CHAPTER XIV

MARCH—APRIL 1926

An entertainment in the theatrical world: Art before sustenance—My intended resignation—Locarno the corner-stone—A new German-Russian Agreement—New Polish-Roumanian Treaty—An explanation of the Brazilian attitude at Geneva—Chamberlain on the German-Russian Agreement.

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BERLIN, *March* 29, 1926.—Yesterday to an interesting entertainment at almost the only house in Berlin which possesses old-world charm. This stands opposite the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, built some time in the eighteenth century, and now leased by the Government to Max Reinhardt, the celebrated theatrical producer. He does not live there himself, being, like many other people in Berlin, either divorced or separated from his wife, but she lives there and entertains from time to time a small number of artistic people. Under her theatrical name of Elsie Heims she is well known to the artistic world, and has a considerable reputation. Her quarrel with Reinhardt makes it difficult for her to obtain the best theatrical engagements, but she is appearing this week in Lonsdale's *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney.*

YESTERDAY the guest of honour was the widow of Wedekind. Herself an actress, she is now principally engaged in supervising the introduction of Wedekind's works in Germany and abroad. Although some of these works are amongst the most crude and superficially the most immoral which have appeared on any stage, she brings a vast amount of almost religious devotion and admiration to the task.

IN appearance a pleasant and unusually demure Viennese, she proposes to act Lulu—the part of an incarnate devil, whose most venial transgression is prostitution. Her daughter of eighteen is cast for one of the subordinate

rôles, most of which are concerned with sexual aberration.

THE entertainment was of a peculiar kind. I came in about a quarter of an hour later than I had been invited, and was formally introduced to each member of the assembled company. The Reinhardt schooling in clear diction resulted in this, that each introduction was enunciated by the hostess in the tones of a toastmaster. Otherwise the entertainment was on agreeable lines. We sat round an artistic dining-room table in comfortable armchairs, the guests consuming enormous quantities of whipped cream, with coffee and curaçao.

FRAU WEDEKIND is probably about forty-five, but she looks much younger. She spoke of her husband as if he had been an apostle of righteousness, and evidently regards his creations as works with an exalted moral tendency.

THE night before I had been to a reception of a peculiar Berlin kind at the house of a rich and artistic Jew. Invitations for 8.30 suggest to the inexpert that dinner is intended, and that it will be the first item on the programme. But certain artistic circles here act otherwise. A long delay usually ensues. The programme involves music first. The *prima donna* generally arrives late—she finds the conditions in the room unsuitable for singing—other arrangements, entailing displacement of heavy furniture, have to be made, so that the concert does not commence until some time after nine o'clock. How long it continues depends upon the decision of the hostess, but the Philistine foreigner who came expecting dinner at 8.30 is often kept without sustenance or a modest quencher until 11 or 11.30. A dinner-supper follows, and there is dancing. Provided one is prepared for it, such an arrangement of the evening is in some respects less material and more artistic than the usual form, where eating and drinking absorb the first two hours. But one must come prepared.

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BERLIN, *March* 30, 1926.—I have agreed to remain here until the autumn, and am glad to have done so, as I hope by then Germany's entry into the League will be an accomplished fact. The Dawes plan is working smoothly—Locarno still promises well notwithstanding Geneva. My ambition is to complete the trilogy, and to quit Berlin with German delegates installed on a fair basis in the League of Nations.

BERLIN, *April* 3, 1926.—While there has been a setback at Geneva over the Council business, there is no weakening in the attitude of the German Ministers, nor any departure from the conviction that the Locarno spirit must be the guiding principle of policy. Concessions may have to be made from time to time to popular feeling, but these will be tactical. Both Luther and Stresemann consider Locarno the corner-stone of European reconstruction and of their own achievement.

BERLIN, *April* 3, 1926.—Similarities of method between Germans and Americans are constantly borne in upon one here. Prevalence of industrial discipline, vast organisations, suppression of individualism.

THE French constantly revert to the theme that the Americans were not in the Great War on the same basis as the European Allies. The Americans are inclined to say that they came in in the interests of justice, and justice alone. The truth is that they were alarmed at the possibility of a German victory which would have meant the triumph of military despotism. The military despotism they feared in 1917 from the German side they now fear from France, who they consider militarily predominant. The Americans look back on the War with little bitterness, with less bitterness even than ourselves, although the rapid disappearance of resentment both on the English and German side is remarkable. Economically America gained

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too much in world predominance through the War to feel any permanent resentment regarding it. To her it gave the economic hegemony which London lost.

THE conception of society in Germany is certainly more materialistic than in France and England. Force and financial success are the two deities worshipped. Idealism is confined to a small minority, which by no means includes all professors—and which carries little or no weight. A parallel is sometimes drawn in this respect between America and Germany. Both appear to me animated with similar ambitions, and to measure success almost exclusively by wealth. The new industrial system goes a long way to destroy individual independence, and to discourage personal initiative in all but a few leaders. The Germans will adapt themselves to American industrial methods much more easily than the English. In business there is a temperamental affinity between them.

BERLIN, *April* 5, 1926.—My French colleague called this evening.

HIS first question was, "What do you think of the German-Russian Agreement?"[1]

[1] IT was perhaps inevitable that the grave rebuff suffered by Germany on the threshold of the League should have caused German public opinion and the leaders of the German nation to turn their gaze once more eastward—the traditional policy of reinsurance. It was an equally foregone conclusion that M. Tchitcherin and the Soviet Foreign Office should once more seize upon German disappointment with the Western Powers to insinuate the benefits of increased and more intimate Russo-German co-operation in the political as well as the economic sphere.

THE outcome of this twofold tendency was the signing, on April 24, 1926, of a new Russo-German Treaty of friendship and neutrality which, in the first instance, caused only a little less concern to the Chancelleries of Western Europe than the previous Rapallo Treaty. Two of the clauses in the new Treaty aroused considerable suspicion and resentment in both Allied and League circles. One was the clause in which Berlin and Moscow agreed to communicate to each other and consult each other about any international matter affecting the interests of both nations. The high contracting parties,

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I said, "Does such an agreement exist? I have only heard of it as a probability and an intention—not as a matter concluded." He replied, "According to Hoesch's communication to Briand yesterday, the German Government have the intention of signing before the end of the present month." Hoesch declared that this would not be done as a result of the failure at Geneva, nor did it indicate any intention of abandoning the Locarno policy. It had been decided upon by the German Government as a result of Russian pressure, the Russians having declared that they would resume their complete liberty of action towards Germany if Germany decided to wait until after September before concluding an agreement with Russia.

The communication made by Hoesch to Briand concerning the proposed clauses of the agreement was identical with the terms already known to me, with one important addition, namely, a general engagement to discuss together all matters of common interest ("Engagement général de se concerter sur toutes les affaires communes"). Nothing about such a clause was said to me. It may be the most important of the whole draft convention, and certainly the one which will be most severely criticised in France and England.

The French Ambassador did not appear particularly alarmed by the idea of this projected Convention. It seemed to him more directed against England than against France, as the latter's relations with Russia were at the present moment quite friendly, outside the question of the debt.

He was anxious to know what the effect would be on English public opinion. I replied that it would be badly

moreover, undertook not to become parties to any move by other countries involving prejudice to the political or economic interests of their co-signatories. This feeling, notwithstanding the effervescence created originally by the Russo-German Treaty, soon subsided, and none but the most modest and platonic protests were lodged with the German Government by the respective Ambassadors in Berlin.

received at first, and would be considered as a device for Germany to pay out the Powers for the way she had been treated at Geneva.

PERSONALLY, with the exception of the general clause regarding previous consultation, the proposed terms appear to me fairly harmless. But "a general agreement to concert together on all matters of common interest" goes uncommonly near an alliance.

MARGERIE did not know anything about the Polish-Roumanian Treaty[1]—had not heard any of its details—did not know whether it was or was not a mere repetition of the 1921 Treaty, and had not considered its bearing upon the present attitude of Germany and Russia. He said he would endeavour to ascertain details.

HE appeared to share my view, that Stresemann was only entering into this agreement with Russia because he was afraid not to.

[1] THE Polish-Roumanian Defensive Treaty of 1921 expired in the spring of 1926, and it was renewable at the close of the quinquennial period. But Poland, whose relations with Soviet Russia had appreciably improved, refused to guarantee Roumania, and in particular Roumania's Bessarabian province, against Russian aggression unless in return Roumania was prepared to guarantee Poland, not only against Russian aggression—which Poland herself now thought unlikely—but against German aggression.

RATHER reluctantly Roumania consented to this expansion of the former Treaty of 1921 because of her continued alarm over the eventual Russian menace to Bessarabia, and because of the pressure of French diplomacy, which was anxious to bring Roumania as well as Serbia into the group of Allies, consisting already of France, Belgium, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland. GERMANY, however, naturally discerned in the amended Polish-Roumanian Treaty a new spearhead directed against herself by the French General Staff. What added to German suspicion and resentment was the subsequent publication of a series of documents constituting a very plausible military annexe to the main Polish-Roumanian Treaty.

BRITISH opinion deeply regretted the conclusion of this camouflaged old-style alliance, and held that the new Polish-Roumanian Treaty had contributed to the conclusion of the Russo-German Treaty a few weeks later quite as much as the failure of the League to admit Germany to membership. *See also* Appendix VII.

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MARGERIE thought that the importance of Conventions of this kind is usually exaggerated by the Press. Rapallo,[1] once thought so great a danger, had resulted in very little.

BERLIN, *April* 23, 1926.—Returned yesterday from a short visit to London. At the House of Commons last Monday (the 19th) Chamberlain looked aged and worried, but he spoke without any loss of confidence, and reverted several times to the view that he had been right to favour the presence of Poland as a permanent member of the Council.

I HEAR that the Brazilian representative in the early days at Geneva had telegrams from his President saying: "On the whole I think you had better stand firm"; but these telegrams indicated so hesitating an attitude that Geneva came to the conclusion that, if the Polish difficulty were solved, Brazil would not stand out. They were therefore surprised and disappointed in the following week when Brazil proved so obdurate.

OTHER authorities with whom I have spoken in London who are perhaps better informed as to what went on behind the scenes at Geneva assert that Briand, from the first, had determined that Poland must come in as a permanent member of the Council.

WITHOUT this condition France would not tolerate Germany's election to the League and nomination to the Council. BRIAND had added Spain and Brazil to the list of candidates (*a*) because he thought it easier to get three candidates through than Poland by herself; (*b*) because it would give him something to drop if his proposal met with too severe an opposition.

APART from Briand's support, there was a considerable amount of Roman Catholic propaganda in favour of all three candidatures. Their election would have given a dominant authority to the Catholic vote on the Council.

[1] SEE Appendix VIII; also vol. i, pp. 296–311.

In the course of the discussions at Geneva, Briand realised that the meeting would be a failure unless Germany was brought in. He became therefore more disposed to compromise, but his disposition to compromise was not shared by Loucheur and Paul-Boncour, the second and third French delegates.

These gentlemen fomented indirectly Brazilian resistance, and would have been strongly opposed to the election of Germany without Poland.

The one point on which all those who pretend to know what went on at Geneva are agreed is this—that there is no immediate prospect that greater facilities will be found for the election of Germany to the Council in September than there were in March. Now that the door has been opened for other candidatures, many Powers think themselves worthy—certainly more worthy than their rivals.

As regards the Russo-German Agreement, I found Chamberlain quiet and I think very sensible. He dislikes this move on the part of Germany, but realises that opposition is more likely to aggravate the evil than to attenuate it. He does not accept the German contention that Russia must be friends with somebody, and that it is better for her to be friends with Germany than with Poland; but, on the other hand, he does not believe in any grave danger from such amount of combination as the Russians and Germans can concoct.

Competent circles in London are alarmed at the growing hostility between France and Italy. It is said that beneath the surface the relations between these two countries are extremely bad. Both sides are suspicious. Mussolini is reported to be determined that there shall be no settlement in Tangier which does not take account of Italian claims.

Nothing has been received in London from either Bucharest or Warsaw regarding the Treaty signed between Poland and Roumania on March 26.

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LONDON information on this most important agreement has been derived from Berlin. There appears to be no doubt that the copy of the Treaty which I sent home at the beginning of this month is substantially correct—indeed, verbally correct.

PUBLIC opinion, not only in England, but also in Germany, has been curiously blind to the great change which this Treaty constitutes, i.e. a Roumanian obligation to defend Poland, not only against Russia—as was done in the 1921 Treaty—but also against Germany.

THE Poles and Roumanians say: "This is just an indication of our attitude towards Russia"; they forget to add—"that it is an aggravation of their attitude towards Germany."