

CHAPTER X

AUGUST—OCTOBER 1925

Beneficial result of evacuation of Ruhr—Acceptance of Commercial Treaty by Reichstag—Outlook more hopeful—Respite for Stresemann and Luther—Interesting information from British representative in Moscow—German and French attitude at Geneva—German Mission leaves for Locarno—Chamberlain's influence.

BERLIN, *August 15, 1925.*—The Commercial Treaty has been accepted by the Reichstag. Up to the last Ministers were nervous about the attitude of the Colonial Party. Pressure from them might have forced the German Government to draw back. As a matter of fact they have remained firm, and are now delighted to have the conclusion of so important a Commercial Treaty to their credit.

CHAP.
X
—
August
1925

BERLIN, *August 15, 1925.*—Assurances are published that in any future conferences—or, as they are technically termed, “conversations”—about the Pact of Security, full equality will be given to the German delegates. This makes powerfully for solution. The proposed meeting of experts has been modified into a proposal that Gaus, the German legal adviser, should come to London to get information and to ascertain the real intention of the Allies. This is good diplomacy. The Germans have always requested that the text of the proposed agreement should not be communicated to them in a formal manner. The Gaus mission enables communication to be made verbally in the most informal way.

THE German Ministers are by way of being very tired and in need of a holiday; the truth is that Stresemann has had a pretty severe task during the last few weeks. I have, however, urged on them that with such an opportunity

CHAP.
X
August
1925

as the present affords to bring the Pact into harbour, the idea of leave must be relegated to the background. They appear somewhat unwilling to recognise this.

THINGS look hopeful about the Pact. Let them continue as favourable for a few weeks longer, and the prize will be won.

BERLIN, *August 27, 1925.*—The Cabinet here has been discussing the draft of the Pact for the last two days. There has been a great deal of criticism from the Ministers of the Right, but I gather that on the whole the draft has been well received.

WITH regard to the meeting of the Allied Ministers, the first idea was that Germany should be represented by Stresemann and Schubert, following the precedent of the London Conference last year. Now it is thought desirable that Germany should also be represented by one of the National Ministers.

THE general view is that Stresemann comes to decisions so rapidly and is so bold that he requires the ballast of an additional Minister. Even Schubert, the Secretary of State, whom all would term an eminently safe man, is not considered an adequate check. Schubert's critics say that his vocabulary is limited to the words, "Es ist schrecklich," and this is not enough to water down Stresemann.

RUMOUR says that in the Cabinet discussion Gessler, who has influence both with the Right and with the Army, has been wise and helpful.

BERLIN, *August 27, 1925.*—Cabinet discussion of the Pact has lasted two full days, and Stresemann tells me that he has had considerable difficulty in meeting the opposition of Schiele. The Ministers, other than the Nationals, were generally favourable to his proposals.

LUTHER is seriously overworked, and has been ordered by

his doctors to go away for several weeks' complete rest. He is proceeding to-day to an island in the North Sea, and will not be back in Berlin before the end of September, unless there is real urgency. Stresemann is going to another island at a reasonably safe distance. I imagine, however, that both will have to return before the middle of next month, if the Gaus conversations proceed as smoothly and as rapidly as I hope.

CHAP.
X
August
1925

BERLIN, *September 15, 1925.*—London is confident about Briand's good sense, suppleness, liberality and courage in the approaching negotiations. I am asked if I have equal confidence in the German negotiators. I have. They will raise tiresome points, but they are determined to arrive at a reasonable settlement. It is unjust to accuse them either of want of faith or want of courage. In the face of great difficulty Berlin has remained reasonably consistent on the main objective.

BERLIN, *September 25, 1925.*—I have great difficulty in getting London to understand the German position. Directly one explains that the German attitude is necessarily limited by the necessity of taking into account Nationalist views, I am told that this must needs lessen the value of Stresemann's good intentions, and makes an observer sceptical about the solid basis for the peaceful relations which are contemplated.

ANOTHER criticism is made. It is that directly German overtures are accepted, they begin to whittle away their assurances and to introduce new conditions.

BERLIN, *September 27, 1925.*—The German answer and declaration were delivered on Saturday in Paris, Brussels and Rome, as well as in London.

IN Brussels and Rome nothing of interest occurred.

IN Paris, Berthelot said the declaration *re* Cologne, though

CHAP.
X
September
1925

inopportune, did not call for any special comment, but that the raising of the War Guilt question was most unfortunate.¹ The only effect would be to endanger the position of the French Government. Briand, who was informed by telephone, took the same view even more energetically. THE German Ambassador explained that the declaration was nothing new; it was a mere repetition of previous declarations contained in their Memorandum given to Powers on the League of Nations Council in September 1924, and originally stated by Marx on August 29, 1924. THE German Government had only obtained assent of parties to acceptance of invitation on the expressed condition that such a declaration should be made. There had been no means of avoiding it.

THE Berlin Government are sending a full statement of the position to their Ambassadors in London and Paris.

BERLIN, *September 28, 1925.*—An interesting talk to-day with Hodgson, the British representative in Moscow. He has been there four and a half years, and seems none the worse for it, either in health or mind. The latter, indeed, which with some people is so unfavourably affected by long residence under Soviet régime, seems particularly clear and bright. He does not take an alarmist view of the future, saying that although the Soviet régime will last, a good deal

¹ THE German reply to the invitation issued on September 15 by the Allied Governments for a Conference of Foreign Ministers to take place in Switzerland was accompanied by a memorandum which raised the contentious question of Germany's war guilt. To this attempt to revive an issue which would naturally have compromised the spirit and outcome of the Conference, the British and French Governments rejoined that the negotiations for a new Pact of Security could not be permitted to alter their judgment of the past as embodied in the Versailles Treaty.

THE Belgian Government, in a separate Note, added that the question of war guilt in relation to the German invasion of Belgium had been settled once and for all by the statement made on August 4, 1914, in the Reichstag by the late Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg. The discussion then dropped.

of the propagandist spirit has gone out of it. He thinks it will be laicised, and that normal human interests will resume their sway.

REGARDING relations with England he says that the Russians are anxious to get on better terms with us. When I asked him what effect resumed relations with England would make, he did not give a very satisfactory answer, saying: "I suppose we should go back to the old rivalry between England and Russia." If the only result of concessions to the Soviet is to get on such a basis, is it worth any great sacrifice to attain it?

THE Russians he said were dissatisfied with what they had achieved in China, not considering the establishment of chaos as a sufficient return for all their labour and expenditure. They were very active in Afghanistan, and were again on extra good terms with the Turks. He apparently viewed their aims in Central Asia without any violent hostility, these aims being the establishment of republics nominally more or less independent, but under the sway of the Russian Army, and contributing both men and resources to its maintenance.

HODGSON said that he did not consider any permanent improvement in the relations between Poland and Russia as probable, nor did he think that Germany's signing the Pact of Security and entering the League would make any violent difference in Russo-German relations. I told him I considered alarm foolish regarding an alliance between the military section in Germany and Communistic Russia. He agreed as to this for the present, but thought there might be danger twenty or fifty years hence.

I FOUND him more disposed to make concessions in order to get on better terms with the Soviets than I expected.

BERLIN, *September* 28, 1925.—I hear from a confidential source that the declaration regarding war guilt was inserted owing to Hindenburg's persistent pressure. He made a

CHAP.
X
October
1925

special point on the maintenance of this clause. On other questions he has given full support to the Cabinet.

BERLIN, *October 1, 1925*.—I have further information about the Geneva conversations. It is to the effect that the German delegates have been difficult, and have raised every possible "pre-condition" which would be likely to prove an obstacle to the Pact. Briand, on the other hand, has been conciliatory. The Germans, so my informant writes, have been niggling and provocative. How far this is a true picture may be doubted. To anyone unaccustomed to German methods, what they in good faith regard as cautious and businesslike appears to an Englishman to be haggling and intolerable. But there is no reason to be upset by it. It is Fanny's little way. In this particular case, I decline to be distrustful of the German intentions. They have made up their minds to the Pact, and they will go through with it. Stresemann has met with considerable opposition, but he will overcome it. He is thoroughly reliable.

THE delegates of Germany and the principal Allied Powers—to whom there were added the Foreign Ministers of Poland and Czecho-Slovakia, Count Skrzyński and Dr. Beneš—met at Locarno on October 5, 1925. The discussions, based as they were on a text in a large part agreed, were conducted informally, rapidly and in an atmosphere of complete harmony. Two difficulties only were raised—those of Germany's entry into the League of Nations—which entailed an agreed revision by Germany regarding her obligations under Article XVI of the League Covenant—and of France's guarantee of the arbitral treaties between Germany and Czecho-Slovakia and Germany and Poland. Both sets of difficulties were settled without loss of time in a spirit of mutual accommodation. A picturesque episode occurred on the occasion of Lady Chamberlain's birthday, when the chief delegates spent the day on the lake in a yacht chartered for the occasion by M. Loucheur. So swiftly did the negotiations proceed that the Rhineland Pact and the annexed Arbitration Treaties were all initialled on October 16. Side by side with the formal

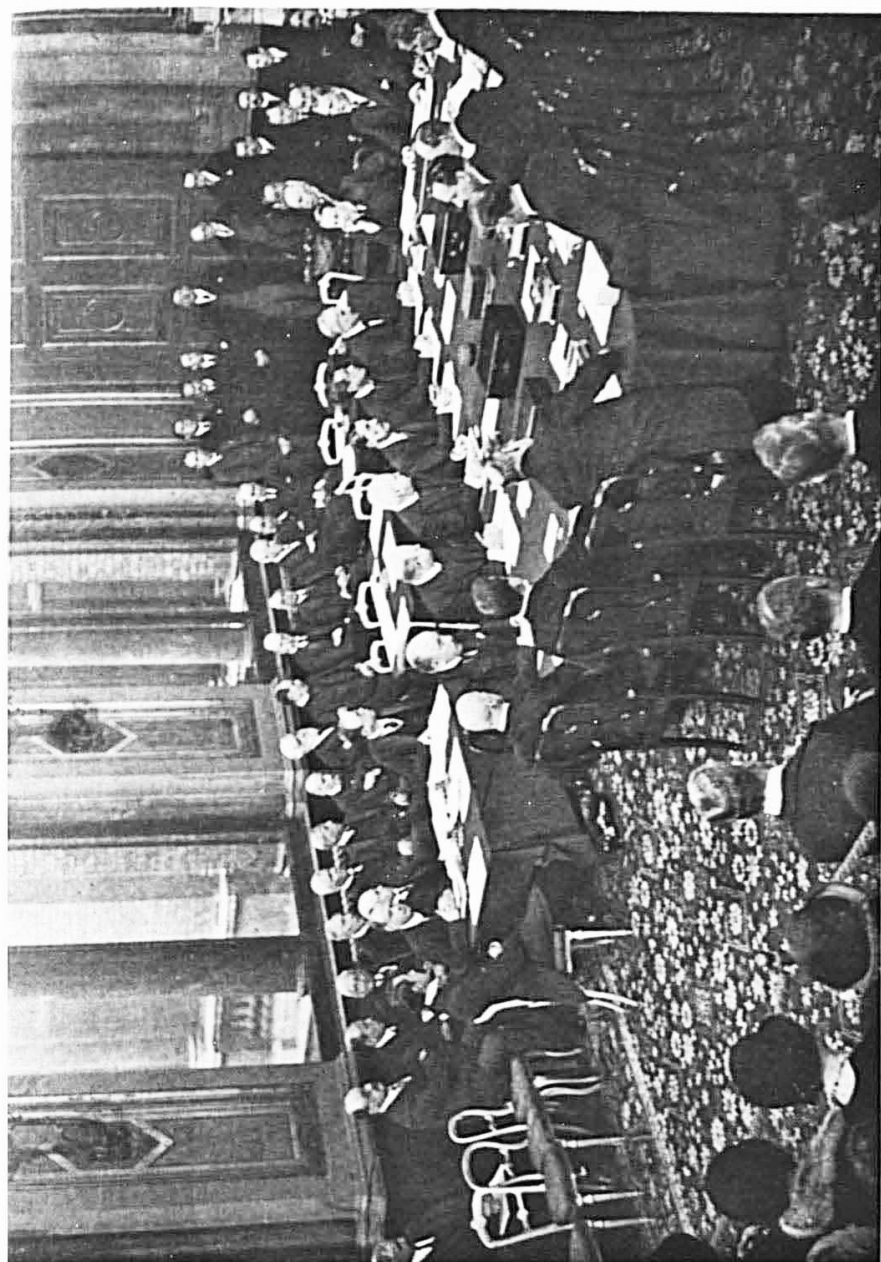


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SIGNING THE LOCARNO TREATY

negotiations mentioned, private conversations took place with a view to reaching a conciliatory settlement of other questions in dispute between Germany and the leading Powers. Thus, the Germans were able to secure the promise of a number of "reactions," such as the speeding-up of the Cologne evacuation, the early winding-up of the Military Control Commission, and a general alleviation of the Occupation Régime in the Rhineland.

CHAP.
X
October
1925

BERLIN, *October 3, 1925.*—Last night the German mission left for Locarno. It consisted of the Chancellor, the Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. As regards the two latter, there can be no doubt that they start to meet the French and English Ministers with the determination to come to an agreement. The Chancellor is more doubtful, being apprehensive about his Reichstag majority unless he obtains, in addition to the Pact, subsidiary advantages for Germany. I had a long talk with him at the American Embassy the other night, and found that he either did not realise, or thought it good policy not to show, the enormous importance of the Pact for Germany. From being an ex-enemy, Germany becomes a Power with equal rights, whose frontiers will be guaranteed by a Treaty, the Treaty being guaranteed by England. Thus, both Germany and France have this security for the safety of their frontiers—that aggression brings in England against the aggressor.

As regards England, it may be said that we take a risk in guaranteeing both France and Germany against aggression from the other. But this guarantee is the best means of preventing aggression.

THERE can be no doubt that to wait for war to come about between France and Germany, and then to hold ourselves free to intervene, if we think our interests affected, is not only selfish but shortsighted, in that it makes war infinitely less improbable than under the Pact. Moreover, as guarantor we enjoy the prestige and the power of an arbiter.

CHAP.
X
October
1925

THE new constellation of Europe under the Pact is more advantageous to England than would be the maintenance of the post-War alliances under which France relied for her security partly on a large army, partly on military alliances with Yugo-Slavia, Poland and Czecho-Slovakia. Under the Pact, these alliances will not immediately be given up, but they will cease to be the main protection, and in process of time will probably fade away.

CZECHO-SLOVAKIA is enthusiastically in favour of the Pact. It avoids for her the necessity of deciding between France, to whom they largely owe their independence and with whom they have a military alliance, and Germany, with whom they have long conterminous frontiers, and who buys 30 per cent. of their exports.

REVIEWING the course of the negotiations up to date: CHAMBERLAIN has shown great ability on several occasions—notably in insisting on the meeting of the legal experts, and secondly in not allowing the incident of the German declaration regarding war guilt to cause any postponement of the Locarno meeting. He answered the German declaration sharply—more sharply than the French or Belgians, and more sharply, some would say, than the occasion required. This was relatively unimportant; what was important was that he treated the episode as minor and transitory, allowing nothing to interfere with or delay the meeting of the Ministers at Locarno.

PERSONALLY, I should not have replied to the German declaration about war guilt with a simple negative. Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles is too unsatisfactory. The first opportunity should be taken to dissociate German liability for reparation from the charge of war guilt. The ground is too open to controversy.

BERLIN, *October 5, 1925.*—News from London is to the effect that Chamberlain is still distrustful of German policy and full of enthusiasm for what he holds to be the extremely

conciliatory attitude of Paris. Briand almost takes his breath away by his liberality, his conciliatoriness and his strong and manifest desire to promote peace. On the other hand, the German methods are criticised as being provocative and suggestive of distrust at every stage.

I CAN hardly believe that Chamberlain really holds these views. Certainly, in this connection any abuse of Stresemann is unjustified. Stresemann might retort that he made the original Pact proposal, and that London went through a stage of considerable hesitation and difficulty before adopting it. Since January the German Foreign Office has steered the scheme through internal political difficulties with immense skill, and has overcome the vocal criticism of the German Nationals no less than the mute disapproval of Hindenburg. From France there has been more scepticism and opposition than support, while Russia has been violently hostile. It would seem therefore that on this particular question nothing but praise is deserved by Stresemann and Schubert, whatever their other laches and crimes may be.

October 7, 1925.—My incredulity regarding Chamberlain's supposed attitude is justified by news from Locarno. He has sent a very optimistic account of the first meeting, praising the conciliatory tone which prevailed, and the desire of everybody to come to terms. Luther, particularly, appears to have made a favourable impression. Stresemann, as usual at first sight, aroused distrust with his sly appearance and his strident voice. It requires a long acquaintance and a clear insight to appreciate Stresemann's good points. Luther certainly possesses the valuable gift of impressing people with honesty and straightforwardness.