador when the treaty was rejected.⁸²

⁸¹ Cab. 40(21), 24 May, 1921, Cab. 23/25.

⁸² Auguste, Comte de Saint-Aulaire, Confession d' un vieux diplomate; (Paris: 1953), pp. 568-570.

Unfortunately there was no evidence of any such memorandum or of its being considered by Cabinet. The question of a guarantee was, however, briefly discussed at the Imperial Conference in late July, 1921.⁸³ This was when the Upper Silesian crisis was at its height and it must be doubted whether at this time a military commitment to France was given serious thought. After July the whole question seems again to have been forgotten, although it was possible that the Cabinet was first hoping to solve its Imperial security problems through the Washington Conference.

It should also be noted that the Cabinet's decision in principle to give a security undertaking to France was not unanimously accepted. Among senior advisors, Sir Maurice Hankey⁸⁴ was opposed and so were some of the Dominions. Perhaps the strongest advocate of an Anglo-French security pact, and the only thoroughly consistent one was Lord Derby, who for much of 1920 was partially silenced owing to his ambassadorial role in Paris. Derby's contentions were:

that just as I would like to see Germany re-established as a commercial nation, so must the French feel that if she is so re-established that there must be danger of her again reconstructing her army and navy and attempting a war of revenge. England and France are therefore bound to look at the resurrection of Germany from two different points of view, and the question is how can these views be so reconciled as to give us the commercial intercourse with Germany which we desire and at the same time safeguard France from military aggression.⁸⁵

⁸³Lloyd George referred to this discussion in his memorandum to Briand, 4 January 1922, Cmd. 2169, p. 117.

⁸⁴cf. Hankey's Memorandum to Austen Chamberlain, 27 January 1925, Birmingham University Library, Austen Chamberlain Papers, 52/453.

⁸⁵R. Churchill, Lord Derby, King of Lancashire, (London: 1959), pp. 384-385.

Derby had grasped the vital point that France would never support the economic reconstruction of Germany, so necessary for Britain and Europe, while she feared for her security. Lloyd George was only now prepared to begin negotiations on this dual basis.

Near the end of 1921, with the Imperial Conference successfully and harmoniously completed, and the Washington Conference to go its successful route, Lloyd George felt strong and secure enough to broach the problem of West European Security with the dual questions of reconstruction and French security. Briand, the French Premier, wishing to complete the last link in the security he was forging, felt much the same way and sent out feelers in late November and early December of 1921.

Briand gave the first indication that France might follow a moderate arms program if her security was guaranteed at the Washington Conference. Immediately on his return to France, the French Ambassador in London, the Count Saint-Aulaire, was asked to sound out the British on the question of a security pact. This was done on 5 December. These talks coming as they did immediately after the Anglo-French disagreement over submarines at the Washington Conference, leads one to conclude that the British and French had both been disturbed by the security misunderstandings caused at the conference, especially by the French reservation in the matter of submarines. Briand later averred that he wished to erase suspicions aroused by the Washington meeting by a positive alliance with Britain.⁸⁶

⁸⁶Briand made this statement in the Chamber of Deputies on 23 November, 1923, France, *Ministere des Affaires Etrangere, Documents diplomatiques relatifs aux negociations concernant les garanties de securite contre une agression de l'Allemagne*, (Paris: 1924), p. 251; Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 225, erroneously indicates that the speech was made on 23 November 1921.

St. Aulaire's talk with Curzon on 5 December was over a bilateral defensive alliance covering any direct attack made on their respective territories. He also felt that they had to be prepared for an indirect attack, i. e., a German attack on Poland.⁸⁷ The agreement would, therefore, involve France guaranteeing the security of India as well as of Britain, while Britain would guarantee Poland as well as France. Curzon's view was that there was little in it for the British. The French argument was that it could lead to general disarmament, a more pacific policy by the French towards Germany, including the promotion of her entry into the League of Nations, a general stabilizing of the continental situation and a joint effort towards the reconstruction of Russia. The talks were all of an unofficial nature but did lead to further notes and exchanges between the British and French.

Lloyd George was now prepared to use the question of a security pact as a strong negotiating point for European reconstruction. He had firmly committed himself not only to reconstruction, but also the reintroduction of Soviet Russia into the sphere of international activity. The proof of this is best shown by the completion of the Anglo-Russian Trade Agreement of 16 March 1921, accomplished by Lloyd George over the opposition of most of his cabinet ministers.⁸⁸ Also, through the League of Nations

⁸⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 32, p. 108.

⁸⁸For a history of the negotiations of the First Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement (1921) and as well for an understanding of the support and opposition Lloyd George had in concluding the agreement, see W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, A History of Anglo-Soviet Relations, (London: 1945), pp. 26-54.

Lord Robert Cecil had been trying to work out the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantee. This treaty would allow for both security and disarmament, hence an attempt was being made to establish a criterion for security. Possibly most significant was the onset of recession in Britain and the dramatic rise of unemployment in late 1921. This forced the issue for the British government, so that by the end of 1921, the circumstances existed for the negotiation of an Anglo-French security pact. The way was cleared for formal talks between Lloyd George and Briand over a wide range of topics, including the Middle East, Naval disarmament, security guarantees, Russia and reparations.

Lloyd George and Briand met on 18 December, 1921, and the first topic discussed was German default on reparations. They agreed on a reduction of the reparations but only in return for a wide range of guarantees, which included greater supervision of the German economy and proposals for a balanced budget.⁸⁹ They also agreed on a method to divide up the reparation payments but since neither the moratorium nor division could be approved without reference to the full Supreme Council, it was decided to hold a conference at Cannes in early January.⁹⁰

The way was now cleared for negotiations at the Cannes Conference to look at both European economic problems and French security. British security policy had travelled a long course in the last two years to get to this point. In that time both France and Britain had tried to advance

⁸⁹A. J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1920-23, (London: 1925), pp. 159-160.

⁹⁰The Times, 22 Dec., 1921, p. 10.

their own concepts of security virtually independent, and in conflict with each other. British Cabinet opinion had appeared to come to agreement in May 1921, that a security guarantee to France was essential at the right moment. It now seemed as if the right moment was approaching.⁹¹

⁹¹The question of the relationship of the guarantee pact offer of 1921-22 to the crisis in the Near East, on which Britain wanted France's support, is a troublesome one which cannot be investigated here. However, in view of what has been said above, it is evident that the British offer had evolved independently of the Near East crisis, even though a link between the two was established. Curzon was to state in Cabinet on 18 November, 1921, that the future of the Entente depended on the reply of the French Government to the British Note on the Middle East. Cab. 23/27. Record of Conference of Ministers, 18 November, 1921.

CHAPTER V

SECURITY: LLOYD GEORGE'S FINAL ATTEMPT

The conversation between the British Foreign Secretary and the French Ambassador in London, despite the reservations which Curzon made on that occasion, prepared the ground for talks between Lloyd George and Briand, and for the British security offer to France of early 1922. Briand visited London in December, 1921, principally to discuss reparations, but also to restore the relationship with Britain that had been threatened by French policy regarding submarines in particular, and naval construction in general, at the Washington Conference.¹

The conditions were set for what appeared might be a successful conference at Cannes. This was, first of all, because there was a prospect of reaching some sort of security agreement between France and Britain. Lloyd George and Briand discussed this topic on 21 December. Lloyd George began by stating that British public opinion was disturbed by the attitude adopted by the French Government at the Washington Conference, and by the reserves it had at that time formulated in respect to submarines.² Briand remarked that the British opinion was not justified but added that "since the attitude prevailed in England, it was to

¹Briand's speech in the Chamber of Deputies 23 November, 1923, extracts of which are printed in France, Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres, Documents Diplomatiques, Documents Relatifs aux Negociations concernant Les Garanties de Securite contre une Agression de L'Allemagne, No. 45.

For British Cabinet opinion about submarines and French naval competition see cabinet meeting Cab. 1 (22) of 10 January, 1922, Cab. 23/29.

²Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 33, 21 December, 1921, p. 112.

the interest of both countries to dispel it by resolutely grasping hands."³ Before Briand could go on to set out the French ideas, he was interrupted by Lloyd George, who knew of the talks with Curzon and sought clarification. In particular he wished to know whether it was "the idea that the guarantee of the alliance should go beyond that concluded in Paris in 1919?" Briand's reply, that "he had in mind a very broad alliance in which the two Powers would guarantee each others interests in all parts of the world, act closely together in all things and go to each other's assistance whenever these things were threatened" showed that his scheme was more far-reaching than St. Aulaire had previously revealed.⁴

Lloyd George countered by stressing "that opinion in Great Britain was hardly prepared for so broad an undertaking as that." Britain would give a guarantee against Germany to France but not to Poland or Danzig.⁵ Briand, however, still insisted on a broader alliance. While not asking for military commitments to Poland, he suggested a compact, to which other nations would also adhere, including Germany. Such an alliance "would thus form the basis in Europe of a group of alliances, capable of giving the League of Nations the physical force which it now lacked and thereby assuring peace."⁶

³ Ibid., p. 112.

⁴ Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 33, Dec. 21, 1921, p. 112.

⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

⁶ Ibid., p. 113. In some ways Briand's idea resembled that which ultimately came to fruition at Locarno in 1925.

Lloyd George brought Briand back to the hard fact "that English public opinion was hardly prepared at the present moment to contemplate such an extensive alliance" but he agreed to consult his colleagues about the suggestion and promised that "they would resume the conversation when they met at Cannes."⁷

The Cannes Conference thus promised to be historic. It was to be the first time the two questions of reparations and a military guarantee were to be linked together. This would represent a new and hopefully fruitful departure in the security negotiations and the efforts to stabilize Europe. There was to be, too, one further ray of hope, for it was also announced that at the Cannes Conference the Supreme Council would make plans for a European Economic Conference which would include Russia and Germany.⁸

Lloyd George was moving to capitalize on the French desire to restore Allied unity and to show to the world the "close political understanding" between Britain and France. Re-introducing Russia and Germany into international affairs would stabilize Europe and lead to the economic reconstruction of the continent. Early in 1922, an article in The Economist was to highlight the urgency with which Britain desired the

⁷ Ibid., p. 113: Lloyd George did consult some of his ministerial colleagues. For the all-too-brief record of what was evidently a short and highly confidential conversation, see: Record of a Ministerial Conference of 21 December, 1921, Cab. 23/29: the participants included Chamberlain, Churchill and Curzon, but not the full Cabinet.

⁸ The History of The Times, 1912-1948, Vol. II, 1921-1947. (London: 1952), pp. 647-648.

economic improvement of Central and Eastern Europe, when it stated that "for Great Britain 1921 has been one of the worst years of depression since the industrial revolution."⁹ There were many causes of this depression, but certainly one of them was that trade with Germany had fallen off by 41.7% compared to 1913, and trade with Russia by 25.9%. The same respected journal had pointed out during the previous year that "the sooner we make an effort to stimulate our trade with the 250 millions of people living in Germany and Russia, the better for our trade both in imports and exports."¹⁰ Lloyd George was now hoping to use the Cannes Conference as the vehicle to such an end.

While expectation of the Cannes Conference from the British viewpoint were high, from the French viewpoint they were not. The Cannes Conference would set up potential election issues upon which Lloyd George could call an early election and from nearly every standpoint stood to reflect Lloyd George's initiative and enhance his popularity.¹¹ For Briand, the Cannes Conference was to spell his doom. The prospect of an economic conference was unpopular in France, for it brought out the French fear that Germany would gain additional reparation concessions.¹² Any form of negotiation with the Germans was unpopular and to make matters worse Lloyd George had also brought the question of Russia up to be discussed at Cannes. For Briand the only reason to accept the Cannes

⁹The Economist, 18 February, 1922.

¹⁰The Economist, May 7, 1921.

¹¹The History of The Times, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 647-651.

¹²Jordan, op. cit., p. 51.

Conference was the prospect of an Anglo-French security pact, but the prospects of his getting that which he wanted were dim.

From the British point of view, however, the London meeting had been a success. A formula on reparations had been worked out, and Briand appeared willing to support the economic conference which, it was hoped, would be a major step towards real stabilization in Europe. The only significant factor to dim the London achievements was that Briand's popularity was slipping and Poincaré's power was growing.¹³

At Cannes on January 4, 1922, Lloyd George communicated to Briand a memorandum which stated that "the British Government desires to make it plain at the Cannes Conference that the British Empire and France stand together as firmly in the issue of peace as in the ordeal of war."¹⁴ The memorandum went on to say that the British Government's opinion was that, "Peace is not to be secured by any piecemeal treatment of the question On the contrary, they consider it absolutely necessary that the problem should be treated as a whole."¹⁵ The British Government thus officially recognized that the problems of economic reconstruction, reparation and French security had to be dealt with in concert. The memorandum contained an offer of a military guarantee to France, but not of the sort that Briand had hoped for. It was cast in the narrow form that Lloyd

¹³There was, in December of 1921, a belief prevalent that "if M. Poincaré was to be returned to power it might be possible to come to some more satisfactory settlement with him than with M. Briand . . ." Cab. 93(21), 16 December, 1921, Cab. 23/27. The same view was expressed by Albert Thomas, the French ex-Minister of Munitions and a Socialist. There was some surprise at his statement so he wrote it down and signed it. D'Abernon, op. cit., p. 239.

¹⁴Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 34, Jan. 4, 1922, pp. 114-120.

¹⁵Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 34, Jan. 4, 1922, p. 114.

George had offered at Paris in 1919. The operative sentence stated that "with regard to the safety of France against invasion, Great Britain will regard this as an interest of her own and is therefore prepared to undertake that, in the event of unprovoked German aggression against French soil, the British people will place their forces at her side." Later in the memorandum Lloyd George even claimed that France would not want the British to secure France by means of an "offensive and defensive alliance" because this was "contrary to British tradition." Also, Britain would not contemplate "participation in military enterprises in Central and Eastern Europe."¹⁶ However, the Prime Minister tried to sweeten the pill for France, by saying that "It is probable that the opinion of the Empire would support that of Great Britain in giving such a guarantee to France. It would therefore have far greater weight for it would, the British Government believes, carry with it the wholehearted opinion, not of Great Britain alone, but of her Dominions."¹⁷

In return for this guarantee Britain demanded far-reaching concessions. France would have to support the economic conference which was tentatively scheduled for Genoa, which would have to include Russia.¹⁸ In addition to the acceptance of Russia at the economic conference, the British Government insisted upon an agreement over submarines, and collaboration between the naval staffs "in order that all competition in ship building be avoided between them."¹⁹ Furthermore, the British Government

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 116-117.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 117-118.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

desired "that peace in the Near East shall be restored," and that there should be agreement on "other important points at issue in foreign affairs, which have hitherto in some measure impeded a complete understanding."²⁰ Finally, in echoing Briand, the memorandum hoped that the entente between Britain and France would "form the basis of a wider scheme of international co-operation to ensure the peace of Europe as a whole." The British anticipated that the economic conference would "inaugurate an era of peace" in Europe.²¹

A lot of words were spoken, a lot of emotion and idealism was shown, but in the final analysis the British were merely renewing their 1919 offer of a guarantee of French security, and this time only in return for a lot of concessions from France, which were likely to be unpopular in that country.

A discussion of the negotiation of the Cannes Conference would involve a great deal of time; of central significance here were two issues, that of Russia and the Genoa Conference, and the fate of Briand and security negotiations. The Cannes Conference achieved the position of a British security guarantee to France for a reciprocal guarantee from France, co-operation in reconstructing Europe and re-introducing Russia into the international sphere. The French were hesitant to accept these conditions but did accede to the convening of the Genoa Conference with both Russia and Germany attending. There were conditions for Russia's attendance: The first was that foreign investors in Russia and other

²⁰Ibid., p. 119.

²¹Ibid., p. 119-120.

countries should enjoy respect for their property and other rights, and the full fruits of their enterprise. The second required recognition of all public debts and compensation for the confiscation or withholding of foreign properties; and the third insisted that all countries (though it principally meant Russia) should give a formal undertaking to refrain from propaganda subversive of order in other states.²²

With such conditions, the Russians had little hope of success at the Genoa Conference, especially considering the attitude of the French Government under Poincare, but Lloyd George was elated with the opportunity the Conference offered to follow through and complete Britain's European policy.

At Cannes Lloyd George and Briand were planning a promising new future. Closer co-operation between Britain and France, to be accompanied by a serious effort to promote European stability, was planned. Perhaps the two leaders were unduly optimistic about future relations with Germany and Russia. Perhaps, too, they were carried away by Lloyd George's enthusiasm and his belief in conference diplomacy, but they did appear to be on the verge of increasing Anglo-French unity, which would have significantly reduced tensions and enhanced the prospect of European reconstruction. As it was, the events of the Cannes Conference forced too much upon French public and parliamentary opinion. The nature of Britain's guarantee offer was a disappointment to France. Following upon the reparations moratorium agreed upon at the London meetings in December, and the

²²Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 225; for the text of the conditions to Russia see Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 34, Jan. 4, 1922, p. 119.

decision to hold an economic conference at Genoa, it led to a grave weakening of Briand's position and his forced resignation.

It was Lloyd George's and Briand's misfortune to believe that the British security guarantee to France would placate French opinion and allow for agreement at Cannes. Briand probably understood something of this, for his reply of 8 January to the British memorandum attempted to improve on the security guarantee. Briand desired three essential changes. The first was that the security guarantee was to be bilateral, not unilateral, as the British guarantee of 1919. This was meant to show the Germans the renewed unity and strength of the Allies. The second change was that Articles 42, 43 and 44 of the Versailles Treaty, concerning the Rhineland settlement, were to be reinforced by a statement that "any violation of those provisions would constitute in the eyes of the British government a case of direct aggression against the security of France in the same degree as an actual invasion of her soil," and further, any violation of the military naval and air clauses should also be regarded as 'casus belli'. The third major change was to set up means for constant collaboration between the two countries over armaments and security.²³

Lloyd George in his reply to the French demands on 12 January, 1922, did not even mention Briand's first proposed change, leaving one to conclude that he meant the guarantee to remain unilateral. He rejected Briand's second change by leaving the British interpretations of a violation of Articles 42, 43 and 44 as "they will consult together should any

²³Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 35, Jan. 8, 1922, pp. 123-126.

breach of them be threatened or any doubt arise as to their interpretation." The third point, too, was rejected, for Britain would agree only "to concert together in the event of any military, naval or air measures."²⁴ The British had not given in on the degree to which they would support France's security, but it is unlikely that any change by the British on 12 January would have saved Briand.

On that day, Briand was forced to resign as Premier of France. His policy of Allied unity above nearly all else had aroused French hostility and the Cannes Conference had climaxed it. There was little doubt as to Briand's successor, and on 13 January, 1922, Poincaré formed a nationalist government. Poincaré in power was something most Britons, and especially Lloyd George, had dreaded.²⁵ He was an implacable French nationalist, and very rigid.²⁶ He was a critic of the Rhineland settlement, of any notion of a lump sum reparation settlement, and also of the idea of conference diplomacy, which Lloyd George so favoured. Poincaré's rise to power, possibly more so than anything else, was to doom the near future of British policy. At the moment he became Premier, British hopes of success at the Genoa Conference were effectively doomed. In the long-range view, Briand's fall might be seen as a turning point in Anglo-French relations in the post-war era.

²⁵D. Lloyd George, The Truth About Reparations and War Debts, (London: 1932), pp. 66-68.

²⁶It has been said of Poincaré that "He could achieve a strong bargaining position, but then could not bargain." cf. Lord Salter, Slave of the Lamp, (London: 1967), p. 52.

After a short hiatus, Poincaré reopened the negotiations for a security guarantee on January 26, 1922. He renewed Briand's demands of January 8, laying particular stress on the interpretation that any violation of the military, naval, or air clauses of the Versailles Treaty, or of the Rhineland clauses, should be considered just reasons for war. He augmented Briand's demands by stating that "a constant entente will be maintained between the respective General Staffs of the two High Contracting Parties." This went beyond his predecessor's desire for consultation. His final demand was that the treaty would remain in force for thirty years,²⁷ twenty more than the British had offered.²⁸

Curzon acted as the British government's spokesman in rejecting Poincaré's version of an Anglo-French treaty. Britain, he said, was striving to obtain security through the League of Nations and not through a dual alliance, and in particular felt no compunction to defend three articles of the Versailles Treaty which were legitimately the obligation of all the members of the League of Nations and not solely of Britain. Britain found the notion of a 'constant entente' objectionable, and desired a much more informal arrangement. Curzon went on to elaborate further problems with the French draft proposals, stating that when Lloyd George and Briand had discussed such a mutual security pact at the Cannes Conference, the Prime Minister "had indicated that we would be required to be satisfied as to the settlement of the Near East question, the

²⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 39, Jan. 26, 1922, pp. 130-131.

²⁸Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 38, Jan. 12, 1922, p. 128.

question of the economic restoration of Europe and the question of submarines, before we could accept the larger obligations entailed by the new treaty."²⁹

Curzon and Lloyd George, as well as Churchill, Austen Chamberlain and Balfour³⁰ seem to have been in agreement that certain issues, including European reconstruction, were essential before a mutual guarantee pact could be signed. Also, it was hoped that Poincaré might accept these terms, as Briand already had before being overthrown.

On 26 January, 1922, the French Ambassador called on Curzon to make it clear that Poincaré desired to settle the question of a security guarantee. He also stated that the guarantee was desired before the Genoa Conference.³¹ Curzon expressed surprise: "it seemed to me quite out of the question that the question of the Pact could be settled in the next five weeks before any substantial progress had been made in the solution of the other matters."³² Negotiations continued with the French trying to extend the British commitment "beyond the boundaries of the Treaty of 1919." Curzon consistently opposed the French proposals on the grounds that they would be "regarded by British opinion as embarking upon a policy of military adventure and potential danger."³³

²⁹Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 40, Jan. 28, 1922, p. 135.

³⁰France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents Diplomatiques, Documents Relatifs aux Négociations concernant les Garanties de Sécurité contre une Agression de l'Allemagne, No. 31, 19 March, 1922.

³¹Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 38, 12 January, p. 136.

³²Ibid., p. 136.

³³Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 42, 9 February, 1922, p. 153.

The difficulty that was now to develop in the negotiations for the security pact was over the prior conditions that Lloyd George had outlined at the Cannes Conference. As early as a Cabinet meeting on the 30 June, 1920, governmental opinion had been that a guarantee would only be given in return for some important concessions by France, particularly towards Germany. Briand had recognized this and had negotiated on this basis. Poincaré had even recognized the necessity of prior agreement on outstanding questions between the two countries, but throughout February and March of 1922, he tried to rush the negotiations for the security pact. Curzon emphatically resisted all of Poincaré's attempts, and then on 19 March, 1922, he outlined the British timetable for negotiations:

The Near-East Conference was about to meet, and we should soon know how far we had been able to come to an agreement. This was to be followed by the Genoa Conference which would take us well into the summer. I had already agreed with M. Poincaré to undertake the Tangier conversations immediately afterwards. When the whole of these matters had been concluded then would be the time to resume the discussion -- and I hope the conclusion -- of the Pact.³⁴

Negotiations with Poincaré had for the moment reached an impasse, partly no doubt because of the British conviction that the security guarantee already offered to France was a magnanimous act on their part, and that without it the French Government might fall.³⁵ Besides, suspicions of France had been manifested in a new form in the middle of March when attention was drawn in Cabinet to an increase in the offensive strength of the French Air Force, and Cabinet "agreed that the French air development constituted a formidable danger to this country."³⁶

³⁴Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 45, 19 March, 1922, p. 163.

³⁵Cab. 19 (22) of 20 March, 1922, Cab. 23/29.

³⁶Cab. 18 (22) of 15 March, 1922, Cab. 23/29.

Meanwhile, Britain was also negotiating a parallel security guarantee with Belgium. At Cannes the Belgian Government had insisted that they had even a better right than France to such assistance in the event of aggression.³⁷ The English statesmen were generally of the view that it would be better to conclude a separate Treaty between Britain and Belgium than to incorporate it into a Tripartite Pact. Both countries were disposed to proceed along those lines.³⁸ On the 13 January, the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. M. Jasper, submitted his government's proposals to Curzon, and the two agreed on the text of the guarantee. A clause was added assuring that unless the British and Belgium cabinets so authorized it, the treaty was concluded only with the signing of an Anglo-French Treaty. Further, it was stated that the British Cabinet would consider whether the Anglo-Belgium Treaty could enter into force even if the Anglo-French Treaty were not signed.³⁹

On the 18 January, 1922, Cabinet agreed that the Anglo-Belgium Treaty should be proceeded with⁴⁰ and the next day the British Ambassador in Brussels informed the Belgian Foreign Minister that the guarantee would be given irregardless of the Anglo-French Treaty.⁴¹ Arguments

³⁷Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 201, 10 Janvier, 1922, pp. 448-450.

³⁸Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 202, 11 Janvier, 1922, pp. 451-452.

³⁹Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 204, 13 Janvier, 1922, the text of the agreement is in the accompanying annex, pp. 456-457.

⁴⁰Cab. 2 (22) of 18 January, 1922, Cab. 23/29.

⁴¹Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 211, 19 Janvier, 1922, p. 467.

over the precise wording of the guarantee went on till the 13 February, when an agreement was reached. Yet a month later, on the 17 March, Sir Eyre Crowe had to inform the Belgian Ambassador that Britain could not sign the guarantee treaty at once, because it was dependent on the conclusion of the Anglo-French guarantee, with which there were several outstanding problems. Crowe added that if the Anglo-Belgium Treaty was concluded "France would no longer be so desirous of obtaining theirs. They would consider in effect that our Treaty sufficed to prevent the passage of Germans across Belgium."⁴² The Belgians had thus been given a guarantee only to find it being withheld from them at the penultimate moment because of its intimate link with other aspects of the security question. This was the situation as it existed coming into the Genoa Conference.

It was upon this Conference that Lloyd George was placing most of his hopes for the settlement of the European situation and the creating of stability in the world's economies. Of significant importance to Lloyd George's plans was Russia. Much has already been said about British-Russian relations indirectly as concerned with Britain's relations with France and Germany, but essential for an understanding of the Genoa Conference and the key position it played in Britain's post war policy will be an understanding of direct British-Russian relations.

Hence some cogent background will be given to place the security issue in context as it stood before the Genoa Conference. The British Government's attitude was split on the topic of Russia most notably

⁴²Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 227, 17 Mars, 1922, pp. 501-503.

between Lloyd George and his Foreign Minister Curzon. In a speech on 16 April, 1919, Lloyd George set out the fundamental principles of British policy in Russia until that time. He professed an adherence to the "fundamental principle of all foreign policies in this country . . . that you should never interfere in the internal affairs of another country, however badly governed."⁴³ Within that same speech he went on to justify the British policy in Russia. Britain was involved in Russia because it had supported Koltchak, Deniken and Kharkoff,⁴⁴ Russian military leaders who after the 1917 revolution had continued the war against Germany tying down large German forces that otherwise would have been used on the Western front. This support had aided the Allied cause.⁴⁵ To understand Britain's support now, after the war, one had to consider that these men were supported by a sympathetic population,⁴⁶ and the Bolsheviki barely controlled central Russia and in no way could be considered the official Russian Government. Lloyd George's criterion for support was that one remains loyal to one's allies. Although he was defending the policy followed until then, he also left in the conclusion of that speech an opening for the future:

⁴³D.B.F.P. I, III, Ch. 2, 309.

⁴⁴This reference was in error. No prominent Russian personality of that name was then active in Russia.

⁴⁵Although Lloyd George uses this statement to justify British policy in Russia, it is a complete historical inaccuracy. See: Ullman, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 333.

⁴⁶D.B.F.P. I, III, 309.

There are unmistakable signs that Russia is emerging from the trouble. When the time comes, when she is once more sane, calm and normal, we shall make peace in Russia. Until we can make peace in Russia, it is idle to say the world is at peace On one thing I am clear. I entreat the House of Commons and the country not to contemplate the possibility of another great war. We have had quite enough bloodshed.⁴⁷

By August of 1919 Curzon was able to summarize the Allies' role in Russia as a failure. The assessment was based on the military predicaments of both Koltchak and Deniken, regardless of the fact that since November 1917 Britain had spent some £94,000,000 on supplying Russian expeditions, all of which had been a total failure. Failure he attributed to the lack of concerted action by the Allies.⁴⁸ By the end of December 1919, British policy was undertaking drastic changes. Lloyd George summarized it in the House of Commons as pure negation, "no further expenditure, no blockade, no negotiations with the Bolsheviks."⁴⁹ Mr. Hoare, in a Foreign Office Memorandum of 22 December, 1919, stated that Britain's two main interests in the Russian problem ought to be the "(1) early establishment of stable conditions and the renewal of trade; (2) to ensure that whatever the future of Russia may be, Bolshevism shall not hurt us."⁵⁰ These were the fundamental conditions of British-Soviet Russia relations at the time of the peace conference. Britain had followed a semi-interventionist policy but within the British Cabinet, at the end of the war, distinct splits developed over the Russian policy. The end

⁴⁷D.B.F.P. I, III, 312.

⁴⁸D.B.F.P. I, III, No. 399, 519-526.

⁴⁹Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, CXXI, p.715f.

⁵⁰D.B.F.P. I, III, No. 619, 736.

of the war meant the end of the need of the White Russians, and Lloyd George had no more desire to support them. Within his Cabinet, Churchill and Birkenhead in particular loathed the Bolsheviks and pushed for continued intervention.⁵¹ Curzon, too, was in opposition to Lloyd George's more conciliatory policy, for he had to solve the problems of the Russian revolutionary tactics in Asia.⁵²

Britain and Russia were separated by wars, fears and hatred, yet they were two countries that had the most in common to gain by peace. Britain wanted peace for the political stability and trade it generated, while Russia wanted a quiet period to put its house in order, reconstruct its economy and prepare its security for an external attack. As F. S. Northedge points out:

Economic realities too, as distinct from economic theories should have brought them together, had material advantage been the sole yardstick. Russia desperately needed capital equipment which Britain, with her massive unemployment could have supplied. . . . Although in the early years Russia lacked the means to pay for such supplies her economic progress and hence her capacity to refund loans from Britain would have been accelerated by the national security which good relations with Britain would have gone far to ensure.⁵³

Instead Anglo-Russian relations remained basically bad, mainly because of numerous small incidents, especially in Persia, Afghanistan and Turkey, but also because of the major issue of the Russo-Polish War of 1920.⁵⁴

⁵¹Lewis Broad, Winston Churchill, (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc. Publishers, 1958), p. 297.

⁵²Northedge, op. cit., p. 199.

⁵³Northedge, op. cit., p. 198.

⁵⁴D.B.F.P. I, VIII, No. 83, 709.

The fear and antagonism of Britain's conservatives, aggravated by the rise of the Labour Party and social and trade union unrest, did nothing to improve the situation. Yet relations did fluctuate somewhat, though they never became good, and Russia did make some overtures to the West, mainly to attract trade and financial assistance.

It was Lloyd George who responded by opening negotiations with Soviet Russia. The logic behind this was stated in the King's speech at the closing of Parliament on December 23, 1919, which dwelt on the "grave economic position of a large part of Europe" which demanded "measures of relief and reconstruction which can only be undertaken as a result of joint action by all nations."⁵⁵ Lloyd George saw Russia as the most important country able to stabilize economic conditions in South-East Europe.⁵⁶ Although the determination of the policy took over a year and there was bitter conflict over it, not only in Cabinet but between Britain and France, Britain signed a trade agreement with Russia on March 16, 1921. By it Soviet Russia achieved de facto recognition and Britain received Russia's pledge to refrain from hostile acts and propaganda.⁵⁷ The Trade Agreement created no great interchange of trade but it was the first step in the move to reintroduce Russia into the European community. It was also a significant reconstruction step, potentially opening Russia's

⁵⁵Northedge, op. cit., p. 209.

⁵⁶The Economist, Vol. 94, 18 February, 1922, p. 289.

⁵⁷Louis Fischer, The Soviets in World Affairs, (New York: 1951), p. 213.

granaries and, again potentially, creating a massive market for Europe's industrial goods.⁵⁸

The culminating point of Lloyd George's Post-war policies may be seen as the Genoa Conference. This was an international conference of over thirty nations convened on 10 April, 1922, with the single-minded purpose of stabilizing the European situation by restoring peace and prosperity. Lloyd George made this very clear in the discussion over a vote of confidence, on the Genoa Conference in the House of Commons, April 3, 1922:

The Conference has been called to consider the problem of the reconstruction of economic Europe, devastated and broken into fragments by the devastating agency of war. Europe, the richest of all continents, the continent which possesses the largest amount of accumulated wealth and certainly the greatest machinery for the production of wealth, the largest aggregate of human beings with highly civilized needs and with highly civilized means of supplying those needs and therefore Europe, the best customer in the world has been impoverished by the greatest destruction of capital that the world has ever witnessed. If European countries had gathered together their mobile wealth accumulated by centuries of industry and thrift onto one pyramid and then set fire to it, the result could hardly have been more complete. International trade has been disorganized through and through. The recognized medium of commerce, exchange based upon currency, has become almost worthless and unworkable; vast areas, upon which Europe has hitherto depended for a large proportion of its food supplies and raw materials, completely destroyed for all purposes of commerce. Nations instead of cooperating to restore, are broken up by suspicions and creating difficulties and new artificial restrictions. Great armies are ready to march and nations already over-burdened with taxation have to bear the additional taxation which the maintenance of these huge armaments to avoid suspected dangers render necessary.⁵⁹

⁵⁸Churchill saw little prospect of trade with Russia exercising an important influence in Great Britain for the next 2 or 3 years. Cab. 21 (22) of 28 March, 1922; see also Meeting of the Conference of Ministers, 28 March, 1922, both in Cab. 23/30.

⁵⁹Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), Vol. 152, 3 April, 1922, p. 1886.

Lloyd George here recognized the complexity of the problems in Europe and enunciated the significance of the work of the Genoa Conference. The fact that he saw the direct correlation between British and European economic problems is also plain, for he stated that "it is our duty to see it is the establishment of complete peace throughout the whole of Europe, with a view to dealing with the serious problems of trade and unemployment which are confronting us at home at this moment."⁶⁰ The conditions and reasons for the calling of the Genoa Conference existed. Through it, Lloyd George was to attempt to lift the whole issue of reparations on to the higher plane of European reconstruction both politically and economically.

The fact that Britain's security policy had been directly shaped by her domestic conditions had led, in the post-war period, to consistent Anglo-French disputes over reconstruction. The Genoa Conference was Lloyd George's attempt to circumvent matters as they had stood, and interweave French security with a policy to rectify Britain's domestic woes. The Genoa Conference was thus part of a two-pronged British policy to restore and stabilize the world situation. In Lloyd George's view, "As the Washington Conference is establishing peace in the great West, I am looking forward to the Genoa Conference to establish peace in the East."⁶¹ The Genoa Conference was to be the focal point for all of Britain's post-war policy, and in the end that upon which its success or failure hinged.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 1903.

⁶¹ J. Saxon Mills, op. cit., p. 21.

For Lloyd George, Russia was an integral part of the settlement he sought at Genoa.⁶² It was believed that Russia offered not only huge potential as a market, but also was indispensable to the redevelopment of Europe.⁶³ With its reintroduction into the international system, Lloyd George also hoped European relations would be normalized and conditions created for an equilibrium in Europe. Lloyd George's own political position within Britain was far from strong.⁶⁴ He was hoping for a success at Genoa to bolster his political fortunes, but hopes for that were further dimmed by Poincaré in February. On 1st February, 1922, Poincaré issued a memorandum which set out his attitude towards the Genoa Conference. He insisted upon preventing any extension of the outline agenda agreed to at the Cannes Conference. He also interpreted the articles within the agenda in the narrowest possible manner so that the questions of reparations, disarmament and any other matters arising out of the Treaties of Peace, were excluded from discussion.⁶⁵ Poincaré's attitude had been hardened by the nationalist fervour that had rejected Briand on 12 January and brought him into power. Yet France was committed to the Conference by Briand and was compelled to participate in it. Having stated his views on 1 February, yet remaining committed to the Conference, Poincaré went on to reinforce his point of view on 25 February. On that

⁶²Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 34, 4 Jan. 1922, pp. 118-120.

⁶³"Notes on Importance of Russia in European Reconstruction" by G. F. Wise, 23 March 1922, in Lloyd George Papers, F/149/3/11.

⁶⁴Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George A Diary, (ed.), A. J. P. Taylor, (London: 1971).

⁶⁵Memorandum du Government Francais Au Sujet de la Conference de Genes, No. 4, Fevrier 1, 1922, pp. 18-22, in; Ministere des Affaires Etrangeres; Documents Diplomatiques: Conference Economique Internationale de Genes, 9 Avril-19 Mai 1922.(Paris: 1922).

date, he met Lloyd George at Boulogne and secured agreement "on the political guarantees to be secured in order to prevent encroachment either on the rights of the League of Nations or on the Treaties signed in France after the Peace or on the rights of the Allies to Reparations."⁶⁶ Lloyd George was forced to accept this stringent interpretation of the Cannes terms for Poincaré made them the conditions upon which France could participate.⁶⁷

These reservations were to cast a shadow over the Genoa Conference whose raison d'etre had been to restore the economic stability of Europe. It appeared impossible to reject the French pre-conditions and still have them attend. Lloyd George was still willing to try and resolve Europe's problems through this conference inspite of so much dedicated opposition. The virtual revolt of his conservative back-bench supporters further weakened Lloyd George's position. His threat to resign⁶⁸ which he had been contemplating for some time, was to bring Austen Chamberlain to his defence, making it evident to the Conservative back-benchers that at this time there was no alternative leader. The revolt was prevented, but Lloyd George's position was precarious.⁶⁹

Although Lloyd George obtained his way there was a decided split in his government between himself, Curzon and Churchill. The Conservatives

⁶⁶Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1920-23, p. 27.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 26.

⁶⁸27 February. See: Cowling, op. cit., p. 156.

⁶⁹For the unrest in the Conservative Party see Ibid., pp. 131-173; see also Riddell, op. cit., p. 365.

were not in favour of the negotiations. Lloyd George, because of this, before the Genoa Conference, spent time with all members of his ministry explaining his position.⁷⁰ The Conservatives were to acquiesce but for the first time they put limitations upon Lloyd George. There would be no formal recognition of Russia unless the Cannes conditions were accepted in substance, and the Prime Minister also agreed to give the House of Commons an opportunity to ratify the conclusions reached at Genoa.⁷¹ The Conference, by virtue of its prior arrangements, had been much more concerned with Europe, while now the basic orientation was more with security, than reconstruction. Lloyd George's position at the beginning of the Conference was weak and he needed a success to restore his sagging authority. At Genoa Lloyd George's actions were to be partially controlled by the Conservatives. Birkenhead attended the Conference as a watch dog over Lloyd George. As A. J. Sylvester outlines: "He had there his own yacht and had decided to call in at Genoa during a cruise in the Mediterranean and in Genoa he remained during the six weeks that the Conference lasted."⁷²

The Conference had an inauspicious beginning. The Americans did not attend, their ostensible reason being that it was going to be a political and not purely an economic or financial conference.⁷³

⁷⁰T. Jones, op. cit., p. 195.

⁷¹Ibid., pp. 196-197.

⁷²A. J. Sylvester, op. cit., p. 80.

⁷³Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.), V, Vol. 152, 3 April, 1922, p. 924.

Poincaré too, was absent,⁷⁴ and so was Lenin, mainly for reasons of health, although the reason given was that "Citizen Lenin" was busy coping with the Russian famine.⁷⁵ Lloyd George as at most previous international conferences, was the most noteworthy figure, and hence it was around him and his actions that success revolved.

The conditions leading up to the Conference had not made success look likely for Lloyd George, yet he was hopeful. He believed that Lenin's New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) entailed a reconsideration of the Bolshevik's position towards foreign capitalism,⁷⁶ and hence that there was room to negotiate. In truth the Russians had come to the Conference willing to make compromises. This conciliatory attitude was brought out in several messages sent to the Allied government before and during the Conference. The telegram accepting the invitation to attend the Genoa Conference ended with the statement, "The Soviet Government will enter the Genoa Conference with the firm intention to engage in close economic co-operation with every state which will give a reciprocal guarantee as to the inviolability of their internal political and economic organizations."⁷⁷

⁷⁴The official reason for Poincaré not attending was that at this time Millerand was paying an official visit to the French dominions in North Africa. M. Poincaré, the French Premier, was thus prevented from personally attending the conference for both Heads of State could not be outside France at the same time.

⁷⁵Fischer, op. cit., p. 231.

⁷⁶Fischer, op. cit., p. 232; cf. also Lord Riddell, op. cit., p. 368.

⁷⁷Cmd. 1637/1922, Miscellaneous No. 2 (1922), Telegram from M. Chicherin, Moscow, to the Governments of Great Britain, France and Italy, respecting the Genoa Conference.

Although the Russians adhered to the ideals of the Conference, they saw little hope for its success, and this was soon to prove true. The German delegation was equally pessimistic, but hopeful. They realized that in Lloyd George they had a strong spokesman for the revision of the Versailles Treaty to provide a just peace. Dr. Rathenau, the German Foreign Minister was to sum up his views of what the Genoa Conference would be like when he stated that "Genoa is . . . a conference from which the chief creditor of the world stays away, at which the reparations question cannot be dealt with . . . at which the Russian situation will get more attention than that of Germany."⁷⁸ He did not see much hope for Germany in the Conference and his prophecy of the main problems were to become only too true.

The conditions set out at the Cannes Conference before Soviet Russia could be recognized were to become the major stumbling block of the Conference.⁷⁹ The actual work of the Genoa Conference was broken down into six committees, with the last five dependent for their success on the results of the first committee. The first committee dealt with the crucial question of Russia and the conditions for its acceptance back into international politics. Basic agreement was reached over nearly all of the points, with the Russians making a wide range of concessions. Yet the Belgians created a major stumbling block. They insisted upon the

⁷⁸David Felix, Walter Rathenau and The Weimar Republic, (London: 1971), p. 130; the chief creditor nation of the world was the U.S.A.

⁷⁹"Text of the Resolution of the Supreme Council calling the Genoa Conference," International Conciliation, No. 171, (January 6, 1922), p. 47.

integral restitution of foreign owned private property in Russia.⁸⁰ Until this point and even to a degree after it, there was room for negotiation, and rumours to the effect that Russia would make a settlement circulated around Genoa. Unfortunately any further hope for Britain of success was ended on April 16, 1922, with the signing of the Russo-German Treaty at Rapallo.⁸¹

Since early in 1920 the Germans and Russians had been cooperating in two general areas, that of matters of daily necessity and the greater ambitions of 'Real politik'. The Germans were becoming worried about the course of the Russian negotiations with the assembled European powers. Their worries had extenuating circumstances in that they firmly believed that French and British public opinion would prevent any real reparation relief. Too, Article 116 of the Versailles Treaty specifically reserved Russian claims for reparations from Germany and this could become an additional burden if the Russians could restore their international position. Russia would then be in a position to claim some reparations. The Russo-German Treaty had been negotiated for some time, but the Germans now wanted to announce it, and did. The principal points were a "mutual renunciation of Reparations; a renunciation on the German side of compensation for losses incurred by German nationals in Russia in consequence

⁸⁰Cmd. 1667/1922, No. 2, 15 April, 1922, p. 25.

⁸¹Cmd. 1667/1922, Part 1, First Commission B, Documents Relating to the Russo-German Treaty, pp. 51-52.

of the socialization of private property; a resumption of consular and diplomatic relations; a mutual application of the 'most favoured nation' principle; and a mutual facilitation of trade."⁸² The treaty came as a shock to the Genoa Conference and the world. France immediately put her army on alert and Lloyd George was more than annoyed.⁸³

The Genoa Conference was to continue for another month, but the Treaty of Rapallo made the French almost intolerable. The French saw the Russo-German alliance as a counter-move to the military conventions between France, Belgium and Poland which had been negotiated after the Treaty of Versailles. They were to demand a British security guarantee for Poland.⁸⁴ With the English unwilling to give France a security guarantee against indirect aggression the conference was deadlocked with little chance for any success.

The signing of the Treaty of Rapallo had in fact signalled the failure of Lloyd George's dream of a reconstituted, reconstructed Europe, returned to healthy normal relations with trade to encourage prosperity and end unemployment. The Genoa Conference was to have found a way out of the blind alley into which reparations had led European statesmen in 1921. Through it Lloyd George had hoped to place the reparations problem on a new footing, by restoring the prosperity of Europe without interfering with the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles as interpreted by the

⁸²Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs 1920-1923, p. 30.

⁸³Cmd. 1667/1922, B, Russo-German Treaty No. 2, Note to the German Delegation, 18 April, 1922, pp. 53-54.

⁸⁴Cmd. 1667/1922, p. 53.

British. His failure, although not obvious at that moment, marked the end for his post-war security policy. Failure could be attributed to the divergence of personalities, or the Cannes Conference pre-conditions, Briand's fall from power, or the Treaty of Rapallo, but in the end, it was a failure. Lloyd George also in not obtaining the great public solution to Britain and Europe's problems, was not able to enhance his popularity at home and bolster his political support. Now it was Poincaré's turn to control European affairs. His proposals were to secure reparations, by coercing Germany under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles as interpreted by French, not British jurists. The only satisfaction Lloyd George was to receive from the Genoa Conference was the publication of his Fontainebleau Memorandum of March 25, 1919, which forewarned France at the Paris Peace Conference that unduly harsh treatment of Germany and Russia would only have the effect of driving them into each other's arms.⁸⁵ It was small reward.

Lloyd George's plan of arresting Europe's decay, normalizing Russian relations with the rest of Europe and restoring Germany while at the same time arresting France's security complex by guaranteeing her security was a grand and elaborate scheme. He was the only man who could have attempted it. Not only was France not ready for the Genoa Conference, but neither was most of the Coalition Party which Lloyd George led, or the United States; and in the ultimate analysis so much of British policy was dependent on the United States. The first hopeful step towards reinvolving the

⁸⁵Northedge, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

United States in world and European affairs had been taken at the Washington Conference. Yet the United States was by no means active in European affairs by April-May, 1922.

American participation could have greatly aided the outcome of the Genoa Conference. Albert Thomas was to point out the relationship:

1. the necessity for reconstruction and the benefits which would accrue;
2. reconstruction is impossible without finance;
3. finance is impossible without the United States;
4. the U.S.A. is impossible without a reduction in the European armaments.⁸⁶

Poincaré was not about to lead the French into a disarmament program, to gain America's aid to rejuvenate Germany, and reintroduce Russia into Europe. Lloyd George had been able to identify the pieces of the puzzle, but he was not able to put them together, at least within the time he had. The end result of the Genoa Conference was the widening of the rift between Britain and her allies, with no solution to Britain's ever-increasing economic woes.

Curzon's timetable of 19 March, 1922, for the discussion of a British security guarantee had effectively terminated one phase of the negotiations with the French. The failure of the Genoa Conference brought forward once again the question of the British pre-conditions for the reopening of security negotiations set out at the Cannes Conference. Before relinquishing hope of achieving an immediate security guarantee from Britain, Poincaré reopened negotiations.

⁸⁶Jones, op. cit., p. 195.

The French Ambassador in London was instructed once again to raise the question of a security guarantee with Curzon. Because Curzon was seriously ill, Saint-Aulaire approached Balfour, who was substituting at the Foreign Office. Balfour described the French scheme as "another international arrangement, on the lines of the Little Entente, so that within the framework of the League of Nations, there should be a subordinate League, designed to secure the same peaceful objects."⁸⁷ Balfour studied the history of the French proposal and in his reply of 13 June, 1922, reiterated what Lloyd George had made clear to Briand at Cannes, that the conclusion of a security pact was dependent "on the previous settlement of various questions at issue between the two governments." Balfour stated that this was still the British attitude and that the particular questions to be settled were "the economic reconstruction of Europe, peace with Turkey and the internationalization of Tangiers."⁸⁸ From this point on, Poincaré's attitude was to become much more obdurate. On 16 June, 1922, he stated that he saw no reason for the pact for he "considered it a mystification without any real value, since if circumstances arose such as occurred in 1914 and Belgium and France were invaded by Germany, England in her own interests, would be obliged to take the same action as then."⁸⁹

⁸⁷Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 46, 30 May, 1922, p. 164: On the 23 May, 1922 Churchill had wondered in Cabinet if French fear of losing the guarantee could be used as a lever against France on the subject of reparations. Lloyd George stated that Poincaré was not interested in it. See Cab. 29 (22) of 23 May, 1922, Cab. 23/30.

⁸⁸Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 47, 13 June, 1922, p. 165.

⁸⁹Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 48, 16 June, 1922, pp. 166-167.

The Belgian Government in June was also pressing the British for the completion of their security guarantee. Sir Eyre Crowe was forced to answer as he had earlier, that the guarantee might only be finalized after that which Britain might give France. On this occasion he gave one additional reason for Britain's refusal to proceed, namely that there would be Parliamentary difficulties with this type of agreement, which the government did not want to encounter twice.⁹⁰

Although British efforts to stabilize Europe through security negotiations with France or Belgium, or a general economic conference, had failed, the Cabinet did not give up completely. Rather, a new initiative was taken to draw America back into Europe to aid in providing some form of equilibrium. The British Cabinet on 16 June, 1922, concluded that negotiations should be started over the Anglo-American debt question. The Cabinet's logic was that they were "mainly interested in reaching a settlement in Europe and this settlement could not be effected until the reparations question had been settled," for which America was needed.⁹¹

On 5 July Lloyd George together with Bonar Law, Chamberlain and Churchill held a luncheon conversation with the former American President Robert Taft, and the United States Ambassador in London, Colonel Harvey. In this conversation, Lloyd George stressed that America could do "a great deal for Europe without lending a single cent more to any European people. What was needed was her detached and impartial moral influence." He also

⁹⁰Docs. Dipl. Belg., No. 228 & 229, 12 & 14 Juin, 1922, pp. 503-506.

⁹¹Cab. 32(22) of 16 June, 1922, Cab. 23/30.

noted that:

France was almost beyond any appeal to reason and would certainly respond to none at the present moment except possibly from the United States. She was consumed by hatred of Germany going back 400 years and she could not believe that the advice of other European powers was not prompted by some selfish interests. This was not the case with advice coming from the United States. The United States was in a position to act as an umpire or an arbitrator whose impartiality and goodwill all Europe was ready to admit.⁹²

The Americans also made their position clear. The Administration wanted the Anglo-American debt question cleared out of the way to enable the two countries "to stand together as the only creditor powers in the world in dealing with the rest. This was the initial basis of Anglo-American co-operation in dealing with the problems of Europe."⁹³

The impotence of the Coalition Government in its dealings with Poincaré was shown in most issues. On the 3 August, 1922, the Cabinet view as expressed on the question of German reparations was that, "if as seemed probable, Poincaré was determined to favour extreme measures it would on the whole be best to allow the French a free hand so that they might learn by experience . . . and that unless Poincaré substantially modified his present attitude France would have to face the consequences of isolation."⁹⁴ No more idle threat could have been voiced.

Lloyd George made his final expression about Poincaré and his attempts to negotiate with the French on the 12 August during a general discussion on German reparations. On that occasion he "emphasized the fact that there is a French election in eighteen months. This would probably bring different forces into power in France as according to all

⁹²"Notes of a Conversation," 5 July, 1922, Cab. 23/36.

⁹³Ibid., loc. cit.

⁹⁴Cab. 43(22) of 3 August, 1922, Cab. 23/30.

information he received, the Paris Press did not represent France as a whole and neither did the present Chamber." For Britain and Germany the intervening period would be a very difficult one, and that "their policy should be to try and tide over until the French elections."⁹⁵

Unfortunately for Lloyd George, his Coalition Government was not to last that long. The end came for it and the policy it had conducted on 19 October, 1922. It was odd in its happening, but possibly not unexpected. Lloyd George's political base was weak, and he was dependent upon his popularity to give him the strength to conduct his policy. Throughout 1922, Lloyd George's influence had been waning and nadir was reached with the Chanak crisis in October. The closeness to war with Turkey that this crisis had brought Britain had shocked the British, and besides the British public were scandalized by the selling of honours by the government. Yet superficially Lloyd George's position had still appeared unassailable. His election in 1918 had been the broadest of popular mandates. Behind him, even in 1922, were the established leaders of the Conservative major party, Chamberlain, Balfour, Birkenhead. Churchill, although now a Liberal Tory, supported him also. His only opponents seemed to be Baldwin and Griffith -- Boscawen, with Curzon, still undecided. Thus in a Cabinet crisis it would seem that Lloyd George's position would be secure, especially since Austen Chamberlain, Lloyd George's chief supporter, had been unanimously elected leader of the

⁹⁵"Notes of a Conference of Ministers, 12 August, 1922, Cab. 23/36.

Conservatives only in March of the previous year.⁹⁶ The discontent with Lloyd George came basically from the backbench Conservatives. Their rebellion might not have been successful had they not obtained the leadership of the retired former head of the Conservatives, Bonar Law.

On May 15, 1921, Bonar Law had been forced to resign due to ill health, and Austen Chamberlain had replaced him as leader of the Conservatives, but Law had not lost touch with politics. His open return to politics was brought about by the Chanak crisis.⁹⁷ There was also growing evidence that individual constituencies planned to run independent Conservatives against Coalition Liberals in the next election. Bonar Law did not make up his mind to attend the Carleton Club meeting of October 9, 1922, until the last moment. His attendance and speech in favour of splitting with the Coalition, decided the issue. Lloyd George was to resign the next day.

⁹⁶ Walker, op. cit., p. 93.

⁹⁷ Blake, op. cit., p. 449.

CHAPTER VI

THE AFTERMATH: SECURITY POLICY UNDER THE CONSERVATIVES

The Coalition Government was overthrown by a Conservative revolt on the 19 October, 1922. On 23 October, Bonar Law was unanimously elected leader of the Conservative Party. The same day the King requested him to form a government. On 26 October, Parliament was dissolved and a general election was fixed for 15 November. In this hurried period of seven days the reins of British policy were taken from the hands that had directed them for the last six years, and put solely into the hands of a Conservative Government to offer new direction. The most obvious changes were in the people, not in the policies, but there, too, there was change.

The policy formation process of the Conservative Government differed from that of its predecessor. Foreign policy although formed often by the Foreign Office was supposed to be government controlled. In its major outlines it was a subject decided by Cabinet and for which the Cabinet was supposed to take collective responsibility. Under Lloyd George's government this had not always been the case.¹ He, along with a select few advisors, had often determined major parts of the nation's policies. This was not to say that the concept of collective cabinet responsibility had broken down under Lloyd George, for it had not. Yet to an increasing extent under the Coalition Government, security policy as an issue had been formulated by Lloyd George informed and aided by a small appointed

¹Blake, *op. cit.*, p. 476.

group. This had not only suited Lloyd George's personality, but it had also become essential as a means to maintain his public and parliamentary support. Hence it often seemed that he was most directly responsible for much of the government's actions.

Under Bonar Law, Cabinet collective responsibility regained much of its old meaning. Policy was agreed to by the Cabinet as a whole and they were never faced with a 'fait accompli' as so often Curzon had been under Lloyd George. Bonar Law's first major problem on becoming Prime Minister was forming a Cabinet. Because of the nature of the Carlton Club meeting which brought him to power, there was a distinct party split, which could be assessed both as a strength and a weakness. Curzon, as Foreign Secretary, and Derby, as Secretary of War, along with Bonar Law himself were the only prominent survivors of the Coalition Government. Balfour, Birkenhead, Austen Chamberlain, Sir Robert Horne, Worthington-Evans and other prominent coalitionists refused to join. Elevated to Cabinet positions were the Under-Secretaries who had engineered the revolt. Amery became First Lord of the Admiralty, E.F.L. Wood President of the Board of Education and Sir Philip Lloyd-Greame President of the Board of Trade.² Stanley Baldwin, who had led the revolt against Lloyd George and who had been at the Board of Trade since April 1921, became Chancellor of the Exchequer. The problem with the Cabinet was that nearly "all the most weighty and experienced figures in the Conservative Party were in opposition to it."³ As Churchill commonly referred to it, it was the "Cabinet of the second eleven."

²Medlicott, op. cit., p. 175

³Blake, op. cit., p. 461.

To be able to form his government Bonar Law had to turn to the support of a great number of peers. The Marquess of Salisbury became Lord President of the Council, and besides Curzon at the Foreign Office there was the Duke of Devonshire as Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Derby in the War Office, Viscount Peel in the India Office.⁴ There were others; in fact, out of the thirty-seven ministers, nineteen were peers or sons of peers. What was more important was that most of the peers were also those who dealt with foreign policy.

D. C. Watt, in his book Personalities and Policies, sets out the foreign policy-making elite of the 1922-24 government as:

A. Bonar Law, Premier, 1922-23
 S. Baldwin, Exchequer, 1922-23, Premier, 1923-24
 Marquess of Salisbury, Lord President, 1922-24
 Viscount Cave, Lord Chancellor, 1922-24
 Lord Robert Cecil, Lord Privy Seal, 1923-24
 Marquess Curzon, Foreign Office, 1922-24
 L. Amery, Admiralty, 1922-24
 Earl of Derby, War Office, 1922-24⁵

On the whole these men formed a comprehensive, cohesive social elite, although Curzon, due to his experience, dominated policy on foreign matters. What was more significant for the public was the change they offered. They were an obvious Conservative, moderate élite that adhered closely to the basic tenets of traditional British foreign policy. But, as an élite, it was not composed of men of the same caliber as Lloyd George's. His élite, although focused on him, was sharp, intelligent, intuitive. He had relied on it to force ideas upon him, to energize his great policy-making abilities and then carry them out for him. The foreign policy élite in Lloyd

⁴D. C. Watt, Personalities and Policies. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1965), p. 253.

⁵Watt, op. cit., p. 253.

George's government was dependent upon him; in Bonar Law's government each was inter-dependent but it was the Foreign Office that now controlled policy. This was due to other factors also. One of Bonar Law's first moves was to abolish Lloyd George's personal secretariat⁶ and greatly restrict the Cabinet Secretariat's functions so that it became less advisory and more mechanical.⁷ In this move, the Foreign Office gained control over all matters pertaining to the League of Nations, reparations, and also in setting up the machinery for and doing the work involved in any International Conferences the Prime Minister might attend. Curzon, in fact, had insisted upon the restored position of the Foreign Office, and also its independence in conducting its policy.⁸ Lord Robert Cecil could be considered the exception and shared a direct responsibility for British policy towards the League of Nations. Both Lord Cecil's and Lord Derby's occasional interference in foreign policy were to arouse Curzon's animosities and protests.⁹

⁶Robert R. James, Memoirs of a Conservative, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), p. 139.

⁷Jones, op. cit., p. 218.

⁸Blake, op. cit., p. 482.

⁹Curzon in a letter to Bonar Law wrote that: "The quasi political activities of the W.O. are a perfect curse. You will remember that before I went to Paris Derby, without even telling the F.O. had sent over Burnett-Stuart to Paris and he had shown a W.O. memo on the whole question of peace with Turkey to Foch--many of the proposals being in violent disagreement with my policy"

Derby is particularly bad in this respect for the fancies that he is the only man who has influence with the French and that his mission in life is to vary attendance at Parisian race meetings with attempts to correct the blunders of the British Ambassador and Foreign Secretary." Quoted in Blake, op. cit., p. 489.

The Conservative government's immediate detachment from Lloyd George's structural power mechanisms, the secretariats, and the forming of a Cabinet largely devoid of any of Lloyd George's old cronies, and the fact that it was a Conservative government alone, and distinctly so, created in the public image something completely different from the former governments. This was to be a positive factor for the new government and for British policy.

Within Britain, opinion upon the Versailles Treaty had become much more odious. This was aided by the writing of J. M. Keynes and especially his work, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, but general opinion "became more hostile to the Treaty, as pacifists, convinced that war could never bring any good, demonstrated that the peace which followed a war could never bring good, the Tories became embarrassed by their connection with it."¹⁰ At the time of the peace it had been good politics to make Germany pay the cost of the war and to tirade about 'hanging the Kaiser' and 'German war guilt,' but these projects had not succeeded or were being questioned. Whether right or wrong, they had failed, and the Tory, a man who conceives of himself as a 'practical man' who was seldom responsible for failures, had no desire to be associated with them and hence found it essential to find a scape-goat.¹¹ This was easy enough, for it was a Coalition government headed by Lloyd George, a Liberal, that had

¹⁰R. B. McCallum, Public Opinion and the Just Peace, (London: 1944), p. 117.

¹¹James, op. cit., p. 305.

negotiated the Treaty. He became responsible directly and solely for it and most of the other failures of the period of his tenure of government. Bonar Law's government was a pure, untainted Conservative administration and hence the Party could claim a clean slate, a new start. Any historical tracing of these claims showed that it was not Lloyd George who called for 'hanging the Kaiser' or 'make Germany pay for the war'. Most could be traced to his Conservative colleagues but, in the public eye, it had been Lloyd George who had dominated and for whom they had voted in 1918. Because he was Prime Minister, and because he had so over-shadowed his colleagues, he was to blame. The contention that Bonar Law's government was excused of most of the blame for the post-war period was partially substantiated by the 15 November 1922 election results.¹²

Stanley Baldwin attributed the Conservative's election success to a short statement by Lloyd George which describes Bonar Law as 'honest to the verge of simplicity.' By no means could this statement have caused the victory but it did summarize the nation's mood, less foreign antics, more progress in solving Britain's domestic problems. Although the Conservative's policy objectives were similar to Lloyd George's, it was in the manner in which they carried out these policies that they differed with the former Coalition government. Bonar Law realized that the most

¹²James, op. cit., p. 137: The Conservatives held almost precisely their number at the dissolution. With 345 seats, they had a majority of 77 over the other parties combined. Labour was 142 seats; the Liberals with almost the same vote (but almost 70 more candidates) only 117. All the national Liberal leaders were defeated except Lloyd George. Taylor, op. cit., p. 198.

pressing problem facing his government was unemployment. He made it clear that it could only be improved by improving the national prosperity. This might be achieved gradually by a reduction of taxes but it certainly could not come overnight.¹³ The Conservative policy was moderate but steady action. One of Bonar Law's solutions for Britain's economic woes was to impose drastic economies in Government spending in order to reduce taxation. Another was to convene a conference of the Empire Prime Ministers to consider the best way of promoting trade and economic development in the Empire.¹⁴

Bonar Law's government, as Lloyd George's before, was searching for a means to solve Britain's problems and restore peace and tranquility. Unemployment remained high, although by the end of 1922 the worst of the recession was over. There were then only one million unemployed. Yet there was no sign of increasing exports to show that relief was on the way. Clearly the policy Lloyd George had followed, of European economic reconstruction facilitated by Russian re-entry into the international system, had not been acceptable to the French and was not popular among the Conservatives, and trade figures had not improved through his highly publicised efforts in the international field.

The Conservatives under Bonar Law had been left several distinct

¹³Blake, op. cit., p. 476.

¹⁴Blake, op. cit., p. 468.

problems by the collapse of Lloyd George's policies.¹⁵ One of the most significant was that France, from the moment of the failure of the Genoa Conference, was headed towards a rupture of its relations with Germany which would result in the Ruhr occupation. This was almost pre-determined by the burden of reparations that Germany was forced to bear and by France's determination to enforce the Treaty of Versailles to the letter. Of importance also was the fact that many of the French rightists and militarists had never been reconciled to the Versailles settlement of the Rhineland question.

Another significant problem was the Russian and German rapprochement. The separation of these two nations had been a prime premise of British foreign policy since 1918. Lloyd George had feared a connection between Russian bolshevism and Germany. One of the justifications for his policy of restoring Germany was to prevent and destroy any hopes of a Bolshevik revolution. The same argument had been used to slow down the process of demobilization of the German army. The detachment of Germany from Russia had been a consistent feature of British policy, yet it had broken down at the Genoa Conference. It was the Conservative government which was to have the problem of once again reorientating Germany away from Russian influence.

¹⁵As this thesis focusses on the West European Security Question, it is not intended here to deal with the Near Eastern Crisis which, together with the resultant Lausanne Conference, occupied a great deal of Cabinet's time. However, it has to be noted that, in Curzon's mind at least, agreement with France on Near Eastern questions "was a prelude to clearing the whole board" (i.e., "the board of our foreign difficulties with France in regard to Europe"). See his statement to Cabinet, Annex IV to Cabinet Conclusion, 1 November 1922, Cab. 23/32.

The third major problem that the Conservative government was faced with was of a lesser political complexity than the other two, and its resolution owed something to policies initiated by the Lloyd George government. The Washington Conference at the end of 1921 and the beginning of 1922 had reestablished good relations between the United States and Britain. The coalition government's slow progress towards arranging the payment of Britain's war debt to the United States facilitated a continued improvement of relations. Yet the opening of negotiations on the debt and the real move to reinvolve the United States in European affairs, and particularly in reconstruction, were actions of the successive Conservative governments of Bonar Law and Stanley Baldwin.

The Conservative government did not react to these problems with the adventurous haste and disquieting forms of conference diplomacy that had characterised the last year of Lloyd George's government. Theirs was a different approach, which recognized the element of time in negotiations and returned to the more characteristic form of diplomatic negotiation carried out through the Foreign Office.¹⁶ There was not the haste of public politicians in conference, nor the inadequacy of knowledge or preparedness that characterized some of Lloyd George's negotiations.

In Europe the major problem the Conservative government was to face was the Ruhr crisis of 1923. It was the culmination of the French

¹⁶Curzon told Cabinet on 1 November 1922 that Lloyd George "had dominated the scene at the various Conferences, not only owing to his great experience, but also owing to his superior cleverness." This had "rankled more and more with the French. At every Conference his personality had proved a great strength but in the international sphere his success had thus resulted in a weakness." Annex IV to Cabinet Conclusion of 1 November 1922, Cab. 23/32.

nationalist policy under Poincaré that had its inception at Cannes in the public furor that forced Briand's resignation, and gained control after Lloyd George's failure at Genoa. Bonar Law's government always tried to build a base so that its policies could be conducted from a position of strength. It recognized the inadequacy of its power position, especially the significant fact that the Dominions were against any involvement in Europe. In the Ruhr crisis, Bonar Law's government took for itself a critical, untainted approach. France and Belgium went about their policy of occupation, while Britain did all in her power to isolate France on this particular issue and turn opinion against her. This gave the appearance, for a time, of a basic Anglo-German alignment against France. At the same time, there was increased hostility within America to the French occupation, and a renewed effort by the United States Secretary of State, Hughes, to find a solution to the European problem.

What has been given here is a simplistic analysis of the general approach that Conservative government took towards Europe. It did not focus on one person or conference for success, as had been the case under the Coalition government. Rather it was a reformed policy, built on a realistic appreciation of power and not on a facade or illusion. It pivoted on four points: First, the isolation of France on the Ruhr issue, not as an end in itself, but as an essential prelude to the restoration of a genuine Entente; second, the reintroduction of the United States into European affairs¹⁷ in order to bring pressure to bear on France in favour of a conciliatory and cooperative policy towards Germany; third,

¹⁷ It is noteworthy in this connection that Cabinet in April, 1923, regretted the absence of the United States from the second session of the Lausanne Conference "on general grounds", Cab. 19 (23) of 12 April, 1923, Cab. 23/45.

the isolation of Soviet Russia, which Curzon believed "to be in a position of special and inveterate hostility towards the British Empire";¹⁸ and fourth, the drawing of Germany into a close alignment with the West, and especially the severance of its ties with Russia.

Two phases of this policy were opened immediately after Bonar Law's election confirmation on 15 November, 1922. On 18 November, Curzon elicited from Poincare a pledge that an allied united front would be maintained vis-a-vis Turkey at the Lausanne Conference. Two days later, he extracted a similar promise from Mussolini, the new Italian premier. At the Lausanne Conference itself, Curzon was the preeminent figure. He was by far the most knowledgeable diplomat as well as the most able debater. In a sense he dominated the conference and in its outcome he restored British prestige, settled most points of Anglo-Turkish tension, and brought a measure of security in the Mediterranean region.¹⁹ In particular the agreement on the Straits, by controlling Russian egress from the Black Sea, in time of war, relieved Britain's anxieties over the security of the Suez Canal. Hence for the time being there was no need for Britain to pursue an active security policy to defend its vast interests and responsibilities in the area.

Curzon's success automatically meant that French and Italian attempts to limit British influence in the Mediterranean were defeated.

¹⁸Statement to Cabinet, 1 November, 1922, Annex IV to Cabinet Conclusion of 1 November, 1922, Cab. 23/32.

¹⁹Harold Nicolson, Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925, (London: 1934), pp. 281-351. See also W. M. Medlicott, Contemporary England 1914-1964, (London: 1967), p. 181.

Possibly more significant was the fact that Curzon's success had driven a wedge between the 'unholy intimacy between Angora and Moscow.' This was the first and most significant step in the Conservative government's restriction of 'bolshevik' advances. By restoring British prestige, limiting the Russian scope of action and removing a point of Anglo-French friction, Curzon had given the Conservative government its first success.

Stanley Baldwin was not to be as successful as Curzon but at least he was to accomplish his task of settling the British war debt to the United States. It is not necessary here to go into the complicated technical details of Baldwin's negotiations in America in January 1923. The settlement he arrived at was not as favourable as had been hoped. In the middle of the month the British Cabinet was averse to the terms Baldwin was negotiating, but over Bonar Law's strenuous opposition approved the terms at the end of the month.²⁰ Perhaps the warning given by Secretary of State Hughes at the final meeting at Washington, "that if the debt dragged on to become an issue in the Presidential election, the United States would not even begin to help Europe towards economic reconstruction,"²¹ was of great importance.

Bonar Law feared that if Britain got nothing from France by way of settlement of war debts, and little from Germany in the form of Reparation, the effect of paying off the American debt would pose too heavy a

²⁰Cabs. 2(23) and 5(23) of 15 and 31 January, 1923, respectively; Cab. 23/45. See also Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., pp. 138-149, and Blake, op. cit., pp. 490-496.

²¹Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., p. 143.

burden on Britain for the next sixty-three years. There would be no chance of any reduction of taxation and the cost of living would be 80% above prewar.²² Most of Bonar Law's cabinet opposed him, fearing that the Americans would market the negotiable bonds they held as collateral on the debt, and that Anglo-American relations would suffer. Both Lord Derby and Lord Cave strongly supported Baldwin.²³ All British worries over the debt would have disappeared if Britain's European debtors had been prepared to meet their obligations. In the end, Bonar Law was to give in to the desires of his cabinet, and arrangements and further negotiations were carried out, lasting until July, concerning the funding of the debt. On 6 July, the agreement was signed and the war debt with America was settled.

Stanley Baldwin, in a speech in the House of Commons on 16 February, 1923, stated that one purpose of settling the American debt was to show that Britain, "in the midst of all this maelstrom stood by the sanctity of contracts." Later in his speech he expressed the hope that the resolution of the Debt problem would also settle international economic conditions and stabilize international trade. American goodwill was basic to British policy and a permanent quarrel over any issue was unthinkable.²⁴ One result of the solution of the Anglo-American debt question had indeed by then already appeared, for Secretary of State Hughes had enquired

²²Middlemas and Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²³Middlemas and Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

²⁴Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.) V, 1923, Vol. 160, p. 559.

informally whether the United States Government could do anything to ease the situation in Europe. The British Government on 15 February replied that "there is still no official intimation that either France or Germany would welcome intervention, but signs are not lacking that such a move may soon be opportune, and that Her Majesty's Government are most grateful for suggestion of U.S. help. Ambassador is reminded that premature move may aggravate rather than ease the situation."²⁵

Hence early in the new year Bonar Law's government had made two vital steps towards the establishment of a successful British policy; British prestige had been resolved at Lausanne, and Anglo-American friendship had been strengthened with the prospect that the United States would begin to help Europe towards economic reconstruction.

While Curzon and Baldwin were negotiating at Lausanne and Washington, restoring British influence and creating a basis from which to conduct a British policy towards Europe, Bonar Law was once more broaching the major problem of reparations with the French. In early December a Conference of the Allied Prime Ministers was held in London specifically on reparations. The Conference was totally unsuccessful, but a further meeting was scheduled for Paris on 2 January. At the Paris Conference, Bonar Law presented a proposal for "Germany's total liability to be fixed at £2500 millions and that Germany should be excused from any payments for the next four years, so that she might have a chance to restore her economic condition and her credit."²⁶ Poincaré would not even accept

²⁵Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

²⁶Blake, op. cit., p. 486.

Bonar Law's proposals as a basis for negotiation, and made it clear that France was going to occupy the Ruhr.²⁷ On January 4, 1923, an absolute deadlock was reached between Bonar Law and Poincaré, and the two statesmen parted, with 'an agreement to disagree.' Despite the impossibility of any accord, nothing was to be changed in the friendship of the British and French people.²⁸

In essence then, one of the cardinal points of British policy, that of better relations with France, was to be put to the test. Bonar Law described himself as "pro-French."²⁹ Baldwin stressed his belief in the need for Anglo-French amity and showed the connection between this and European security, when he told the House of Commons on 16 February that "desiring above all things, as we do, peace and the settlement of Europe we believe, as far as we can see at present, that we are more likely to attain those ends by maintaining our friendship with our old Ally, in the hope and belief that the time may come when our services as mediator and helper may be possible, and may be effective."³⁰ Curzon was also positive in his attitude that a "clear and solid understanding between France and ourselves is an essential condition" for the re-establishment of peace in Europe.³¹ Good relations, in fact an Entente with France, were as

²⁷ Lord D'Abernon, An Ambassador of Peace: The Year of Crisis, Vol. II, (London:1929), pp. 150-151.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 151: Cabinet stated "their satisfaction that, in spite of the impossibility of reaching agreement on the questions before the Conference there has been no breach between the British and French Governments." Cab. 1(23), 11 January, 1923, Cab. 23/45.

²⁹ Blake, op. cit., p. 485.

³⁰ Parliamentary Debates, (H. of C.) V, 1923, Vol. 160, pp. 554-555.

³¹ Ronaldshay, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 345.

much a part of Conservative as of Coalition policy. Yet the stumbling block of their relations with Germany was to remain. The conduct of those relations had passed to Poincaré after the Genoa Conference, but the Ruhr crisis brought Anglo-French tensions to a head.

On 11 January, the French and Belgium governments began the process of occupying the Ruhr.³² Engineers and experts were sent in, protected at first by some five divisions of French and Belgian troops, for the purpose of controlling the distribution of coal and coke, Germany having been declared in default of deliveries in 1922 by the majority of the Reparation Commission.³³ Germany reacted against the occupation with what became known as passive resistance. On 13 January, the German Government notified the Reparations Commission that it "would discontinue payment and delivery of reparations to the powers occupying the Ruhr." The Reparations Commission replied on 26 January, "that it considered as abrogated all agreements with Germany since May 5, 1921, and the full amount fixed by that schedule of payments was due."³⁴ A deadlock ensued,

³²The Ruhr district is situated on the Right Bank of the Rhine, in the valley of the River Ruhr. It covers an area of 3,600 square miles and had a population of about 5,000,000. The district is the largest industrial centre of Germany, producing, 1913, 115 million tons of coal, 9 million tons of cast iron and 10 million tons of steel; that is, about 70% of the total coal output of the country and 50% of the total steel and cast iron output respectively.

³³Kellor, Security Against War, Vol. 1, (New York: 1924), p. 416: The Reparation Commission was formed of Britain, France, Belgium and Italy and chaired by France. Hence France and Belgium with the chairman's vote could always outvote Britain. This is in fact what happened in 1922 with Britain giving a minority vote but no formal protest. No formal protest was raised against the French occupation of the Ruhr, although the day before it occurred the Americans withdrew their troops from the Rhine.

³⁴Ibid., p. 416.

with little violence in the beginning, although wherever the French were there was a complete shut down by the Germans of all their services.

Over the next few months, tension was to increase and the occupation was to worsen. Anglo-French relations sank to their lowest ebb, and all serious talks about a security pact were ended. Until May the British government was to do very little, and received much adverse publicity on this account. Poincaré adamantly stuck to the contention that he would only talk to Britain on a security pact and not the Ruhr crisis, which he saw as a perfectly legal manœuvre.³⁵ Poincaré was demanding full reparations and French security as well. This was an impossibility in British eyes. Anglo-French negotiations were certainly not facilitated by the intense dislike which Bonar Law and Poincaré had for the other,³⁶ or the fact that Curzon similarly disliked Poincaré intensely.³⁷

³⁵Throughout July and August, 1923, the British Government made several illusions to the question of a security guarantee. The French reply was consistently that it could only be discussed as an issue separate from the question of the Ruhr. This was not satisfactory to the British. See Cmd. 2169/1924, No. 51, 52, 53, 54, of 10 July, 20 July, 30 July, 11 August, 1923, pp. 171-173. See also the statement by the French Ambassador in London that the "French Government did not regard the question of the Ruhr as in any way bound up with security, which they had not raised and did not desire to raise, since no danger could arise from the German side for many years." Cab. 36(23), 11 July, 1923, Cab. 23/46.

³⁶James, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

³⁷H. Nicolson, *King George V*, (London: 1952), p. 373; see also James Pope-Hennessy. *Lord Crewe*, (London: 1955), pp. 163-165; Curzon describes Poincaré as a "clever, hard, rigid, metallic, lawyer" with an "explosive temper;" Annex IV to Cabinet Conclusions of 1 November, 1922, Cab. 23/32.

Curzon eventually took the initiative to bring about some change. In a speech in the House of Lords on 21 April he contended that the Ruhr occupation had been a failure, but he went on to state that Germany must now give proof of her willingness to pay reparations and back this up with guarantees. Britain, he said, was prepared to give France a security guarantee as long as Germany was not dismembered, and also added that Britain would not surrender her own reparation demands. He then proceeded to outline a course of action for Germany:

I can only repeat the advice that I have again and again given to the German government, to take the first step and make an offer so as to make an impression on public opinion in the Entente countries to the effect that Germany is prepared to fulfill her obligations so far as her strength will permit. I know the French and Belgian Governments are ready, when they have such an offer before them--whether it be addressed to these two countries or to the Entente as a whole--at once to enter upon negotiations on the subject with the Government, concerned and seriously to discuss what may be proposed. In my opinion, to Germany as the creditor country falls the duty of taking the first step towards the termination of the conflict in the Ruhr.³⁸

Lord D'Abernon³⁹ has pointed out that the Germans often lacked an acute perception of world affairs, and thus frequently failed to take advantage of their opportunities. This was the case with their note of 2 May in which they replied to Curzon, who had given them an opening. Poincaré had let it be known on 26 April that no German offer could be considered that was not addressed directly to France, and he also demanded the evacuation of the Ruhr as a condition of negotiations.⁴⁰ The Germans

³⁸Parliamentary Debates (H. of L.), V., Vol. 53, 1923, pp. 782-798.

³⁹Lord D'Abernon was the British Ambassador in Berlin, and believed to be responsible for some of the initiative in German policy. See D'Abernon, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 77-78, 205-206, 217-218 and 287-289.

⁴⁰Eric Sutton (ed. transl.) Gustav Stresemann-Diaries, Letters and Papers, Vol. 1, (London: 1935), p. 64.

had the opportunity to make some extensive, conciliatory offers, with a fair degree of certainty that the French would reject them. Instead they were specific and uncompromising, giving "an offer to fix the total obligations at thirty milliard gold marks, to be raised by July, 1931; to submit to an international commission in case of default of payments the whole question of Germany's capacity to pay; and before entering into negotiations requested evacuation of the Ruhr."⁴¹ The Germans made it clear that passive resistance would continue until a settlement was reached and French troops were withdrawn from the Ruhr. This note, with its unconciliatory tone, did not create any shift in world sentiments in the German favour. The British hope had been to obtain a negotiable position from the Germans, so that they could use it against the French to create an impartial international commission to settle the reparation problem. This last point had been a part of a proposal by the American Secretary of State Hughes, of the previous December, in which he had called for a "small group, given proper freedom of action" to examine reparations . . . "Such a body would not only be expert but friendly."⁴²

Lord Curzon had been hoping for a vantage point from which Britain could force negotiations. He now renewed his efforts. On 13 May he asked the Germans to reconsider and expand their proposals. Finally on 7 June, Curzon received from the Germans the reply he wanted. It was an extensive

⁴¹Kellor, op. cit., p. 418.

⁴²Foreign Relations of the United States, 1922, Vol. II, telegram from the Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in France, December 29, 1922, p. 199.

note asking for an impartial and international body to help in settling the reparation problems, and as well it gave suitable guarantees for fulfillment.⁴³ Poincaré emphatically rejected the German offer, since it contained no promise that the Germans would abandon passive resistance.

Curzon reacted strongly to the uncompromising French position. In a note on 13 June, he attacked the French position by questioning their actions:

How long, then is the occupation to continue? And in what form? Is it to remain a purely military occupation? Or will it perhaps by stages assume the character of a police protection? Or, again, is it proposed to submit the territory to actual exploitation by or on behalf of France and Belgium?⁴⁴

This statement was forecasting Curzon's fear of France's intention. It was a direct attack upon the French attitude. Reinforcing Curzon's statement was another which declared that:

As long as the most highly developed area of German industrial life remains under military rule and is made the scene of political agitation, it is difficult to see how the economic problem can be solved. It may be possible to break Germany's power of resistance by such means; but it will be at the price of the very recovery on which the Allied policy depends for its ultimate success.⁴⁵

France, by maintaining its policy, was putting a great strain on Anglo-French relations. The German market was important to Britain's

⁴³For a complete version of the German Memorandum of June 7, see Eric Sutton, op. cit., p. 67.

⁴⁴Kellor, op. cit., p. 419.

⁴⁵Ronaldshay, op. cit. p. 356. Cabinet approved a memorandum to be sent to the French and Belgian Governments on reparations stating that, "Europe was going to pieces and, in particular (the draft announcement) should include a brief review of the depressing effect of the present impasse on British trade. The statement should indicate in addition that this was a matter of concern to the whole world, since the present economic situation reacted on every country." Cab. 35(23), 9 July, 1923, Cab. 23/46.

economic recovery, and in the period just before the Ruhr crisis was assuming increasing significance as a factor in Britain's export trade. There were other signs of tension between the British and French, and of possible warnings to the French by the British. One of the earliest warnings, with an indication that Britain might withdraw from involvement in the continent was in Baldwin's speech on foreign policy on 16 February:

It is possible, although I hope it will not happen, that we may lose for some time the European markets. If we do, that will be so much to the bad. But it would be the height of folly, in the position of the European markets of today, if those responsible for the Government of this country did not do everything in their power to increase our trade in other places and to develop other markets than those of Europe. And if the state of Europe should remain bad for many years, I believe it to be true . . . (that) this country with its inter-imperial trade and its connection with the East, would be the first country to get on to a firm basis of trade of any other country in the world.⁴⁶

The strained relationship between the two leading members of the Entente also manifested itself in fears for Britain's national security. In March 1922 there had been concern, in the Coalition government, about French air expansion. During the tension over the Ruhr, such fears were viewed in a heightened form. Cabinet, in June 1923, in determining the size and complement of the British Home Air Force, was greatly worried about France and decided on an increase that would make the R.A.F. "equal to the strongest Air Force within striking distance of this country."⁴⁷ French power on the continent was obviously becoming too much for the British. A France in control of the Ruhr and its industrial potential

⁴⁶Parliamentary Debates (H. of C.), V. Vol. 160, February 16, 1923, p. 558.

⁴⁷Cabinet 32(23) of 20 June, 1923, Cab., 32/46.

would not only be the economic master of Europe, but also its potential military strength would be greatly enhanced over its already incomparable might.

Poincaré's attitude was leading to a definite consolidating and hardening of the British cabinet view towards France.⁴⁸ This hardening of cabinet opinion was supported by the outcry of public and world opinion against the French, and was leading the British government to a more active policy. Curzon described this to Lord Crewe, British Ambassador in Paris:

The gist of it all is that we will not go on drifting any longer. Even the pro-French element in the Cabinet . . . are indignant with Poincaré, and are hot for independent action. We have shown patience, toleration, even weakness. But now we mean to move . . . you may rely upon me to go as far as is possible in keeping together the Entente. But act we must and will.⁴⁹

Curzon sent a note to Poincaré outlining proposals for securing a settlement. Its main points were that the Germans would stop their 'passive resistance' if in return France and Belgium would agree with Britain to accept the decisions of an impartial body of experts regarding Germany's capacity to pay.⁵⁰ Poincaré was to stick to his policy of the end of passive resistance before any negotiations.

This rejoinder from Poincaré elicited the strongest British note of the whole Ruhr crisis. On 11 August, Curzon sent to the French a review

⁴⁸For a complete history of the division within the cabinet and their attitude towards France and cohesion in this period, see Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., pp. 187-197.

⁴⁹Ronaldshay, op. cit., Vol. III, p. 357.

⁵⁰Kellor, op. cit., p. 420.

of the whole crisis and reiterated the British offer made by Bonar Law at the beginning of the crisis to cancel the French and Belgium debts to Britain if they would agree to reduce the sum total of German debts.⁵¹ It was a belligerent note, in regard to which the Times commented that "twenty years before (it) could not have been sent unless the Admiralty and War Office had first been alerted."⁵² It was also the first time the British had used a legal argument against the French rights to occupy the Ruhr. The surprising element now was the French reaction. As Lord D'Abernon stated in his diary, "Since August 12 their (the French) attitude towards Germany had altered; they were anxious to come to a reasonable arrangement with Germany."⁵³ Unfortunately at this moment a number of events occurred so that advantage was not taken of the situation. The most significant was the fall of the then German government led by Cuno, which was replaced by one led by Stresemann. Stresemann's government felt strengthened by the Curzon note and failed to follow up the slight opening gained. The second factor was that inflation went wild in Germany so that in November of 1923 the Gold Mark was valued at 22,300,000,000 to the pound.⁵⁴ The German middle class was ruined and an economic restoration of Germany was now essential.

The German government had a short opportunity to open up negotiations but failed to take advantage of it. On 20 August, Poincaré refuted

⁵¹Kellor, op. cit., pp. 421-422.

⁵²Cited in Middlemas and Barnes, op. cit., p. 191.

⁵³D'Abernon, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 234.

⁵⁴Nicolson, Curzon The Last Phase, p. 366.

Curzon's note in a paragraph by paragraph dissective attack. In it he reaffirmed the French legal position in occupying the Ruhr, thereby ending this attempt by the British for a solution of the Ruhr crisis. What was to shortly become obvious to Stresemann was that the policy of passive resistance to the Ruhr could not be continued. Unofficial negotiations were begun on this point and on 24 September passive resistance came to an end.⁵⁵

Curzon's note, and Poincaré's reply, marked the failure of the attempts to restore the Entente. They also signalled the point of deadlock between all parties, and this at a time when the economies of Europe had never been worse. The British efforts to bring the French and Germans together to negotiate had failed, as had also the British legal attack on the French occupation. It might have seemed that the German cessation of passive resistance might have led to negotiations, but another deadlock was quickly reached over the French insistence on the resumption of payment in kind on the pre-January 1923 standards. This was technically and financially beyond the German means. Intervention by Baldwin, the new British Prime Minister in September, produced a more cordial relationship, but did not seem to alter the problem.⁵⁶

Yet it had, for it was now that Baldwin felt ready to attempt what had been in his mind ever since the American debt settlement-- the drawing in of the United States to redress the balance of Europe.⁵⁷ In Cabinet

⁵⁵A. J. Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1924, p. 338.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 339.

⁵⁷Middlemass and Barnes, op. cit., p. 202.

on 26 September, Curzon stated "that as a result of conversations with the Prime Minister he proposed to sound the American Ambassador as to whether there would be any prospect of the appointment of an American representative on the Reparation Commission if the American Government were approached by the British Government in conjunction with their Allies."⁵⁸ Curzon himself saw little hope for this initiative, which indicated that it was obviously Baldwin's.

Because Baldwin and Curzon wanted to poll Dominion opinion at the ongoing Imperial Economic Conference a telegram, resulting from "discussion at the Imperial Conference . . . inquiring into the possibility of American cooperation in an enquiry as to the capacity of Germany to pay reparations" was not sent until 12 October. The first reply was friendly though non-committal.⁵⁹ A fuller statement was received on the 15 October, 1923, when "Mr. Hughes replied expressing agreement with the plan of appointing an international advisory commission of experts, on which no doubt, 'competent American citizens would be willing to participate.'⁶⁰ There were still some major problems, and Poincaré voiced some objections but agreement in general terms was reached by 29 October, when the French Government stated "its readiness to request the cooperation of the American Government in the examination of the reparations problem and to agree

⁵⁸ Cab. 47(23), 26 September, 1923, Cab. 23/46.

⁵⁹ Cab. 48(23), 15 October, 1923, Cab. 23/46; see also The Colonial and Imperial Conferences from 1887 to 1937. ed. Maurice Ollivier, (Ottawa: 1954), pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰ Kellor, op. cit., p. 425.

that a joint representation to that effect be made at Washington."⁶¹ This was to lead to the decision on the 30 November by the Reparations Commission to appoint two expert committees. On both of these Americans were to sit, but the major committee, whose purpose was to balance the German budget and restore its currency, was chaired by General Charles G. Dawes of the U.S.A.⁶² It was his committee report which was the basis for the Inter-Allied Conference held July and August, 1924, which set out the London Agreements upon reparations, which led to a measure of stability and peace in Europe for the next five years.

The British policy as followed by the Conservative Government first under Bonar Law and subsequently under Stanley Baldwin thus met with moderate success. It firmly established the basis on which Britain could once again conduct a European policy. It solved Britain's debt problem with America, however satisfactorily is questionable, and having removed that obstacle it was able to begin to rejuvenate Britain's trade, and as well involve America in the recovery of Europe. Whereas Lloyd George had worked indefatigably and sincerely to reach an agreement with Soviet Russia, the Conservative Government was more orientated to reintroducing the United States rather than Russia into Europe to restore the lost equilibrium. In fact the Conservative Government was frequently at odds with Soviet Russia and Cabinet seriously contemplated abrogating the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement of 1921.⁶³ Its policy of blocking Bolshevik

⁶¹Cab. 51(23), 29 October, 1923, Cab. 23/46.

⁶²Kellor, *op. cit.*, p. 429.

⁶³See Cab. 21(23), 23(23), 24(23), 25(23) and 27(23), respectively, of 25 April, 2 May, 7 May, 9 May and 25 May, 1923, Cab. 23/45.

expansion was also successful. It detached Turkey from Russia at the Lausanne Conference and through the Dawes scheme was able to reorientate Germany once again towards the West. The settlement of the reparations question was well on its way when Baldwin's government fell, and hence it can be considered that the Conservative policy was a prime mover in settling that problem and hence also restoring the British-French entente.

The security policy followed by the Conservative government, like that of the Coalition government, was based on Britain's domestic woes. Unlike Lloyd George's policy it was carried out in a more moderate manner. It operated through traditional diplomatic channels and was controlled by the Foreign Office. Curzon brooked little interference with the conduct of British policy and felt only responsible to consult the cabinet on his handling of it. As has been shown, there were few conferences and only informal meetings of the Prime Ministers, and most negotiations took place through diplomatic notes. Although a great deal of public attention was given to the Ruhr crisis, there was little focussing of hopes on any one special moment. Diplomacy was more formalized and lost some of the personal touch it had had under Lloyd George. There was a degree of isolationism within the Conservative policy, for it turned in on itself for solution and recognized the significance of the Empire. The Conservatives put their faith in the gold standard, the Empire, and a desire for close Anglo-American relations. In part this was a response to conditions in Europe, and in particular the role that France was playing, but it was also partially an aristocratic élite response to find security in trusted allies, such as the Dominions and the United States. The

League of Nations took on a greater function, partly because of the influence of Lord Robert Cecil in the cabinet after May 1923, and partly because of the excellent tool it provided to chisel away at France's security mentality. It was to produce the Draft Treaty of Mutual Guarantees as a means to achieve both disarmament and security. France accepted it but Britain rejected it because it did not believe its military services could meet the far ranging guarantees it involved.⁶⁴ The Conservatives recognized that Britain did not have the forces and could not afford to expand them to meet any expanding commitments. Other security proposals were to meet the same fate. Regarding the Dominions the Conservative government had learned the lesson of the Chanak crisis and kept them much better informed.

The Conservatives restored much of what government had lost under the forward impetus of Lloyd George. It recreated a traditional British Cabinet, destroyed the power structures that Lloyd George had erected and made government more moderate, less public, and attached to its political power, rooted from its supporters upward through its hierarchy. In both senses there were gains and losses. The Conservative Governments of this period might have been formed of the 'second eleven' as compared with the great minds in Lloyd George's Coalition governments, yet their policies although lacking in 'Georgite' initiative were much firmer in their roots than his. What also becomes apparent is that the Conservative policy was a success towards Europe where the Coalition policy was not due

⁶⁴The Implications of the Security Pact for the British Army; Public Record Office, W.O. 32/3452.

to one main factor; the reinvolvement of America in Europe. On peripheral issues such as Turkey and the conduct of the Lausanne Conference, or relations with Bolshevik Russia, Britain was strong enough to confront the opposition alone. For British policy to be successful in Europe the moderating influence of America and its massive credit supply was essential. Conservative success was based on this fact.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The simple underlying premise of British security policy for both the Coalition and the Conservative Governments, was to restore Europe's economies so as to regenerate the trade which was Britain's life substance. Britain's economy was based on trade and hence so was her security, for one of the significant facts of the First World War was that strength lay in one's industrial base as much as in one's armed forces.

In 1920, the United States withdrew from European affairs leaving Britain and France virtually alone to implement the Versailles Treaty, in which they had certain noteworthy differences. These differences, which had been so evident during the Peace Conference now became greater and more significant. British policy was fairly straight forward. As at the Paris Peace Conference, Britain wanted to find solutions to European problems which would satisfy both the Allies and Germany. These solutions, however, had to be found within the confines of the Treaty. Any outright revision of the treaty was impossible for several reasons. First, the British leaders themselves believed in Germany's responsibilities for the war and, consequently, in her obligation to pay reparations and to disarm. Second, any talk of revision would have been opposed by important (and exceedingly vocal) segments of public opinion and parliament. Third, British demands for revision would have played into the hands of the French extremists and led, almost inevitably, to France's unilateral occupation of the Ruhr.

Although revision was out of the question, Britain insisted on moderation in implementing the treaty so that a democratic German government would be able to remain in power and would willingly accept its obligations. This British policy is best and most consistently illustrated by the reparations discussions. In them Britain constantly reaffirmed that Germany must pay, yet, at the same time, demanded reasonable terms and face-to-face negotiations with Germany.

There appears to be a quite natural progression in the way in which British security policy was interpreted. Throughout the Paris Peace negotiations Britain appeared to be searching for security solely through political stabilization in Europe, and this was the sole purpose of the security guarantee. Throughout 1920 the Coalition Government believed that it could achieve stability in Europe without offering France a security guarantee. Early in 1921 the Coalition Government's attitude changed and it recognized that it was essential to offer France a security guarantee if Europe were to be stabilized.

This change in attitude was a reflection of the growing awareness by the British of the depth of fear France had of a revanchist Germany. Then at the Cannes Conference the offer of a security guarantee in exchange for French aid in European reconstruction, and certain other matters, was made, but in this case Lloyd George had overestimated the degree to which France wanted a guarantee. To be sure they wanted it, so negotiations for such a guarantee continued, but the French now tried to detach it from any preconditions, particularly European reconstruction. Lloyd George stuck to his basic set of preconditions, refused to

consider any extension of the nature of the guarantee and prepared for what was to be his last major effort to reconstruct Europe, a general European conference, at Genoa. Fruitless negotiations for a security guarantee continued for three months after the failure at Genoa.

When the futility of these negotiations became apparent, Lloyd George adopted an attitude of complete resignation towards France, at least until Poincaré was removed 18 months hence. The concept of British security through the restoration of stability in Europe was not completely rejected, but now came to be concentrated in the first place on attempting to introduce the United States back into the European equilibrium.

It was the Conservative governments that came into power after October, 1922, that actually facilitated American re-entry into the European equilibrium. These Conservative governments did not place their hopes for Britain's economic recovery as intensely on European rehabilitation, as Lloyd George had done until the Genoa Conference nor did they despair quite so much of Poincaré as Lloyd George did in the last months of the coalition. They did adopt the notion that France must first be allowed to exhaust herself before she could realize the foolishness of her independent action.

One marked difference between the Coalition and Conservative attitudes towards the achievement of British security through European construction lay in their approaches towards Russia. Lloyd George sought to re-introduce Russia back into the European system, the Conservatives took an anti-Russian stance and saw America as the key to the European equilibrium.

In France there was a national tendency to reject Britain's policy. Most French leaders distrusted Germany so completely that they doubted she would ever accept her obligations willingly. They therefore saw little reason why France should modify her own demands or be flexible in enforcing the treaty except to satisfy Britain. This is the crucial point. Obsessed by fears of German revanchism, the French sorely wanted Allied unity, and were willing to pay a price for it. This is what gave Britain's policy of moderation and flexibility a chance of success. There was a degree of credibility to the British policy and to be successful it had to maintain this. Yet this credibility was put to the test because the British, although recognizing the security guarantee as their most significant bargaining counter, also thought of the offer of a guarantee as a major boon that might be bestowed upon France. In return for what they seem to have regarded as a magnanimous gift they expected some major concessions on the part of France.

This attitude unfortunately led to a squandering of Britain's position. First, Britain's unwillingness to give France a unilateral guarantee greatly aided extremists such as Foch and Poincaré. It could certainly be argued that, with a guarantee pact, Millerand would have been able to resist Foch's pressures for the occupation of Frankfurt. He would have been in a stronger position vis-a-vis Poincaré on the reparation lump sum question. Without a doubt, a guarantee would also have improved Briand's political position, and might well have averted the Cannes imbroglio. The fall of Briand allowed the rise of Poincaré with his intransigent views, and it might well be argued that from this point on

Lloyd George's policy was doomed because Poincaré was opposed to its Russian and German aspects. Second, it is significant that Lloyd George only decided upon the unilateral offer of security when he saw that he needed French support on several vital issues--the reparations moratorium, the Genoa Conference, naval disarmament and the Near East. He might well have realized much earlier that the guarantee was imperative to the success of British policy. That he waited so long leaves open the question of his diplomatic vision. Third, the failure to join in a guarantee to Belgium, particularly in 1919, alienated the French and also made Belgium pro-French, with all that this entailed for the work of the Reparations Commission, the Supreme Council and the treatment of Germany in general. Fourth and possibly most significant was the undermining effect of conference diplomacy on French opinion.

The effectiveness of conference diplomacy deserves to be more closely examined. It had its advantages as well as its faults. Perhaps it was not the best means to conduct the delicate Anglo-French negotiations. When Germany attended an Allied Conference the two parties often ended up further apart. In the purely Anglo-French Conferences there was perhaps more success. It has been said that these Conferences often showed the lack of Allied unity, but France's unilateral occupation of Frankfurt and her unilateral agreement with the Kemal Government of Turkey did more to focus attention on Allied disunity than any conference.

The facts seem to indicate that until 1922 the Conferences did facilitate agreement. They allowed for technical experts to work together for solutions, and political leaders to sound each other out on

the important issues. At all times Lloyd George needed to know how far he could push the French towards moderation without undermining the position of the French Government. The French, for their part, had to know whether they could use sanctions against Germany without destroying Allied unity. This knowledge was best attained at face-to-face meetings. Moreover, the Conferences definitely allowed the French premiers to be more moderate, using the excuse of the need for Allied unity to defend their actions.

Unfortunately the Conferences always seemed to enable the British to gain some concessions from the French and hence conference diplomacy attained a bad name in France. It became the central issue of attack from Poincaré and the French right and hence lost much of its political value.

Briand and Lloyd George at the Cannes Conference believed that the guarantee offer would allow the French premier to be more moderate. They were wrong and Poincaré and a much hardened French attitude was the result. Poincaré enforced a whole new regime which could only be met through an implacable Foreign Office and proper diplomatic procedures based in a rational realization of the utility of power. This is what the Conservative Government brought. Further, the reintroduction of the United States into European affairs, facilitated by the Conservatives, helped change diplomacy from that of policies of the impoverished searching for sanctity beyond their resources to credible diplomacy with the means for achievement.

The basic premise of British security policy had been that once Europe was stabilized and its economies restored, security would have

been achieved. It is interesting therefore to note that after 1924, when the re-entry of America into the European equilibrium had done much to stabilize Europe and restore its economies, security took on the singularly important emphasis of salving France's security fears. This was finally achieved with the Locarno Pact.

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V NEWSPAPERS

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