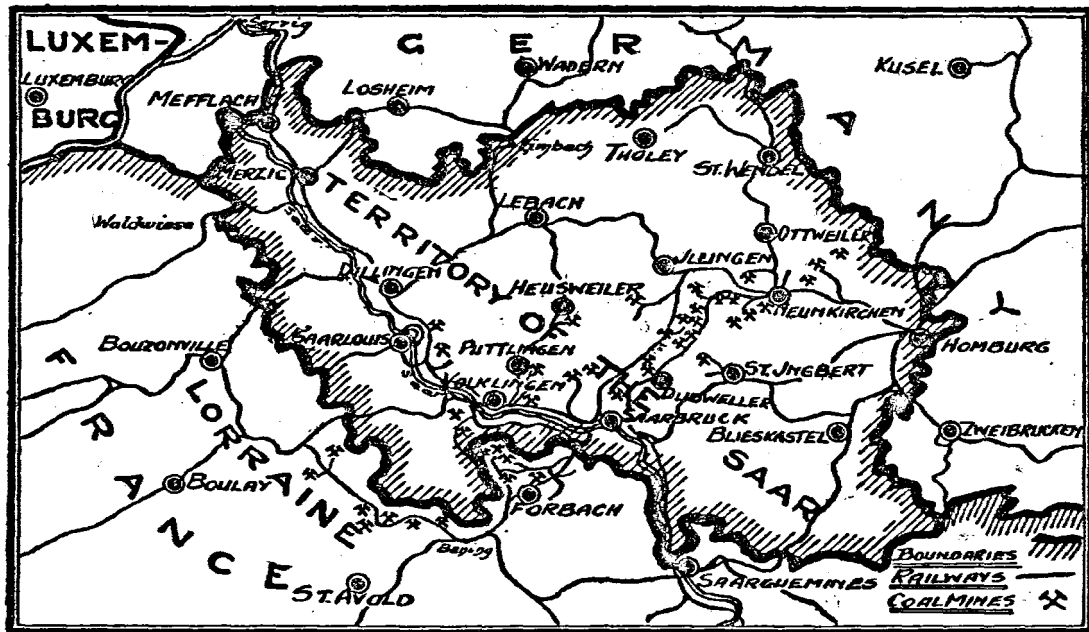


A DANGER SPOT  
IN EUROPE

SIR ROBERT DONALD

A DANGER SPOT  
IN EUROPE





A DANGER SPOT  
IN EUROPE  
AND ITS GOVERNMENT BY  
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

BY

SIR ROBERT DONALD, G.B.E., LL.D.

"The Governing Commission will have no occupation and no interest except the welfare of the people of the territory of the Saar Basin."—Resolution of the Council of the League of Nations giving directions to the Governing Commission, adopted February 19th, 1920

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# CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. THE PEACE-MAKERS AT THE CROSS ROADS . . . . .	9
II. A KEY COUNTRY . . . . .	19
III. MAKING A CONSTITUTION . . . . .	27
IV. APPLYING THE CONSTITUTION . . . . .	35
V. THE COMMISSION AT WORK . . . . .	43
VI. THE ADVISORY COUNCIL: A SHADOW PARLIAMENT .	49
VII. RUHR REACTIONS . . . . .	55
VIII. MILITARISM: FOREIGN TROOPS AND LOCAL GENDARMES . . . . .	63
IX. EDUCATION: FRENCH SCHOOLS AND GERMAN CHILDREN . . . . .	73
X. CURRENCY AND TAXATION . . . . .	99
XI. PROPAGANDA AND ESPIONAGE . . . . .	105
XII. PSYCHOLOGY AND PINPRICKS . . . . .	113
XIII. THE FRENCH STATE MINES: COAL AND STEEL .	121
XIV. ECONOMIC PENETRATION . . . . .	129
XV. TARIFFS AND PRICES . . . . .	139
XVI. APPEASEMENT OR CHAOS . . . . .	147

**THE PEACE-MAKERS AT THE  
CROSS ROADS .**

## CHAPTER I

### THE PEACE-MAKERS AT THE CROSS ROADS

IN the spring of 1919 a grave crisis occurred during the peace negotiations which led to a deadlock and almost to a breakdown. M. Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, threatened to resign, and President Wilson announced his departure: the *George Washington* was getting ready to cross the Atlantic to take him home. The crash would have come had not a way to safety been found in the League of Nations.

The split was over the Saar Basin, a territory of 700 square miles, bordering on Lorraine, partly in Prussia and partly in Bavaria.

Before the peace negotiations began, the French Government took it for granted that the Saar would be added to France. It was included in the French war aims. "The annexation of the Saar Basin is indispensable for reparation from a general point of view," said the French claim. Annexation was based on historical, political, strategical and economic grounds. The



## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Franco-Russian secret agreement of February 1917 added "the entire coal district of the Saar Valley" to France. Historically the claim was weak. For some years in the reign of Louis XIV, and for a shorter period during and immediately after the Revolution, the Saar had been annexed to France. Otherwise the territory had been German for a thousand years. It was admitted to contain an "overwhelmingly German" population, even by those who advocated annexation. It is true that M. Clemenceau—without adducing any evidence in support of the statement—told President Wilson that there were then 150,000 Frenchmen living in the Territory, although to-day, after five years' French ownership of the mines and the introduction of numerous French officials and workmen, the French resident population is stated to be 12,000.<sup>1</sup> President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George saw in the Saar a danger spot—another Alsace-Lorraine—if the French proposals were adopted. From the first Mr. Lloyd George insisted on some kind of autonomy, accompanied by economic justice for France. President Wilson was stronger in his hostility to French claims. He was adamant in his opposi-

<sup>1</sup> "Since the Saar Mines belong to the French State and the Saar Territory is under the French customs regime there is a French population of about 12,000 in the Saar." Report of Governing Commission to the League of Nations, Sept. 1924.

### *The Peace-makers at the Cross Roads*

tion to the transfer of several hundred thousand Germans to France.

The French right to the coal-mines was conceded. It was then pointed out on behalf of France that there would be extreme difficulties if the mines, upon which at least one-third of the population depended, were in the hands of one authority, while the government of the country was controlled by another. Logically some kind of French sovereignty or overlordship should follow.

President Wilson proposed a Commission of Arbitration to reconcile the interests of the dual authorities, still keeping the Saar within the German Reich. France refused, and proposed a scheme of economic and administrative union with France, allowing the people, district by district, the option to vote for French nationality at any time, and at the end of fifteen years, if any section of the people remained undecided, they would have a final opportunity of voting themselves in or out. Differences continued and became more acute between the Americans and the French. "The problem of the Saar Basin," said M. André Tardieu, M. Clemenceau's lieutenant, "was one of those which the American delegates to the Peace Conference and the United States as a whole least understood." M. Clemenceau said if they were not careful the Saar would

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

become a European Morocco—"a hotbed and forcing ground for continual Franco-German conflicts."

President Wilson was considering the fate of Fiume in connection with the future of the Saar. He had to be consistent. The issue was complicated. The Intelligence Section of the American Government, preparing material for the negotiations, had favoured the transfer of the major portion of the Saar to France. They admitted that the additional cession would transfer to France a German-speaking population of about 355,000 people, who had shown no desire for union with France, but held that the present desires of these people should not prevent a just disposition of this important coal deposit in favour of a country whose limited coal supplies had been much reduced by unlicensed German exploitation and destruction in the present war.

Dr. C. H. Haskins, the American expert, who took the chief part in these negotiations, held the view that "the control of key deposits of minerals by a small population which happens to live over them is not a necessary part of the principles of self-determination."

The French scheme for annexation was finally turned down at the meeting of the Big Three on March 28th, when the clash came between M. Clemenceau and President Wilson. After the

### *The Peace-makers at the Cross Roads*

meeting Mr. Lloyd George invited the British Foreign Office to produce alternative schemes. Three proposals were made. One feature of all three was the ownership and control of the mines by France. Under two of the schemes, which varied slightly, France was to receive a mandate to administer the Territory under the League of Nations. The third scheme created an independent Saar Republic with a customs union with France. M. Tardieu was busy at the same time with another proposal. In the meantime Mr. Wickham Steed was at work on a formula for President Wilson, which was not submitted, however, until April 1st.

Mr. Wilson was not won by any of these plans. Nor did he succumb to M. Clemenceau's touching appeals. He held his ground to the breaking point. On the critical day he said: "I do not know whether I shall see M. Clemenceau again, in fact I do not know whether the Peace Conference will continue."<sup>1</sup>

Gradually the plan was accepted of handing over the coal-mines, which had been the property of the Prussian Government, to France as some compensation for losses in Northern France, and of placing the government of the Territory under the League of Nations. "This," said Dr.

<sup>1</sup> "What Really Happened at Paris." Edited by Colonel House.

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Haskins, the American expert, "is something for the League of Nations to do—something very real and very important."<sup>1</sup> The French came into line, but with misgivings. "This solution is bad," wrote M. Tardieu afterwards, "as it left nearly 150,000 people of the Saar, as French in their hearts and aspirations as the Alsatians and Lorrainers, under the German heel."<sup>2</sup>

The League was then being fashioned. The Saar was to be its first charge. The decision was welcomed as a good beginning. The compromise was accepted, although it did not satisfy Mr. Wilson. The League was justified before it began to function, as the alternative seemed to be the smash-up of the Peace Conference. "Failure to come to an agreement," said one who participated in the negotiations, "might have had the most disastrous consequences." The future welfare of Europe was, he thought, involved in the settlement. It was not foreseen at the time that the compromise left Europe with a new problem.

There was another hitch when the Treaty was handed over to Germany to sign. Count

<sup>1</sup> At a conference with President Wilson, June 3, 1919, quoted in "Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement" (Baker).

<sup>2</sup> "The Truth about the Treaty." The 150,000 people referred to M. Clemenceau's mythical Frenchmen.

### *The Peace-makers at the Cross Roads*

Brockdorff-Rantzau, the German representative, complained that the Saar annex contained a condition under which, in the event of Germany being unable to pay for the mines in 1935, the whole territory would become French, even if the people voted to a man and woman in favour of rejoining Germany. Describing this condition, which was incompatible with the Wilsonian policy, Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, in "Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement," says:—

"One of the most powerful points of attack by the Germans was the Saar Valley settlement, both on the ground that it offended the principle of self-determination, and that its economic aspects were both unjust and unworkable. Here on one minor point—a 'joker' in the Treaty by which a final vote of the population of the Saar for Germany was to be effective only if she were able to redeem the coal-mines from France with their value in gold—the German attack was effective and a new proposal, drawn by the American expert, Haskins, was accepted on May 24."

It is clear from the discussions that the final settlement was based on the assumption that the United States would be a member of the League, and that Germany would soon be permitted to join.

The problem, so far as the peace-makers were

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

concerned, was solved—in principle. The self-determinists did not like it, but they consoled themselves with the thought that, after all, the Saar would be better off under the contemplated rule than if it had become an occupied area, which otherwise would have been its fate, with France owning and working the coal-mines. And as for the undemocratic character of the proposed Government, it was, after all, only a temporary arrangement during which German sovereignty would be in suspense, the fate of the people being in their own hands after fifteen years.

**A KEY COUNTRY**



## CHAPTER II

### A KEY COUNTRY

THE new governmental area which now had a constitution is a key "state" geographically, industrially and politically. It lies along the banks of the Saar river, a tributary of the Mosel in the Rhine Watershed. On the west and south it borders with Lorraine, on the north with Prussia, and on the east with Bavaria. It has a population of 750,000, nearly one-half of whom are women. Over 8,000 miners live, with their families, over the border in Germany, and are not included in the Saar census. The population is thoroughly homogeneous. Ninety-nine per cent. claim, according to the last census, German as their mother tongue. There was a negligible minority using French. Over two-thirds of the people registered as Roman Catholics.<sup>1</sup>

The Saar is the most industrialised area for its size on the Continent; in spite of that fact, it has not the usual forbidding landscape of a mining and manufacturing district. The place

"Bericht des Statistischen Amtes des Saargebietes."

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

is well wooded, containing beautiful forests; fruit trees are planted along roads and streets; there are thousands of small-holdings, and the ideal of the workman is to have a garden attached to his home. The Saar may be described as an industrial garden city.

Traversed as it is by the main lines of communication which were part of the former well-organised German railway transportation system, with its canals and the navigable Saar river, the Territory, being a vast workshop, naturally played a notable part in the War. It suffered the penalty of being in close proximity to the fighting area. It was within easy reach of the French airmen. The first enemy plane invaded the territory in 1915, killing and wounding several people. There were 253 flights over Saarbruck, in which 61 people were killed and 229 wounded. Damage to the extent of 2,170,000 marks was done. The experience of the population during the conflict intensified their nationalism.

Before the War the Saar was an integral part of an immense industrial organism, including the mineral and metallurgical regions of Lorraine, the Ruhr and Luxemburg. The interests of the Saar were dove-tailed into the co-ordinated combinations throughout Germany, backed by their vast resources and international connections. The close community of industrial interests

### *A Key Country*

between Lorraine and the Saar was advanced by France as a reason why the two areas should be under the same political and economic control, and why it would be damaging to both if they were separated. The same argument might have been widened to embrace the Ruhr.

Describing the geographical position and economic dependency of the Saar, the Governing Commission, reporting in March 1922, said :—

“The Saar basin is essentially a border territory. Its area is so small and its frontiers are so open that it is inevitably affected by outside events and by the great economic movements taking place in the neighbouring countries. Until November 11, 1918, the Saar Territory, Alsace-Lorraine, and Luxemburg were under the same customs administration. The mines and metal-working establishments of the Territory exported the greater portion of their products within this same customs zone. The Armistice Convention, however, in the first place, and then the Treaty of Peace of Versailles, placed Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg and the Saar Basin outside the German customs union. There is, therefore, no customs barrier between the Saar Basin and Luxemburg, from which it obtains its iron ore, nor between it and its former customers in Alsace-Lorraine. On the

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

other hand, it is separated from the markets of South Germany by a different customs regime.”

The Saar coal-bed is one of the richest and most concentrated on the Continent. Over 72,000 men are employed in the mines, which means that one-third of the population is dependent on this dominating industry. Where coal is, other industries gather together. The Saar is a centre of great steel and engineering works. Historic names in European industrial progress are identified with the Saar, including such firms of world-wide renown as Stumm, Mannesmann, Roechling and Boecking. A census of occupations shows that the industries represented include, besides iron, steel and engineering works, glass, pottery and chemical works, etc.

The Territory relied for its prosperity on its trade affiliations beyond its borders. The internal consumption of its products is small. It cannot live on or by itself, nor house all its people. It is stated that its own food supply would not keep the community in meat and bread for a fortnight out of the whole year. It is a great community of workers. There are 180,000 miners, skilled men and other workers engaged in industries. Apart from the official classes and the employers, the rest of the population consists of

*A Key Country*

shopkeepers, clerks, and those who cater for the needs of the community.

This was the Territory which the Peace Treaty decided should be cut off from its parent system and created into a new governmental unit.

## MAKING A CONSTITUTION

## CHAPTER III

### MAKING A CONSTITUTION

How to transform an informal memorandum embodying a compromise scheme into a working Constitution for a new State was the next phase of the problem. When the German Government was presented with the scheme it protested against the conditions and the negotiators made pledges and gave assurances concerning the future policy and the spirit behind it. The German delegates were assured that the Allies had "exercised the greatest care in order to avoid inflicting on the inhabitants of the district itself any material or moral injury. In every point their interests have been most scrupulously guarded, and, in fact, their conditions will be improved." There were other undertakings: the whole system of communal and civil law and taxation was untouched. The people would retain their local assemblies, their religious liberties, their schools and their language. There would not, however, be a Parliamentary Assembly; final control rested with a Governing Commission,

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

but the inhabitants were told that the Commission "is required to take the advice of the elected representatives of the district before any change in the laws can be made or any new tax imposed." The Allies also emphasised the advantage the people would have in "living under a Government resident on the spot, which will have no occupation and no interest except their welfare."

Three experts got to work to fashion a Constitution for the new Saar State. It forms a series of articles in the Saar Annex to the Treaty of Versailles. The experts had to build on the decisions of the Council of Four, on a memorandum from President Wilson and on notes of discussions. It was an extremely delicate and difficult task. Things that seemed to be incompatible had to be reconciled. An instrument had to be made which would work. And it was also a rush job. The peace-makers were anxiously waiting.

The Drafting Committee were M. André Tardieu (Chairman), Dr. C. H. Haskins, and Mr. J. W. Headlam-Morley, an official of the British Foreign Office. They were not experienced framers of constitutions; they were not international jurists. M. Tardieu was a journalist and politician. Dr. Haskins was an American Professor of History and Political Science. Mr. Headlam-Morley had a wide knowledge of treaties



### *Making a Constitution*

and constitutions, but no technical knowledge; he had no preconceived notions. He was a capable and impartial official. Dr. Haskins was reputed to be more pro-French than M. Tardieu. His views, expressed with brutal frankness on self-determination, would satisfy the most reactionary. These three had an unenviable task. One can infer that certain clauses which tried them sorely were left vague to escape differences on details. Legal technicalities and niceties were not elaborated. Things were left unspecified so that the Governing Commission should not be cramped by an ironclad Constitution. The Commission was given wide discretionary powers and the unique privilege of interpreting the Constitution under which it functioned. The chief control reserved for the League of Nations was the power of appointing and removing members of the Commission. The League was the Parliament: the Commission the Cabinet. When the Constitution was finished it was accepted by the peace-makers, in the firm belief that what mattered more than the written word was the spirit in which the document would be interpreted and administration carried on. The intentions of the peace-makers were conspicuous in every decision which they had reached.

The Governing Commission was to consist of five members, of whom one must be a Frenchman,

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

one a native of the Saar and three representatives of countries other than France and Germany. They were appointed by the Council of the League. Economic justice to France was linked with the preservation of the civil rights, institutions, religious liberties, schools, language, laws, administration and local assemblies. France was assured complete freedom for the exploitation of the coal-mines for fifteen years, at the end of which period it would be optional for Germany to buy them back if she won the plebiscite. For fifteen years Commission Government would continue, and then the inhabitants—those born at the date of the Treaty and living in the Territory—can vote district by district, to decide whether they prefer to remain under the League of Nations, or become united to France, or rejoin Germany. The plebiscite is open to everyone, male and female, over twenty years of age.

The susceptibilities of the people were not overlooked. Thus there would be a local gendarmerie for maintaining order. An Advisory Council, or some similar body, was to be elected, which would be consulted by the Governing Commission before any new law was proposed or new or increased taxes imposed. The only apparent disability which the people would experience was the absence of Parliamentary Government, apart

### *Making a Constitution*

from the enforced separation from their Fatherland. The district was included in the French Customs union without for five years being cut away from Germany. The economic interests of France in the mines were rigidly safeguarded—with just the same rights and privileges as owners as those possessed in this capacity by the Prussian Government. Beyond that France was granted no special rights, except that one of the Commissioners must be a French citizen, but he was expected to be just as independent of the French Government as any of the other Commissioners. The impression was conveyed that the inhabitants should be a happy and privileged people, compared with their compatriots in the rest of Germany or with the inhabitants of any small country in Europe. They had been given the first League of Nations Government under the first Parliament of the World, which, acting through an executive administration, had assured them that it desired “no occupation and no interest except their welfare,” and was determined to see that “their condition will be improved.”

## APPLYING THE CONSTITUTION

## CHAPTER IV

### APPLYING THE CONSTITUTION

THE framing of the Constitution which involved so much anxious discussion and travail, exhausted the interest of the Big Four in this trying part of their task. The next step was with the new-born League. Said M. Caclamonos, the Greek member of the League Council (Feb. 13th, 1920):—

“The appointment of a Governing Commission of a State created under the auspices of the League of Nations will be the first characteristic act of the League after leaving its theoretic existence to enter upon its practical life. It constitutes, so to speak, the incarnation of the lofty principles that inspired its creation, and which are to guide its work of pacification, and later of organisation and adjustment.”

Under the glamour of this epoch-making event, M. Caclamonos drew up the lines upon which the Governing Commission was to work, based on the assumption that France and the Com-

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

mission and the local population would all cooperate together as a happy family. In the hope of bringing about the desired harmony, he made a breach in the Constitution in two respects. (1) He recommended that the French Government should exercise a closer collaboration in the affairs of the Territory than was ever contemplated and (2) that, to promote this co-operation, the Chairman of the Governing Commission should be a Frenchman—which was never specified in the Constitution.

It had been provided that the Chairman was to act as the executive of the Commission. This interpretation of the Constitution was a departure from President Wilson's intention and outside the spirit and the letter of the Statute. It was a misfortune that the man responsible for the scheme was not represented when it had to be put into operation.

It was probably in order to live up to the enlarged interpretation of the Constitution that among the first Commissioners appointed a majority sympathetic with French policy was assured. The members were M. V. Rault, who had been Préfet of Lyon, Major Lambert, a Belgian, Count de Moltke-Huitfeldt, a Dane, who had spent most of his life in Paris. The other two were Herr Von Boch, the Saarois member, and Mr. R. D. Waugh, a Canadian.

### *Applying the Constitution*

The Chairman of the Commission was to receive an annual salary of 150,000 francs, the other members 100,000 francs, and all had certain allowances. The League of Nations kept control over the appointments, which were annual unless renewed.

The Governing Commissioners, who took up their duties in January 1920, had a stupendous task before them. They had to create a new State, with all the machinery of government, administrative, civil, juridical and financial. The new frontiers were artificial, and cut across all the former lines of government and communication. There were different laws in the area, two mining administrations, two educational systems, different postal organisations, etc. There were two provincial centres responsible for the area; two capitals, Munich and Berlin, to which they were subject; while over all was the German Empire, as the military and fiscal central power.

To tear up by the roots century-old institutions, to carve out a new province and weld the area into one administrative unit, was the stupendous task which lay before the Governing Commission. The Commission took over, as national undertakings, the railways, forests, post office, telegraphs, telephones, navigation, all public works and institutions. That the change was carried through with orderly promptitude speaks

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

well for the capacity of the new officials, mostly French, who were appointed by the Commission.

While the new Government was putting its machinery in order, the French Mines Administration took over the coal-mines with their army of employees. The former chief German officials, engineers and managers were replaced by Frenchmen. The mining administration took part in housing, social insurance, and education, so that here was a parallel administration to that set up by the Governing Commission, and independent of it.

The President, exercising his prerogative as the Executive, took upon himself all the chief departmental offices in the new Government: home and foreign affairs, commerce, industry and labour, customs and social welfare—the departments which are most concerned with policy and come into closest touch with the people.

Between the Armistice and the appointment of the Commission the Saar was occupied by French troops—just as were other parts of Germany by French and Allied troops. With this difference: the French troops in the Saar acted as if they intended to remain pending the annexation of the Territory to France. Besides maintaining order and taking over control of all public works and institutions, the Army carried on a propaganda in favour of annexation, held trials by



### *Applying the Constitution*

courts martial and deported a number of influential Saar citizens—officials, pastors, lawyers, teachers, trade union leaders, etc., creating the impression that annexation was coming, and that the inhabitants had better be getting reconciled to their fate, which in any case was a fortunate destiny for them. It was well known immediately after the Armistice that France would put up an unanswerable claim for the Saar coal, and all Frenchmen assumed that the country must go with the coal.

France faced the compromise solution very reluctantly, and never really acquiesced in it. The significance of the new development in government under the League of Nations was not fully appreciated at the time. Dr. Haskins, who was one of those who shared in settling the new Constitution, although a convert to the compromise, has expressed himself as follows, on the far-reaching importance of the decision :—

“The Government of the Saar Basin by a Commission of the League of Nations is a very interesting experiment in international administration. . . . By its success or failure in such matters the League will be in large measure judged in Western Europe.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Some Problems of the Peace Conference.” Haskins and Lord, 1920.

**THE COMMISSION AT WORK**

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMMISSION AT WORK

THE unprecedented task which the Commissioners had in constructing an entirely new administrative organism for the area was carried through with as little friction as possible. The chief German officials were superseded, and French organisers carried out the transformation. The work took time, and did not all advance at the same rate. Still the success which had accompanied the handling of material things gave the Commission hope and confidence in the new regime. The French troops, in the absence of any other force, remained in occupation. Administrative work by the Commission was well done, and its treatment of disabled German soldiers was generous. But the people did not welcome the rule of an alien oligarchy. They were sullen and suspicious. They made up their minds that the Commission was not the neutral authority they were led to expect, but a body whose first purpose was to safeguard and extend

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

French interests. They did not accept it "as the incarnation of lofty principles" nor as a medium of pacification. Their suspicion intensified their nationalism. The more they feared things were being done to seduce or force them to become French, the more determined they were to remain German. They were looking for grievances, and would have been disappointed if they had not found them.

These early impressions coloured the future. And a series of events happened, some of which, if taken separately, were trivial, but their collective effect was portentous. A strike of the German officials on a demand for higher pay took place in 1920, and some of the public services were, in consequence, temporarily disorganised. The Commission proclaimed a state of siege: the French Army took charge and ruled things with an iron hand, punishing and deporting many leading citizens for the crime of holding anti-French sentiments. The Commission was alarmed at the ruthlessness of its agent, and obtained a revision of punishment in many cases.

The appointment of Dr. Hector as a Commissioner in place of Herr Von Boch, who resigned because he objected to the President's policy, caused universal resentment. Dr. Hector had been regarded as a pliable agent on behalf of the

### *The Commission at Work*

French. Lord Robert Cecil protested against his appointment, and the conditions under which he had subsequently to resign office justified the objections and criticisms made by all parties.

The fact that France was to look after the interests of Saar Nationals abroad was another cause of protest. They remain German citizens and yet are under the protection of France. Saar inhabitants in Germany—if they are men of position and influence—have to get permission from a French Consul to enter the Territory of their birth which is still part of the Reich. The Treaty stipulated that the “existing nationality of the inhabitants,” which is German, would not be affected. The representation of Saar interests abroad by France and the definition of “inhabitants” by the Commission were two steps towards creating a Saar nationality. Many other incidents occurred to arouse hostility on the part of the inhabitants, such as filling the chief official positions by Frenchmen, teaching French in Mines schools to German children, and trying to get the Bishopric moved from Trèves. On the negative side there was bitter disappointment because the Commission had not made any serious steps towards organising a local gendarmerie to replace the French troops, nor had it set up, as required by the Statute, a Representative Assembly. Still further, it had

*A Danger Spot in Europe*

systematically ignored local public opinion. When, after persistent agitation, an elective body was created, its powers were so circumscribed that it only served to increase public dissatisfaction.

**THE ADVISORY COUNCIL: A SHADOW  
PARLIAMENT**

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ADVISORY COUNCIL : A SHADOW PARLIAMENT

ARTICLE 23 of the Saar Statute says that if the Governing Commission finds it necessary "to introduce modification laws and regulations,"

"these shall be decided on and put into effect by the Governing Commission after consultation with the elected representatives of the inhabitants, in such a manner as the Commission may determine."

This is another example of vague and elastic drafting—far from being in harmony with the declarations made after the settlement. The only elected representatives to consult in 1920 were the 210 members of the various municipal councils in the area. This machinery was much too clumsy: a new body had to be set up, and the only conditions were that it had to be elective and would only be consultative. The Commission issued in March 1922 a decree establishing an Advisory Council consisting of thirty members elected by universal suffrage (men and women over twenty years of age), but restrictions were



## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

imposed, making only Germans born in the Territory eligible, and allowing foreigners with one year's residence, if officials, and three years' for other foreigners to vote. The political parties protested against these and other constitutional restrictions. The electors endorsed their protests. At that and subsequent elections the Landesrat has consisted of a majority of the Central (or Catholic Party) and more moderate Liberals and Social Democrats. The last election shows the Central, the largest party. Membership has varied little, and all parties are united against their rulers.

The grant of the Representative Assembly was preceded by the nomination of a Consultative Committee of experts, which was put on a level with the elective body—although without any constitutional authority.

The Advisory Council met on July 19th, 1922, two and a half years after the new Government took office. The Commission welcomed the new Council with these grandiloquent salutations:—

“May the work of the Advisory Council be of the greatest benefit to the population.

“May it add to the welfare and prosperity of the Saar Territory.

“May it be inspired with the spirit of the League of Nations and forward the cause of the reconciliation of the peoples.”

### *The Advisory Council: a Shadow Parliament*

These eloquent words were significant of little.

The members could only discuss the *table d'hôte* menu which the Government prepared for them. They could raise no issue. The Chairman, who happened to be an official in the Land Department, was appointed Chairman by the Government. The only business transacted at the first meeting was, that consent was given that each member should receive a salary of 10,000 marks a month. The leaders of each party in turn came forward with a declaration of war against the governing authority, in spite of the attempt to suppress freedom of discussion. The leader of the Central party, which had fourteen members out of thirty in the Council, said that while they were ready to co-operate with the Government in the spirit of the League, the Government were treating them much more strictly in every direction than the Treaty required, with the obvious intention of reducing them to a mere shadow of a Representative Assembly. The leader of the Social Democrats delivered a raking broadside against their insulting and degrading treatment, and he was followed by the leaders of the Liberal Populist party, of the Democrats, of the Agrarian party and of the Communists. As the Decree had been sanctioned by the League, responsibility had passed from the

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Governing Commission to that body. The purport of all the protests was that the Governing Commission was, by various means, carrying on propaganda in the interests of France, instead of fulfilling the promises in the Constitution and the expectations of the people. It was charged with prosecuting a French policy. Normally the internecine political quarrels in the Saar are extremely acute, but all differences were forgotten and unity secured in hostility of the Governing Commission. It should be added that more attention has been paid within the last year to the opinions expressed by the Advisory Council by the Government, but in most vital matters of policy the Commission acts first and consults the Council afterwards.

## RÜHR REACTIONS

## CHAPTER VII

### RUHR REACTIONS

THE reactions which followed the French occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923 were perilously reflected in the Saar Territory, which was now almost encircled by armed forces. The Commission was recovering from the preliminary transition stage. The place was prosperous, bad feeling was lessening. Relations between the Governing authority and the people were improving. After the Ruhr occupation the tone of the administration changed. The President looked more and more to France. His policy was shaped in relation to its bearing on French interests. Dissatisfaction and distrust spread. Exceptional executive acts exasperated the inhabitants. In the midst of the ferment the strike of the coal-miners occurred and disorganised local industry. The Commission became panicky. It issued stinging ordinances dealing with public order, and suppressed free speech.

In pursuance of this stern policy a Decree was issued, with the co-operation of the Inter-Allied

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Rhineland Commission, prohibiting certain German Saar citizens, including two directors of steel works and the largest independent steel manufacturer, from leaving the Saar and entering into other parts of Germany. The Treaty guarantees free transit between the Saar and Germany, similar to that conferred on Germans in East Prussia. No reason existed for the action taken. There was no ground whatever for suggesting that the presence of the men thus penalised would have been a menace to the maintenance, wants, or the security of the troops in occupation. Only after much agitation and a public appeal to the League of Nations—and strongly expressed public opinion—was this prohibitory order rescinded.

The pressure on the Saar people was increased in every direction, and the flow of petitions from the organised parties in the area to the League of Nations continued, alleging infringement of the Treaty and injustice on the part of the Commission. There was further trouble with regard to the composition of the Commission. Dr. Hector was obliged to resign, but before doing so he nominated Herr Land as his substitute. In spite of the protests of the Swedish and British representatives on the Council of the League, Herr Land was elected in his place, although he was not acceptable to the local

population, whose representative he was supposed to be.

The occupation of the Ruhr had a detrimental effect on the trade of the Saar, and business was further demoralised during the period of the Ruhr occupation by the adoption of French currency. This aggressive step was taken to be an expression of Poincaréism, and the Saar people saw themselves forcibly annexed to France in defiance of the Treaty. The artificial separatist agitation in the Palatinate confirmed their fears.

The outlook was most discouraging, and was beginning to affect the European situation. It led *The Times*, in a leading article, published early in January 1924, to make the following comment :—

“The Saar Valley was entrusted at the Peace Conference not to France, but to the League of Nations. But, by one way and another, by intimidation and cajolery, by ready supply of capital or by boycott, by clever diplomacy and tenacity of purpose, France has firmly established herself economically, and is now engaged in trying to force the inhabitants to use the French language. French schools are established where they should not exist, since the Treaty provides for no interference with the former system of education.”

In the midst of this period of aggression the League of Nations held its inquiry. Investigation

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

was not welcomed by M. Hanotaux, the French representative, and he particularly discountenanced a public inquiry. Lord Cecil insisted that the Council would injure its reputation in the eyes of the world if it settled such inquiries in private. Mr. Branting of Sweden wanted representatives of the people to be heard, but the investigation was limited to the examination of members of the Government, chiefly of the President.

The inquiry revealed the fact that the President was in the habit of issuing reports before submitting them to his colleagues, and that he had sent the budget to the French Government before it had been sent to the League of Nations, in spite of the protests of his Minister of Finance, Mr. R. D. Waugh.

An ordinance of March 7th, 1923, following upon the miners' strike, aroused universal indignation, measured out punishment over a wide field and led to the suppression of newspapers. According to Mr. Waugh this action was quite unnecessary, as "the strike had already been in existence for a month and nothing had happened to disturb public tranquillity."

The Commission followed with a decree against peaceful picketing which aroused more anger. Had it been necessary to enforce this decree, French soldiers would have been called in to



### *Ruhr Reactions*

fight German miners. These revolutionary decrees had been adopted without having been first submitted to the Advisory Council, as required by the Constitution. They were only submitted after they were promulgated and the mischief done. The Council could have been called together at any moment.

The first ordinance made it a criminal offence to attack members of the League of Nations—a fantastic provision, said Lord Cecil. Mr. Branting said that the editor of a Swedish newspaper would be punishable for an article published in Sweden criticising any member of the League.

Other facts which came out at the inquiry besides this disregard for the wishes of the people were that after three years of Commission Government the gendarmes only numbered 150. But the most important revelation in regard to policy was the declaration of the President that he considered himself to be the French representative, whose first duty was “to see that the advantages secured to France by the Treaty were maintained.”

As a result of the investigation, Lord Cecil established beyond question that the Governing Commission is responsible to the Council of the League, and to no other body. The responsibility was collective and individual. A practice was growing up under which the Commission

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

was relegating to itself responsibility for acts which were outside its wide discretionary powers, and the President was acting independently of his colleagues. Lord Cecil brought the relationship of Commission and Council into its proper perspective.

The records of Council meetings show that members take an indulgent view of the Commission. They are eager to bring out the best in their governmental offspring, to stimulate and encourage, and not to criticise. Condemnation would be a reflection on themselves.

**MILITARISM: FOREIGN TROOPS AND  
LOCAL GENDARMES**

## CHAPTER VIII

### MILITARISM : FOREIGN TROOPS AND LOCAL GENDARMES

“THERE will be no military service, whether compulsory or voluntary, in the Territory of the Saar Basin, and the construction of fortifications therein is forbidden.

“Only a local gendarmerie for the maintenance of order may be established.

“It will be the duty of the Governing Commission to provide in all cases for the protection of persons and property in the Saar Basin.” (Clause 30 of Annex on the Saar.)

The framers of the Peace Treaty made a bold attempt in this clause to conciliate the inhabitants of the Saar and to show confidence in them. Here was a country which would have no armed force; no foreign troops quartered upon it; no militarism. The Governing Commission, which was given authority to retain the French troops while the local gendarmerie was being organised, had no constitutional right to call in foreign troops, even in cases of emergency. The

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

duty is placed on the Governing Commission "to provide in all cases for the protection of persons and property," but, apart from organising an adequate local gendarmerie, it had no other means at its disposal for fulfilling this duty and no legal power to call in foreign troops. The Treaty-makers assumed that, as this small compact district was surrounded by occupied territory and as French garrisons were only a few miles away in Lorraine, there was no excuse to burden the inhabitants with the cost, or to excite them with the menace, of foreign troops in their midst. It was also taken into account that the French Government in case of need would necessarily have the right to use troops to protect their coal-mines, in connection with which over 70,000 people were employed.

The occupying troops remained when the new Government took office. There was no alternative. They were to act as a police force until the new gendarmerie was ready to take their place.

It was two years before local gendarmerie were on duty. A force of about 7,000 French soldiers and also French gendarmes remained in possession of the Territory. It was exceedingly irritating and upsetting for the inhabitants to have forced upon them for police duty a foreign military force, consisting of men who did not

### *Militarism : Foreign Troops and Local Gendarmes*

know the language and were not familiar with local customs and conditions.

The Council of the League in July 1921 invited the Commission to develop the local gendarmerie at the earliest possible moment, and not to allow the military garrison to become a permanency.

The Governing Commission always communicated with the French Government regarding the number of troops which should be stationed in the Saar, and requested the force to be increased or diminished as the case might be. Legally the French Government should have no more to do with policing the Saar than has Italy or Belgium or England. The Commission had no statutory power to approach the French Government on this question, nor could the French Government legally treat the Saar as occupied territory. The legal and constitutional practice is that all requests for extra force should be made through the League of Nations. Even in cases of emergency Geneva should be communicated with.

The irregularity is not lessened by the fact that the French Government has paid for the troops. If there was a legitimate case for introducing foreign troops the inhabitants should pay for their maintenance, in which case they would be all the more anxious to remove the slightest excuse for their presence.

The coal strike which took place in 1923 was

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

a reason to call in more troops, although the disturbances were not serious; at the same time every precaution had to be taken.

At every session of the Council of the League this question of the troops and the police has come up for discussion. Five years have gone—a third of the plebiscitary period—and little progress has been made with building up the local gendarmerie and still less in getting rid of the foreign soldiers. The President of the Governing Commission, who takes charge of the Home Department, feels secure with the French troops, but is afraid to trust the local gendarmerie, simply because they are local and not foreign—German and not French. His difficulty is insurmountable, because the Saar is German. The Treaty lays down that only a local force may be established. But the President was appalled by the dangers of local enlistment. The police recruits, he said in an official report, would “themselves be of the population”; it “would be impossible to withdraw them from the influence of family, comrades and companions.” Yet the object of the Treaty was to draw the police from the people, as in other countries, so that they would feel that they were under the protection of their own national police. There would be close sympathy and understanding between them and their guardians who spoke their language.

### *Militarism : Foreign Troops and Local Gendarmes*

The President's estimate of the necessary force is between 3,000 and 4,000 men, and for several years all that he could offer towards the total was 200 a year, so that his margin of safety would not be reached until five years after the suspensory period had expired. Suitable men, he said, could not be found and trained at a greater rate. Continual pressure from the League had an effect, and at the Council meeting in March 1924 the President agreed that 500 new men could be found within a year. The members welcomed the news and saw the condition in Clause 30 becoming realised within a short time, when the Finance Minister announced that there were no funds to train and maintain more than 200 new police that year. (The Saar police are probably the most expensive in the world.) Members of the Council, particularly Mr. Branting and Lord Parmoor, who considered that the presence of French troops, besides being unnecessary, was a menace to peace, urged that if the financial situation improved then additional gendarmes should be trained. Lord Parmoor was also able to announce that the members of the Advisory Council were ready to support increased taxation.

The financial situation improved unexpectedly, and it was decided in May to train 400 gendarmes in 1924-1925. This will only make about 1,000



### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

police towards the ultimate force of between 3,000 and 4,000 which the Commission states is necessary. No term has been fixed for the withdrawal of the French troops—still an effective force of about 2,000 men. On these hypotheses the gendarmes will not be up to the Commission's minimum in 1935, and the District will remain in the occupation of the French garrison troops.

It is contended that the present police, now on duty or in training, are adequate to maintain peace and protect life and property. There is no need to add to the local burdens by recruiting police who are not wanted, and still less reason to keep foreign troops which are an irritant.

Besides the gendarmes there is a city police in Saarbrück, under the control of the French Chief of the gendarmerie, and there are other communal police, making a total of 533—or, with the gendarmes, a protective force of over 1,500. The French State maintain an armed guard of 400 to protect the mines. A few miles away at the frontier there are French garrisons, from which reinforcements can be quickly obtained in cases of emergency. In the neighbouring territory of Luxemburg, with a population of 260,000, the local gendarmes only number 180, with 250 volunteers. In Dantzig, which has a population of 350,000, including a large dock population, who are rather unruly, there is not a gendarme

*Militarism: Foreign Troops and Local Gendarmes*  
and police force of 1,000. It is not a compliment to the Commission Government of the Saar that it feels its rule is not safe without an abnormal protective force.

The continued presence of foreign troops, in contravention of the Constitution, is in itself provocative. The fears which the Commission wants to guard against are in some measure thus created by itself.

As things have turned out, the special privileges which the Treaty-makers thought they had accorded to the Saar are transformed into penalising conditions. No attempt has been made to win the confidence of the people. "A Government which has to rely on foreign bayonets proves by so doing that it has failed to win the confidence and co-operation of the people."<sup>1</sup> To say that without foreign troops there would be disturbances, riots and outrages, is to attribute to the people the folly of doing the very things which would justify the presence of the soldiers. The published protests of the local leaders suggest that they are loyal and law-abiding and anxious to justify the trust which the Treaty was intended to put in them.

The French soldiers, while not associating with the native population, have on the whole behaved

<sup>1</sup> Petition to the League of Nations by local political leaders, 1923.

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

well. There is unfortunately a number of well-authenticated cases of outrages committed and injuries inflicted by soldiers on civilians, causing death. Such regrettable occurrences are almost inevitable when young foreign soldiers are quartered among a strange people whom they may still look upon as enemies. Clause 30 of the Saar Statutes has been broken in another respect. The Statute prohibits recruiting, yet under the eyes of the Commission a recruiting office for the Foreign Legion was opened in Saarbrück. It is proved that twenty young men—Saar inhabitants—some of them under nineteen years of age, were induced to enlist in the French Foreign Legion. Recruiting was going on up to January 28th, 1925, upon which date the garrison major at Saarlouis invited a youth of that town to present himself at the recruiting office at Metz for enlistment.

**EDUCATION: FRENCH SCHOOLS AND  
GERMAN CHILDREN**

## CHAPTER IX

### EDUCATION : FRENCH SCHOOLS AND GERMAN CHILDREN

“UNDER the control of the Governing Commission the inhabitants will retain their local assemblies, their religious liberties, their schools and their language.” (Article 28.)

“The French State shall always have the right of establishing and maintaining, as incidental to the mines, primary or technical schools for its employees and their children, and of causing instruction therein to be given in the French language, in accordance with such curriculum and by such teachers as it may select.” (Article 14.)

An acute controversy has raged round these two Articles in the Saar Annex to the Treaty. They were not intended to be incompatible, but the action of the French Government and the interpretation put on the Articles by the Governing Commission have produced a furore of embittered protest. The issue was discussed, but

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

not settled, by the Council of the League in Rome, in December 1924. The question shows that fundamental and apparently insoluble difficulties lie in the interpretation of the Saar Statutes. The education of children is one subject upon which parents are extremely sensitive; it has led to political conflicts in most countries, and the rise and fall of parties. When the Governing authority is an alien and unrepresentative body, and is out of touch with, or indifferent to, local sentiment, as is the case in the Saar, suspicions are easily aroused, prejudices created, and bitter hostility provoked.

The Peace Treaty, which provided for the transfer to the French State of the coal-mines in the Territory of the Saar, reserved to the new Administration the right of

“maintaining as incidental to the mines primary and technical schools for its employees and their children.”

The French Government had to bring into the Territory a large number of French officials—engineers, managers, foremen, etc.—and also a certain number of workmen who were allowed to remain members of their trade unions in France. The children of these immigrants had to be educated according to the French system. Technical schools for workmen were also required

### *Education : French Schools and German Children*

as incidental to the mines. It was not contemplated by Article 28, which safeguarded the rights of the inhabitants in "their schools and their language," that the privilege granted to the French State as owner of the mines would in any way interfere with the existing schools.

As this was a vital issue the inhabitants consequently attach great importance to the strict literal interpretation of Article 28, and are backed up by the German Government, the medium through which communications are sent to the League of Nations. The dispute which is now under discussion has arisen because the French Mines Administration, besides teaching French children, also teaches children of German employees, and it is charged against it that "a geographical and historical propaganda in favour of France" is carried on. Apart from the correct interpretation of the Statute and the possibilities of harmonising the provisions in the two Articles which I have quoted, one would naturally think that it is an advantage for children to be taught two languages. In the case of the Saar the advantages of a bilingual education are made subordinate to other considerations. The Saar is a plebiscitary country, and ten years from now the inhabitants will be invited to declare whether they prefer to remain under the government of the League of Nations, as at present, or

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

be united to France, or rejoin Germany. All children over five years of age when the Treaty was signed are qualified to vote in the plebiscite of 1935.

The education trouble first arose out of the action of the Mines Administration including in its schools "German employees who have to work under French engineers in the mines," and their children. This system, it is feared by the leaders of local life, would, if carried to the full extent, go a long way towards displacing German as the official language. Besides primary and technical schools the Mines have established secondary schools.

Under the Prussian regime there were no primary or infant schools maintained by the Mines. They became necessary when the French Government took over the mines, but were restricted in the first instance to children of French officials. Technical schools were required for adults. When the system was extended to include the children of Germans as well as of French employers, the French educational code was adopted; discipline was lax compared with the German system, and religious instruction was not at first included. There were at the end of 1924, 5,200 children in the French Mines schools, and all these, except between 450 and 500, were German. An official return shows that there



*Education : French Schools and German Children*

were only forty-four French workmen at the mines on January 1st, 1924, and that the total French citizens, engineers and workmen on January 1st, 1925, was 1,105. The French children in the Mines schools include children of Frenchmen engaged in Saar industries. The schools where German and French are taught are divided so that the classes do not mix. The teachers are French and German and Luxemburgers. Denominational instruction is now given in all schools attended by German children, and the Prussian system of instruction is followed. Two-thirds of the teachers instructing German children are French citizens, most of them belonging to Alsace-Lorraine. The children receive the instruction best suited to them, but French is a compulsory subject. Children of Germans other than those employed at the mines are only admitted to the schools on the application of their parents, but influences are in some cases brought to bear both upon parents and children. For instance, allowances made to children are more liberal than if they attended German schools. There have been cases where parents have been given special facilities to obtain housing accommodation if their children were sent to French schools. But the chief attraction lies in the laxity of discipline. Parents of German children are punished according to German law

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

if their children play truant, but no such penalty is enforced under the French code. There is here an attraction attributable to human weakness, on the part of parents and children, which may lead to a preference for French schools.

The policy adopted by the Mines Administration was enforced by ordinances issued by the Governing Commission. The German case against the Governing Commission for authorising the contraventions of the Statute is summarised by the League of Nations as follows:—

“The French schools, according to the Treaty, are only intended for the French employees of the mines and their children, and ‘as incidental to the mines.’ It is inadmissible to open them to the children of persons not employed in the mines. . . . An examination of the origin of the Treaty of Versailles shows that there could be no reason for giving the French State the right to draw into its schools the children of the non-French employees of the mines (not to mention other inhabitants of the country), which moreover would be tantamount to entrusting the French State with part of the administration of the country. France has under the Treaty great influence in this plebiscite territory, and everything should be done by the Commission, particularly in view of the trustee administration, to avoid weighting the balance more heavily in

### *Education : French Schools and German Children*

favour of France by granting to her greater rights than those given to her by the Treaty. Moreover, the development of the French schools is in contradiction with the principles which govern the whole of the provisions concerning the Saar Territory: to secure the right and welfare of the population and to guarantee to France complete freedom in working the mines.

“Even though only a very small percentage of the children subject to compulsory education have passed over to the French schools, there is nothing, at any rate in theory, to prevent those schools from extending their sphere of influence, and from one day completely supplanting the schools of the country. This shows that the measures taken by the Governing Commission are not in conformity with the Treaty, which provides that the inhabitants shall retain their schools. . . . The French schools are, moreover, employed for political propaganda, and from the educational point of view the situation is unsatisfactory, not only for this reason, but for others, such as the imperfect acquaintance of many of the teachers with the German language and the prolonged absence of children from school without punishment.”

Nearly a third of the whole population is dependent on the French State as the owner of the mines. Then the Mines Administration in

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

providing for its own requirements is the largest buyer of material and goods in the Territory—thus finding employment for another large number of local workmen and shopkeepers and clerks. There is an *imperium in imperio* in the Saar. One cannot go far in studying local problems before discovering that there is a very close alliance between the Governing Commission, which was expected to be a neutral authority, and the French Mines Administration. So friendly are their relations and cordially reciprocal their services to each other, that one might think that they were two departments of the same Government. The fact is that just as the officials in the Mines Administration are all French, so are the most important officials under the Governing Commission.

“The German Government,” says the Reporter to the League of Nations, “gives a number of cases in support of its statements”—that illegitimate influences are brought to bear on parents and children.

Complaints and protests were first made to the League of Nations in January 1923, covering precisely the same ground. Denials were made by the League from the information given by the Governing Commission. There was only one admission: that in certain districts attendances at national schools had declined, and “even in

*Education: French Schools and German Children*

these localities the local schools have still been kept open." As the League in April 1923 supported the policy of the Governing Commission, the controversy was renewed last autumn over a wider field.

In its reply, the Governing Commission denied, as in 1923, that it had exceeded its authority or contravened the Treaty, or that it had exercised undue influence on parents with children. Part of the present controversy has turned, not on the interpretation of the Statute, but on the meaning of the words "employee" and "personnel." In the French text of the Treaty the word "personnel" is used in the Article which gives France authority to establish schools as incidental to the ownership of the mines. In the English version "personnel" is translated "employee," and both texts are legal. In other three Articles in the Annex the word "personnel" appears in the English text in one case as "employee" and in two as "personnel." In two Articles in the French text "personnel" is used to mean both employees and workmen, and in other two a distinction is made between employees and workmen.

Three jurists have given opinions on this etymological enigma. Professor Josef Partsch, Professor of Law at Berlin University, after citing the various uses in the Treaty of the words

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

“personnel,” “employee,” and “workmen,” holds that the word “personnel” in Article 14 does not include workmen. He states that the English text was submitted to President Wilson, who had the deciding voice in the fate of the Saar, and that

“it is quite clear from the history of the origin of the Treaty that he would have acted in contradiction to all his principles if he had only contemplated the possibility that the French Government might base on Article 14 a claim to force the French Mines schools upon German workmen with the assistance of the Governing Commission acting under its influence.”

Dr. Edwin M. Borchard, Professor of International Law at Yale University, further explores the legal meaning and the general usage of “personnel” and “employee.” In Anglo-American law, he says, “the term ‘employee’ has been used sometimes in a broad sense” and also in a narrower sense to make a distinction between “employee” and “workmen.” His opinion is that in Article 14 “employees” refers to the higher officials and salaried staff, or it might include such part of the personnel and their children as have been introduced into the Saar Basin from France or other non-German

*Education: French Schools and German Children*

countries, but in no case can the interpretation justify the conclusion that children of German miners or of other German workmen are included in the term "employees" or "personnel."

"It would be," he says, "inconsistent with the whole framework of the Saar Clauses to permit the French State to introduce French schools for the native German population."

Against these weighty opinions by jurists of international reputation the Governing Commission only presented the opinion of an English legal authority, Mr. Edward H. Mitchell-Innes. He makes short work of the etymological definition by claiming that "employee" and "personnel" mean the same thing, although he admits that the French make a distinction between "employee" and "workman." His view is that the English text supports the French case, as the word employees "includes all grades of those employed." According to Bouvier's "Dictionnaire Juridique" (third edition by Rawle), the word "employee" in French means in a literal sense a person employed, but "in practice in the French language it ordinarily is used to signify a person in some official employment," and not a workman.

The restricted definition of the word in this sense is supported by standard English dictionaries. But English dictionaries give the same restricted

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

definition to "personnel." In the official description of the French mines ("Les Mines Domaniales Françaises de la Sarre"), issued last year, a distinction is made between "ingénieurs et employés" and "ouvriers" (workers), and the same distinction between "personnel" and "employee" is made in the official returns.

While there is scope for a pretty quarrel here for philologists and jurists, the main issue turns on a more general interpretation of the Treaty. Mr. Mitchell-Innes holds that the education ordinances of the Governing Commission are valid, that its policy is justified, and that Article 28, guaranteeing that the inhabitants will retain their schools, has not been broken. "The schools remain at the disposition of the inhabitants if they wish to attend them." It might be, he says, that an organised attack upon the schools of the Territory would constitute a violation of Article 28, "but no reliable evidence of such action is before me."

The German and American jurists are more emphatic on the other side, and give more comprehensive opinions. Professor Partsch says that the French State, through the Mines Administration, and the Governing Commission, have both violated Articles 14 and 28 of the Saar Constitution. As illustrating the propagandist tendencies of the new French schools he declares:—



### *Education: French Schools and German Children*

“French is taught eight hours a week and German six hours. The lessons are given partly in German and partly in French. The geography and history lessons are made the vehicle of French propaganda. The German readers contain numerous inferior translations from French. The fact that the children are German is completely ignored.”

The German classics are neglected, and the children are not taught to write and speak correct literary German.

In addition to these three legal opinions on the dispute, Mr. Branting, Prime Minister of Sweden, submitted a statement from a Swedish authority which does not support the claims of the Governing Commission or its interpretation of the Treaty.

The Commission in its last communication to the League of Nations on the subject says that “the French State is entitled to maintain schools within the Saar Territory not merely for the use of its French employees and their children, but for the use of all its employees and their children without distinction of nationality.” This means that the French State can set up a rival or duplicate system of education in a foreign country—as the Saar still is, as German sovereignty is only in suspense. France would take the place of the Prussian Government, not only as the

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

owner of the mines, but as the education authority for more than one-third of the population of the Saar. The Governing Commission attaches no significance to the establishment of secondary schools—admittedly not contemplated by the Treaty—as it is quite usual for one State to maintain secondary schools in other countries. The Governing Commission declares that the national schools have not been suppressed. If they cease to be patronised they will soon be discontinued. The Mines Department and the Governing Commission can co-operate for the extension of the French schools, the cost for which does not fall on the Saar taxpayers, but is defrayed by the French Government out of the profits of the mines.

The Governing Commission cited in support of its schools policy a report by Professor J. Tockert of Luxemburg (whom the Germans probably would not accept as a real neutral), on the result of an investigation carried out by him in the summer of 1923.

In reporting to the League, Signor Salandra referred to this report, and confined himself to the following statement:—

“He (Professor Tockert) reported that the spirit of the Mines schools was in the direction of reconciliation and neutrality. That they were governed by a spirit of order, sound

*Education : French Schools and German Children*

methods, healthy vitality and progress, and as regards both education and teaching, they were on a level with the German schools in the Saar."

This was practically the same summary as was used by the Governing Commission. I do not suppose that a member of the League Council ever read Professor Tockert's report, otherwise he would have noticed that the geography manual used in the German classes is by the same French author as the manual used in the French classes, and that geography includes lessons in comparative problems, having a present and educative value. The same officials prepared all school manuals, including the history books. The history lessons include an account of the Treaty of Versailles and of the organisation of the Saar, and no French historian or pedagogue can give an explanation of that momentous document with which a German will agree. Professor Tockert is not a strong partisan of compulsory bilingualism in schools, but he says the Saar, as a frontier country, needs it. "This necessity will increase year by year, according as the economic ties with France draw closer." In conclusion, he says that, in his opinion, the result of the Franco-Saarois teaching will be as beneficial to both populations as to the cause of European

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

civilisation, which can only survive thanks to the entente between the two great Western countries, France and Germany. Professor Tockert favours a pacific policy and believes in the League of Nations. He was represented to the League of Nations by the Governing Commission as having reported that "the spirit of these schools is in the direction of reconciliation and neutrality as conceived by the League of Nations." This is not a correct translation of the phrase: "L'esprit général de l'école franço-Sarroise veut être celui de la conciliation et de la neutralité, dans les idées de la Société des Nations." A more correct translation is "The general tone of the Franco-Saarois school intends to be that of conciliation and neutrality according to the ideals of the League of Nations."

The question cannot be settled by a narrow interpretation of the Statute. Anyone who reads the record of the discussions which took place at the Peace Conference on the Saar question must realise that the whole purpose of the compromise was to make it possible to reconcile the German inhabitants to a period of alien Government. One of the fundamental conditions which led the inhabitants in the first instance to accept the new regime in a submissive spirit, was the undertaking that they would retain "their local assemblies, their religious

*Education: French Schools and German Children*

liberties, their schools and their language." The Governing Commission had above all to consider the welfare of the population. The Statute also obliges the Commission to consult the Advisory Council—elected by universal suffrage—on all new measures which it proposes. The Advisory Council was not consulted with regard to the education ordinances issued by the Commission—a clear breach of the Constitution. At the same time the Commission had no difficulty in ascertaining what was the state of local opinion. One of the five commissioners is a Saarois, Herr Kossmann, and he voiced the local feeling, as well as his own view of the unconstitutional action proposed in emphatic language. In his protest to the Commission he made the following statements:—

“The question of the French elementary schools in the Saar Territory is certainly the question which causes most unrest among the inhabitants of the Saar, which prevents them from settling down, and which, far beyond the frontiers of the Saar Territory, has aroused strong German feeling.”

“It is the very point for which the entire German population of the Saar is fighting with the greatest tenacity.”

“It would perhaps have been better for the question to be examined by impartial jurists, neither French nor German, but belonging to

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

entirely neutral States. I am convinced that jurists could be found in the service of the League of Nations itself, or neutral jurists of the Hague Court of Arbitration, who might undertake to examine the question. Without expressing any opinion in regard to the authors of the German note or to the draft reply submitted to the Governing Commission, I feel bound to urge that the opinion of eminent jurists belonging to neutral States might inspire more confidence, especially in the inhabitants of the Saar Territory, than do the divergent opinions laid before us to-day. I venture, therefore, to ask that such an examination may be made."

"The German inhabitants of the Saar Territory cannot reconcile themselves to the idea of the existence in the Saar Territory of French schools so numerous as to constitute a menace to the German schools which are secured by the Treaty of Peace. They consider it to be contrary to the Treaty of Peace that France should be enabled to carry on systematic recruiting for France by means of the French schools. The German inhabitants of the Saar Territory regard the right of option guaranteed them under the Treaty of Peace, by means of a plebiscite in 1935, as so important and sacred that they cannot admit the propriety of anything which could in the least degree prejudice that right of self-determination. This right to a free plebiscite

### *Education: French Schools and German Children*

after the lapse of fifteen years is what the German inhabitants of the Saar consider of greatest value in the whole of the provisions of the Treaty of Peace referring to the Saar Territory. They therefore oppose to the limit of their power any attempt to infringe their right of self-determination, whether such an attempt appears in the existence of the French schools or in any other form."

Herr Kossmann's opinion was ignored.

The question of denominational teaching was settled, but only after the mischief had been done. The Mines schools were at first non-religious, which caused a charge to be made against the French for free-thought propoganda in the schools. No subject can give rise to more embittered controversy than education, particularly where religious teaching is also involved. It is not even necessary that actual interference with a former system should be made: the mere suspicion that it may take place is quite sufficient to arouse fears and provoke an agitation such as has developed in the Saar.

The Governing Commission has concurred and defended the school policy of the Mines. In the national schools it has in some respects adopted a progressive policy. It has developed secondary technical and commercial teaching and has utilised the film as an adjunct to education.

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

There is no dissatisfaction with the national schools.

The League of Nations is the responsible authority for the Government of the Saar. It is Trustee on behalf of all members of the League. How, then, did the Council of the League deal with this many-sided and delicate question of French schools? It made no attempt to settle the problem. According to routine a reporter made a report. The reporter was Signor Salandra. According to routine the reports of the Governing Commission are circulated, and also all the communications bearing upon it sent to the League, but it is extremely doubtful whether members of the Council read all the mass of documents which they receive. They rely on the reporter to sum up the case, and he relies on statements from official sources. No independent inquiries were made.

Signor Salandra reported that

“The Council will no doubt agree with me that the matter before us is essentially a question of interpretation of certain provisions in the Annex to the Treaty of Versailles regarding the Saar Territory.”

Quite so: and what did the Council do to find out the truth about the interpretation? Nothing. The Council received the two legal



*Education: French Schools and German Children*

opinions obtained by the German Government and the one handed in by the Governing Commission, but it did not express its own views. Mr. Branting took the trouble, acting as an individual member of the Council, to obtain an independent legal opinion. The Council had therefore before it closely reasoned and weighty opinions from German and American jurists, who held strongly that the Governing Commission had committed breaches of the Treaty by its education ordinances. The Swedish jurist was more moderate in tone, but was against the Commission's interpretation of the Treaty, which was only supported by the English jurist. The Council had nothing to say on the vital issue of interpreting the Constitution upon which the Government of the Saar depends. It shirked the whole issue. As Trustee for the Saar people it was obviously the duty of the League to obtain the opinions of neutral jurists attached to the High Court of the Hague or jurists in its own service. The Swedish jurist pointed out that more information was necessary. The Council ignored the suggestion. It cannot, however, get rid of this question of interpretation by running away. It is always there. The Saar statutes were drawn up by M. Tardieu, a journalist and politician, Mr. Headlam-Morley, an official of the Foreign Office, and Dr. C. H.

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Haskins, an American Professor of History and Political Science. They were not experts in constitutional law and practice. Misunderstandings about interpretation were bound to arise, and as policy and administration depend on interpretation, it is the duty of the League to put it right.

Signor Salandra continued in his report to say:—

“Furthermore, the very detailed reports that the Governing Commission has sent us show that it is aware not only of the legal aspect of the problem of public education in the Saar, but also of its political and moral aspects, and in particular of the importance which public opinion in the Territory attached to the problem. These circumstances give to the question of the French schools a wider hearing than would result from a mere comparison between the inconsiderable number of pupils who frequent these schools and those who frequent the ordinary schools of the Territory. Personally, I rely on the wisdom of the Governing Commission, and I am fully confident that it will find the means of allaying the anxiety which this matter seems to have aroused in certain sections of the Saar population.”

The Council did not waste much time over the report. It “approves the conclusions of

*Education: French Schools and German Children*

the present report" was the resolution passed almost without a word. The so-called "conclusions" were singularly inconclusive. The report mentioned that the Governing Commission was aware of the "political and moral aspects of the problem, and in particular of the importance which public opinion in the Territory attached to the problem," but it forgot that the Commission acted in defiance of public opinion and ignored the political and moral aspects of the problem.

One would think that the Governing Commission in fulfilling its mission of having no other occupation or interest than the welfare of the Saar people, should not support the schools policy of the French Government which combines political colonisation with a tendency to denationalise the national schools under the Commission's control.

## CURRENCY AND TAXATION

## CHAPTER X

### CURRENCY AND TAXATION

CONFUSION was inevitable with the existence of three national organisations in the Saar: the French State mines, the French customs and the Governing Commission. Currency soon brought trouble. The French mines and customs officials were paid in francs instead of marks, which was the legal tender. As marks depreciated until one mark was worth only fifteen instead of thirty centimes, the miners agreed to accept, and naturally preferred, payment in francs. In July 1921 the franc was decreed to be legal tender, and its use was extended with the co-operation of the Governing Commission. In July 1923 it was established as the sole legal tender.

The ostensible reason for the change was that the franc was stable currency, while the mark was sinking to nothing. The local leaders protested vigorously and demanded a stabilised currency on a gold mark basis. Their protests were disregarded. The result was a period of financial chaos. Irreparable losses were incurred. Trade union and building society funds, insurance

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

money, and savings bank deposits, belonging to the working classes, were reduced by two-thirds in value. Financial institutions and commercial concerns were disorganised by having to convert their capital into the new currency. Banks suffered through the change, and French banks took advantage of the temporary paralysis into which all business was thrown to establish branches in the Territory. French mortgage banks at once obtained a grip on valuable assets, as credit was very low. To add to the chaos and loss, the Bank of France refused to discount Saar bills. No community had ever been so heavily penalised by a change in currency, which, as events have turned out, has been a profound mistake. The local German leaders showed prescience when they proposed a gold mark currency. Had their suggestion been adopted at the time, the Saar would have become the most prosperous country on the Continent. The franc, which then looked down on the mark with a superiority of three to one, now finds itself humbled by the five to one superiority of the new German mark. The franc has steadily depreciated, since the combined wisdom and foresight of the Governing Commission and the Mines Administration adopted it as stable currency, while the mark has been permanently stabilised.

The Saarois are a heavily-taxed people. They

## *Currency and Taxation*

were told that they would enjoy the inestimable advantages of having a Government on the spot, instead of being ruled from Munich and Berlin. The so-called advantages are certainly not financial. State expenditure is excessive. The Governing Commissioners, with their presidential palace and five ministries, are a heavy financial burden. Their salaries and expenses are fixed by the League of Nations. French immigrant officials are paid much more than German officials. A generous consideration is allowed because of their voluntary expatriation. The small area carries on its back governmental machinery which should be equal to running a country several times its size. Public services are expensive compared with their cost when they were small parts of large national systems. The State railways, which are 400 kilometres in length, involved a loss of 40 million francs in 1923; the post office, telegraph and telephones have also adverse balances. The local gendarmerie probably cost more per head than any police force in Europe, and if the present policy of increasing the gendarmes from about 1,000 to more than 3,000 is persisted in the burden will drive the country into insolvency; it will have to live on borrowed money. Thus the people will have to face financial ruin in paying for a force which they do not need. Administration

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

of justice costs more, as a Supreme Saar Court has been established.

The taxation system in the Saar approximates more and more to the French system. There is a turnover tax, and a luxury tax, a tax on capital, taxes on patents (professions) and succession duties—all graduated. There are two kinds of income tax—one on “*personnes physiques*” and one on “*personnes morales*”—the one on direct income, the other for the privilege of existing and living in the Saar. The State levies the taxes and passes on supplementary taxes to the Communes. The customs duties go to France, and the Saar exchequer receives only the balance which remains after expenses are paid—if any.

The cost of all public utility services, which is in the nature of taxation, has increased out of all proportion to the general rise in other countries. For example, electricity for power has risen from 10 pfennigs to 80 centimes per kilowatt, for light from 40 pfennigs to 1 fr. 4; gas has increased from 14 pfennigs to 90 centimes, and water from 18 pfennigs to 90 centimes.

The taxes which fall on the Saar people would be considerably less if the French State mines paid a fair proportion, either based on capital value or on profit. The duty of 20 per cent. has been successively reduced to 10 per cent., then to 7½ and to 5 per cent.



## PROPAGANDA AND ESPIONAGE

## CHAPTER XI

### PROPAGANDA AND ESPIONAGE

It is impressed upon everyone who visits the Saar that the place is permeated with propaganda and overrun with spies. A lot of underground work certainly goes on. There is propaganda and counter-propaganda and spies who double-cross each other. The visitor thinks that for once he is an important individual and imagines that he is shadowed by the police sleuth-hounds. He is told of eavesdroppers who listen to conversations in hotels. He is warned to be careful where he goes and to whom he talks—also to leave nothing in his room which he would like to keep secret. A leading member of the Administration told me that a waiter was listening to our conversation. Undoubtedly both the French military and the French heads of the police (gendarmerie) brought with them branches of well-organised secret intelligence services. These services are used by the French Government and operate independently of the Saar Governing Commission, which is itself spied on. There is

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

ample evidence that correspondence is liable to be interfered with, as that detestable institution invented by Louis the Fourteenth and used by modern autocracies, the Cabinet Noir, exists in the Saar. The inquisition is carried on without much discrimination. A member of the Government told me that his letters had been opened, and a letter from a member of the Council of the League of Nations to a prominent citizen had been read before it was delivered. Saar residents who wish to insure secrecy in their correspondence are obliged to send and receive their communications at addresses outside the Territory.

The provocative agent is not unknown in the Territory. A few months ago the leading Saar newspaper published elaborate details, at prodigious length, of a case of police espionage implicating the President and also associating it with the French Government. Although the Commission keeps the Press in order it has not called the newspaper to account for its conduct. Local opinion holds that if the charges are true it is the duty of the President to clear himself; if they are not true, action should be taken by the police against the newspaper for committing a grave offence against the State. The following summary of this case appears in the last memorial sent by the political parties in the Saar to the League of Nations :—

### *Propaganda and Espionage*

“ From revelations which were made in December 1924 by a man who for a long time acted as a spy in the service of the Central Police Department, it is quite clear that these house-searches were made with the sole object of enabling M. Rault to declare at the Meeting of the League of Nations on the 23rd April, 1923 :—

“ ‘ that branches of the secret Bavarian Organisations which were condemned by the German Empire had been established in the Territory of the Saar although the political parties denied their existence. Following the publication of the Ordinance of 7th March, 1923, house-searches had been carried out and evidence found that left no doubt that former suspicions on the subject had been fully justified. Two reports from the Attorney-General in Saarlouis provide ample proof that branches of two Bavarian secret organisations existed in the Territory of the Saar.’

“ Now what was the basic reason for the accusations of President Rault against the Saar population ?

“ The whole thing was got up as a result of the spy system of the French officials under whose direction the Central Police Department is placed and who are responsible to a government appointed by the League of Nations. In their endeavour to injure the reputation of the Saar population

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

before the Council of the League they left no stone unturned. Neither did they shrink from deeds which in themselves were punishable with imprisonment and penal servitude up to five years.

“One of the most important duties of the spy in question was to ‘discover’ the existence of secret associations in the Saar Basin, and with this end in view a Bavarian leader of secret organisations was brought into the Territory of the Saar. One of Hittler’s uniforms and some firearms were obtained, and the plot was carried out even to the length of preparing ‘plans of attacks’ against the barracks occupied by French troops. It was also arranged that, when a ‘search’ was undertaken in his apartment a compromising diary, ordered by the Central Police Department, should be found among his effects. This diary contained forged entries through which the most esteemed citizens of Saarbrücken were to be compromised; even a Catholic priest was not spared the ‘dignity’ of inclusion in this list of dishonour. The sum of 26,500 francs, as well as other sums, was paid to the spy in question by the High Police Administration out of the Public Treasury as an award for the part he played in this contemptible work.”

I have been informed that the spy referred to was formerly in the German secret service and

### *Propaganda and Espionage*

was forgiven by the Saar police on condition that he transferred his services to them. I have seen facsimiles of the documents in the case which support the chief allegations made. Like the newspaper the spy is left unpunished and is still resident in the country, but changes have recently been made in the Police Administration which may or may not have some connection with the case.

The spying is not all on one side. While the chief officials in almost every Government office are French, the Germans are well informed concerning everything that takes place. The Commission, in its report to the League of Nations in March 1922, said :—

“The Commission was rather perturbed by the publication of the German White Book on the Saar Territory, and received a most painful impression from reading certain documents in it, which lead one to suspect the existence of secret agents in the Territory.”

There is internal and external propaganda. A daily pro-French paper is published in Saarbrück edited by an official in the Mines Department, reputed to be an agent of the French Foreign Office. A stream of pamphlets and periodicals pours forth in French and German, and sometimes also in English, in support of French interests. There is an equally voluminous flood

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

of counter-material from the German Press. Journals are published in Germany in support of the German case, and are prohibited from entering the Territory: French papers take up the other side in France and are freely admitted. The organs of the Saar political parties are contraband at the frontier, while Saar pro-French publications are on the free list.

Allowing for a reasonable margin of exaggeration, as the tendency is for each side to make misleading statements about the activities of the other, there is unquestionably an amount of spying and propaganda going on which must have a thoroughly demoralising effect on the community.

The Governing Commission has no power to stop the practice; even if it did not take a hand in the game itself. German propaganda can be carried on outside the Territory, and the three departments of the French Government—the Mines, the Military and the Customs—can do what they like inside.

One of the first acts of President Rault was to establish a secret service with the French Government, and to open an office in Paris at the expense of the Saar—in spite of the protest of the Finance Commissioner—to facilitate his operations.

PSYCHOLOGY AND PINPRICKS



## CHAPTER XII

### PSYCHOLOGY AND PINPRICKS

THERE are two rival nations in the Saar—a perpetual clash of interests, natures, temperaments, and mentality. The autocratic rule of the victors is hateful, but the masses accept their fate with sullen resignation. There is an atmosphere of apprehension, as if something was going to happen. The people are cheerless. There is no brightness in the cafés or beer halls. There is a lack of gaiety which is not due to absence of personal comforts or privation. In material things the people are fairly well off compared with their neighbours. The ambition of the miner and the artisan is to marry young, cultivate a garden or allotment and bring up a large family. The disruptive and revolutionary elements are small—increasing somewhat in recent years because of the conditions under which they live and the uncertainty of the future. The working people are stable, hard-working, and well educated.

The French employers do not get into sympathetic touch with the German workmen, a

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

large proportion of whom are social democrats. There are no regular Whitley Councils.

There is a liberal insurance system which gives satisfaction. The French Mines Administration and the Governing Commission became the heirs of an enlightened system of social welfare and social legislation which they have not disturbed, and in some cases have improved upon.

The phenomenon of the silent racial antipathies runs through all classes. There is aloofness between employees working side by side in the same offices. The French clerks and typists in the Government departments do not associate with their German colleagues. Behaviour in the offices is correct; there is official courtesy and politeness, but there intercourse ends. The higher French officials in the Government departments meet together but have no dealings with their German colleagues. Each Governing Commissioner carries on his own job and rarely meets his colleague except for formal discussion. Class and racial distinctions are general and no attempt is made to break down the barriers, no touch of humanity is introduced in the relationships.

The President has never set an example. He has made no effort to understand the people. Nor have the French administrators in the Mines Department and in the Government eased the situation by trying to appreciate German

psychology. Life would be pleasanter for everybody if those in authority would only remember that they have all to work together for the welfare of the people whose country is made the experimental ground for an untried system of international government. The people are keenly sympathetic and soon show confidence in anyone who treats them fairly. Colonel Espinosa, the Spanish nobleman, who was a member of the Governing Commission for about seven months during 1924, at once won the esteem and respect of all classes. He was a good German scholar, and was able to get into close touch with people. Colonel Espinosa made friends wherever he went : there was universal mourning when he died. The Governing Commission never came into more sympathetic relationship with the people than when he was a member. He knew German mentality and realised that the situation in which they found themselves had to be met with tact and patience on both sides. He interpreted his powers in a sympathetic spirit which produced an immediate response.

Alongside the failure of the Government to satisfy the inhabitants that their welfare is its first concern and apart from the major influences that are at work hammering it into them that they are a conquered race at the mercy of the victors, there is a continual policy of pin-pricks

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

which causes an infinite amount of irritation and bad temper. This policy is made up of things, each one of which is trivial in itself, but taken together touch the susceptibilities of the people at many points, and stir up their easily aroused suspicions. Every incident is magnified and distorted. A sense of injustice permeates all classes. And yet there is no reason in the world why many of these incidents should take place. The French troops, for instance, could carry out manœuvres, in which their comrades in Lorraine take part, in that province instead of bringing them over the border to manœuvres in the Saar. There was no need to have an aerodrome near Saarbrück, nor indeed in the Territory. If it gratifies the harmless ambition of the burgomaster of Saarbrück to use the affix "ober," why should his request not be granted, although there is no equivalent title in France?

Then there is an embargo on flags. French flags are flown every day over the French Administrative offices, more so than in France, but the natives are only permitted to fly flags on fête days.

Residents are not allowed to sing German patriotic songs, and there is a censorship on music-hall and concert programmes. German lecturers and singers and trade union leaders find obstacles put in their way of entering the Territory, and are sometimes prohibited from appearing

### *Psychology and Pinpricks*

in public. There is an attempt to stifle German intellectual and cultural influences, and certain German newspapers are prohibited from entering the Territory, including well-known German satirical journals. Papers published in Germany specially devoted to Saar interests are also barred. On the other hand, visitors leaving the Saar are not allowed to take with them copies of the local organs of the political parties or propagandist journals. It is doubtful if a Saar newspaper could bring a journalist or editor from Germany. In any case he would be admitted under sufferance and under conditions as if he were an alien. French boys practise school drill but German boys must not play at soldiers. On various occasions the right of association has been threatened and the freedom of the Press curtailed. Germans find it difficult to settle in the Saar, while taking up residence is made easy for Frenchmen. Officials, chiefly French, are allowed to vote after one year's residence. Other visitors require three years' qualification in order to exercise the suffrage.

The President shows little respect for the leaders of local life. He refers in a derogatory way to the party leaders who get up memorials and petitions for the League of Nations, and when the parties first sent a delegation to Geneva, the Commission complained that they had

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

obtained passports without having informed the Governing Commission of their intention, and had approached the League of Nations without their consent. There are a thousand and one things which help to breed antagonism, and the faults are not all on one side. There are inevitably attempts at retaliation. Nothing is done to soothe injured feelings or clear away misunderstandings.

**THE FRENCH STATE MINES: COAL  
AND STEEL**

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRENCH STATE MINES : COAL AND STEEL

IF the Saar is a key country, its key industry is coal. You cannot discuss its Government without dealing with the dominating part played by its coal in its national life. It was round the Saar coal-mines that the fight started at the Peace Conference. No one questioned the right of France to draw upon this rich store of mineral wealth to make up for the loss of production from its mines in Northern France, destroyed by the enemy. The question turned on whether France should be given possession of the mines for all time, or for a period during which production would be regarded on the basis of compensation, or whether the deliveries of Saar coal depended upon the increased production of the reconstructed mines in Northern France. The final decision was to give France unconditional possession of the mines for fifteen years, the ownership afterwards to depend on the result of the plebiscite in 1935.

France has adopted a progressive policy in its management of the mines, which have been placed under the French Minister of Public Works.



## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

A fair description of the mines of the Saar is issued by the State Administration.<sup>1</sup> The area of exploitation is 50 kilometres long and is not more than 20 kilometres in width. The same coal-bed runs for several kilometres into Lorraine.

The coal is of three distinct varieties: bituminous, dry and gas. The seams average about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  metres. The chief characteristic of the Saar coal is the high proportion of volatile matter which it contains. The estimated reserves of coal in the Basin is 9,440,000,000 tons. Formerly Saar coal was considered an inferior quality to coal from Westphalia, north of France, and Belgium for making coke. Improvements have taken place which enable more coke from Saar coal to be used in the blast furnaces in Lorraine.

In 1913, the last normal year before the war, the total coal production in the Saar was 13,206,309 tons. The total number of workers employed below and on the surface was 56,589. In 1919, the last year of German exploitation, the production was 8,981,299 tons and the workers numbered 61,964. The production in 1922 was 11,240,003 tons. It was reduced by 2,000,000 tons in 1923, owing to the 100 days' strike, but the daily production was greater than it had ever been. The workers employed in March last year numbered 76,937. All, except 3,050 engineers

<sup>1</sup> "Les Mines Domaniales Françaises de la Sarre," 1924.

### *The French State Mines: Coal and Steel*

and employees, were engaged in connection with the actual mining operations. The coal-mines possess a battery of coke ovens, three central electric power stations, and a fourth has just been built. The French State goes in for a policy of new works, having for its object increased production and the replacement of inadequate installations. The State Mines expended, up to the end of 1923, a total of 56,161,362 gold marks in constructional works.

The administration of the mines is on the lines of company enterprises in France: the engineers and employees are not Civil servants. There is only one mine outside the State system; it is leased to a French company and has a production of from 1,000 to 1,200 tons a day.

The eight-hour system has been adopted, and seven and a half in the case of the workers underground. Miners are given allowances for their wives and children. The average pay, including allowances, is 24 fr. 60 per day. A coal-getter receives 29 fr. 40, including family allowances. There are dormitories for miners who are unable to go home except on Sunday. This official document says that the Saar miners like to own their houses, preferably with gardens or allotments attached. They borrow to build their houses. They are a stable population attached to the land and the mines. They have large families.

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

A greater volume of coal is now being sent to France. Before the war only 7 per cent. of the production went to France. Now considerably over one-third goes. The figures are reversed with regard to Germany, which formerly took one-third and now receives only 4 per cent. The quantity for home consumption remains the same.

For distribution the mines depend chiefly on the railways, and transportation facilities should be improved. The official booklet says:—

“The development of the mines is intimately allied with the facilities which the railways can give it, both with regard to the freights and the arrangements for assuring transport. This question should be taken into very serious consideration by those who are responsible for the distribution of Saar coal, for the prosperity of the industries which consume it and for the economic future of the Territory.”

The latest official returns supplement the figures quoted above, and show that the mines are now producing an average of 1,200,000 tons a month. In October last the miners, workers, and employees numbered 78,078. The output per man was considerably less than in 1913, but the shorter working hours may account for part of the difference.

So much for official information. On the other hand, independent consumers and the people

### *The French State Mines : Coal and Steel*

have grievances against the Mines Administration. One is that it makes excessive profits by keeping up the price of coal. M. Richard, reporting on the mines in the Chamber of Deputies in February 1924, said that the annual surplus profit was 20 million gold francs, and also that all loans had been repaid. Up to that time about 56 million gold marks had been spent on the mines, and had been repaid in three years out of profits. Then it is said that the mines are undervalued for purposes of taxation and that the coal dues are too low. According to the Treaty, taxes must be levied on the ratio of value as between the mines and the taxable wealth of the Territory. A report of the Mines Department estimates the values of the mines at 350 million francs, exclusive of the additional capital expenditure incurred. On this basis the mines should pay a higher percentage than is now charged.

The foregoing facts bring home to the observer that the mines are an overwhelming factor in the economic life of the country. The working arrangements and mutual understanding between the Mines Administration and the Governing Commission, through the President, could not well be closer.

France is making the most of its ownership of the mines. Industrial unity has been established over a wide area, and France is in a powerful

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

position as a competitor in the steel markets of the world. Writing to President Wilson on April 19, 1919, Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, the American economic expert, said :—

“ It is well to note that the German metallurgical industries in the Saar Valley, as well as many of the gas works of Southern Germany, are dependent upon the coal of the Valley of the Saar. Therefore the ownership of these mines by the French could be used to handicap these industries and greatly disturb the economic life. It should also be noted that the steel mills in the Saar Valley and adjacent German territory are dependent upon the iron ores from Lorraine, which is now French territory. This furnishes the French with a powerful weapon for trading.”

The Mines Administration states that the Lorraine blast furnaces can now be operated almost entirely with coke made from Saar coal. The price of the coal need not be regulated by competition. The Mines Administration can work at a profit and at the same time undersell everyone in the coal market. There are no capital charges on Saar coal.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The sequestered steel works in Lorraine which work in conjunction with the Saar coal-mines also enjoy light capital burdens as the French Government have never exacted payment in full from the owners.

## ECONOMIC PENETRATION

## CHAPTER XIV

### ECONOMIC PENETRATION

THE period between the Armistice and the signing of the Peace Treaty was the decisive time for shaping French policy. From what took place during that period have followed as a logical sequence the French ownership of iron and steel works in the Saar and the occupation of the Ruhr.

The French Government were convinced that the Saar Valley would be annexed to France just like Alsace-Lorraine. They could conceive of no alternative. M. Tardieu said that the two areas were industrially interdependent. To separate the Saar with its coal from Lorraine with its iron would, he said, be ruinous. During the time of French occupation the officials made plans which they were justified in thinking were only anticipatory of the fruits of victory. M. Loucheur was at this time Minister of Reconstruction, an able man with political ambitions, a mighty man of commerce who never missed a golden opportunity of serving his country. He

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

is the man who, if he had the chance, would settle things between France and Germany on an industrial basis.

After the Armistice France was in possession of the Saar, and M. Loucheur sent one of his efficient officials, Commandant Riche, into the area with complete power to survey the richness of the land and its industries. The policy adopted was justified by the results. The French directors put in charge of the coal-mines were able to regulate supplies. The course of proceedings was not changed by the Treaty, which gave France all the German-owned coal-mines except the Hostenbach pit, in which the Roechling family were interested, which was appropriated—its output is 180,000 tons a year—and the Frankenholz mine, which had French shareholders—which consequently has been left in private hands—with an annual output of 300,000 tons.

The object of French policy was to secure that unity in the Saar which was essential to complete industrial success, and also to extend French influence by the control of all the chief undertakings. An admirable plan was adopted to bring the owners of the blast furnaces and steel works to reason. They were rationed with coal. They obtained enough to keep one-third of their plants at work, but were prohibited from discharging any of their workmen. These Saar



### *Economic Penetration*

steel works had formerly obtained pig iron from iron foundries in Lorraine, and it was made a condition that when these, which had formerly belonged to Saar firms, were put up for sale, only firms could bid who had come to an arrangement with the French authorities. Quite obviously a crisis had arisen, but the French industrialists were ready with a remedy.

They were not going to leave the Saar works in such a plight; the way out was simple; sell 60 per cent. interest in the works to French companies—the same companies which would have control of iron mines in Lorraine. A beginning was made with the Neunkircher steel works, which formerly belonged to the Stumm family, employing 5,000 men. They succumbed to an offer for 60 per cent. of their shares. Some difficulty was met in the case of the Dillinger iron works, employing about 7,000 men, as they were supplying tin for Reparation requirements and could not be deprived of coal. The hitch was overcome by the dismissal of the general technical director and several of the chief engineers, and the Dillinger works passed over to French control.

The Halberger foundries of Boecking and Co. next yielded to the temptation of a 60 per cent. French participation. The firm employs 3,500 men. A smaller business, the Homburger steel works, belonging to Stumm, with about 1,200

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

workmen, followed suit. There is every reason to believe that a fair price was paid for the 60 per cent. interest in all these works, and in the circumstances a very favourable price. There remained two other great steel works to be dealt with. One was the Burbacher foundry in Saarbrück, but as that concern belonged to French, Belgian and Luxemburg interests, with iron mines in Lorraine, the conditions for successful operation were already fulfilled. The other was the Roechling works in Volklingen, which merits special reference.

The enterprise of the French did not stop at steel works. Their industrial ambitions were insatiable and their capital (for this purpose) apparently unlimited. The following engineering works in the Saar were acquired by the French 60 per centers: The Mannesmann tube works, employing 3,000 people, acquired by the Société Metallurgique de Montbard Aulnoy; Ehrhardt and Schmer machine works (1,200 hands), which have gone to the Alsatian machine factory of Mulhausen; the Dingler, Karcher and Co. works, makers of railway rolling-stock, are transferred to the Alsatian firm of Dietrich; the Meguin machine factory at Dillinger; glass bottle works at Louisenthal and St. Inghert; table glass works at Sulzbochtal (about 1,000 hands); the screw factory of Karcher, Both

### *Economic Penetration*

and Co., of Beckingen, and other industrial establishments have all passed under French control. The well-known business of Villeroy and Boch, with 5,000 employees, has French and Belgian shareholders. The chief offices of many of these French controlled companies are in Paris.

The authorities in possession of the railways and other public works in alliance with the owners of the mines naturally, by their patronage, favours, and preference, exercise a determining influence on many local businesses. All this means that the vast majority of the industrial resources of the Saar have been brought under French control by the coercive influence of intimidation and the boycott with the tempting alternative of an easy life. M. Tardieu's fears have not been realised. Unity is maintained.

The only works of which French companies are not masters are the Volklingen iron and steel foundries, the property of the Roechling family—one of the old industrial hierarchies of the Saar.

The Roechling works employ 7,000 men, and the firm were invited to sell 60 per cent. of their business to the Acieries de Longwy, a company with which they had associations, but they declined the proposal, and have remained the one big independent firm in the Saar, to their cost, as relations have not been friendly between them

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

and the Commission, and it is said that no orders which the Government and the French State can influence go their way. The firm state that they have been penalised in regard to coal supplies and that vindictive action has been taken against their chief partner.

The French make no concealment of their industrial conquest. It is a triumph for France.

A French propagandist publication, "Science et Industrie," informs us that "French capital has been invested since the Armistice in a large number of Saar industrial firms, securing for ourselves generally the preponderance on the Boards. From that date on the French have not ceased to multiply and develop their participation." The publication gives a list of some of the industrial works now under French control. From this and other sources it appears that French capital controls, besides the undertakings mentioned above, a large number of smaller businesses, including glass, enamel, ceramic, cycle, textile bricks, printing, jute and clothing works, paper-making works, newspapers and a hotel. Several French banks and insurance companies have been established in the Territory, and both the Mines Administration and the Governing Commission put all the business they can in the way of their friends. There is a close community of interests among all the French con-

### *Economic Penetration*

trolled enterprises. The propagandist publication already quoted says: "A certain number of Saar firms have no French capital yet." They cannot be either numerous or important—with the exception of the Roechling works—as the French conquerors spread their net very wide. There is a French-Saarois Chamber of Commerce, founded by Frenchmen. It has about 800 members, and the Chamber is under French direction. The reports which it issues, in French, bear the impress of their origin.

The cumulative effect of this preponderance of French industrial interests amounts to economic annexation of the Territory. A census of all the workers employed at the French-owned mines and at the multifarious works under French control, the public services, railways, telegraphs, telephone, canals, etc., which draw their supplies from French-owned works through the sympathetic Governing Commission, would show that about three-fourths of the whole working population find their means of livelihood in French service or in French controlled works. The chief directors, engineers, and managers of the French-controlled enterprises are French. Trade is diverted into French channels. There is not a free market. If the Saar reverts to German sovereignty in ten years, France would still control the industrial forces now in her

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

possession, which would be by that time, if they are not already, part of affiliated companies and associations in Lorraine and throughout France. And yet the working classes do not esteem or trust their triumphant foreign employers. Good treatment will not win their sympathy. Racial and nationalist antipathies are fomented. But for the state of political bondage which the people now live under, fierce hatred leading to revolt would blaze forth against the French capitalists.

## TARIFFS AND PRICES

## CHAPTER XV

### TARIFFS AND PRICES

UNDER the Treaty of Versailles the Saar was "subjected to the French Customs regime," but for a period of five years—that is, until January 10th, 1925—articles imported from Germany "for local consumption" were free from import duties. Here was another phrase which left scope for misinterpretation. To declare that goods were for "local consumption" was not enough; the importer had to satisfy the Customs officers on that point, and they did not intend to be easily convinced. Certificates of destination were issued which hampered and delayed the movement of goods. Complicated regulations and restrictions were imposed. For example, the weight of herrings in a tin had to be declared apart from the weight of the tin which contained them.

The Governing Commission, acting in co-operation with the French Customs authorities, qualified the expression "local consumption" by adding a condition not indicated in the Treaty; that goods admitted free for local



## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

consumption had to be consumed within the five-years period. An attempt was made to set up a special court for Customs prosecutions, and in fact every act of the authorities evidenced a desire to make the free import regime as inconvenient as possible. German manufacturers supplying the Saar complained that their French competitors always got their goods in first.

There is an extremely strict examination at the French frontier, not only as regards goods for export, but also of papers and personal belongings.

On the 10th of January, 1925, the new Customs regime began with the erection of a high tariff wall between the Saar and Germany, so formidable that for many articles the door is shut. Consternation spread in the community; members of the Governing Commission took alarm and rushed to Paris in the hope of obtaining some modification from the French Government.

While during the last five years the French imports were stimulated, the Saar people still look to Germany for the great bulk of their domestic supplies. Many articles, including surgical instruments, popular patent medicines and soap, can only enter under permits. Other articles, such as boots and shoes, furniture, textiles, clothes for men and women, are subject to almost prohibitory duties. French and

## *Tariffs and Prices*

German tastes in furniture and dress are opposites and French ready-made shoes would be misfits on German feet. Favourite German delicatessen will become expensive luxuries, and indeed all domestic supplies will enter, if at all, under heavy penalties. The habits of generations are not readily broken: it will take more years than now remain in the plebiscitary period before consumers are won over to use, except under compulsion, French-made domestic supplies.

It is probable that local factories may be set up, manned by German workmen, to produce the goods which the people have been accustomed to use or consume, but it is predicted that prices will increase, leading to discontent, which will express itself in strikes. Already there has been a strike of the metal workers since the new tariff came into operation, and a demand for 20 per cent. rise in wages. The cost of the necessaries of life—meat, bread, and vegetables—is already excessive. The district is only capable of producing a small proportion of its food requirements, and future prices will depend on the cost of freight and on the scale of duties.

The Territory is going through its most serious phase since it came under the rule of the League of Nations. There may yet be modifications in the tariff, as bargaining will take place between

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

France and Germany over the commercial treaty now under discussion. Concessions may be granted by France to the Saar in return for concessions granted to Lorraine by Germany. In any event the new fiscal regime will increase the cost of living to the Saar people.

For the last two years the French Customs authorities have been replacing the temporary control stations on the German frontier by permanent buildings erected at a cost of 80 million francs. The people who live in the expectation that their economic separation from Germany is only temporary do not see why the French Government should erect permanent buildings at great cost when they may only be required for ten years. On this point the leaders of the majority parties on the Advisory Council, in an open letter to M. Herriot in December 1924, said :

“ According to Article 31 of the Constitution of the Saar the Territory forms part of the French Customs system until the plebiscite takes place (1935). Until January 10th, 1925, the exportation of Saar products to Germany and the importation of German products intended for local consumption in the Saar are exempt from Customs duty. A Customs barrier separating the Saar from Germany is from every point of view unfavourable to the Saarois. The Saar people are accustomed to

## *Tariffs and Prices*

buy what they want from German sources, and the Saar industries will not find in the French market, crowded with goods similar to the products of the Saar, compensation for the loss of the German market. If the Customs separation is damaging to Saar industries, we do not see what benefits it can confer on French economic life. The industries of the Saar are the best customers of the mines of the Saar, the property of the French State—using more than one-third of the coal production. To set up a Customs barrier will mean the loss of a good customer for the Saar industries and consequently have a detrimental effect on the profits of the mines. The Customs dues will not recoup the French State for this loss of profit from the mines, as the balance of the Customs belongs to the Saar Territory. Therefore, as neither the Saar nor France gets any advantage from the policy, we do not understand why it is proposed to carry out this Customs separation and why the French Customs administration should spend 65 millions in constituting Customs Houses around the Saar Territory.”

A revised estimate of the cost of the Customs Houses is 80 million francs—not far short of a million pounds at the present rate of exchange.

The Customs agreement was carried through by the President and the French Minister of Finance.

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

While some modifications have been introduced, the whole scheme is drawn up as if it were intended to be a permanent and not a possible temporary adjustment of fiscal arrangements.

## APPEASEMENT OR CHAOS

## CHAPTER XVI

### APPEASEMENT OR CHAOS

“SMALL as the district is,” says an official historian of the Peace Conference referring to the Saar Basin, “the settlement of the problem might well be decisive of the future welfare of Europe.” This statement was made before the so-called settlement had been put to the test. Five years’ experience of the new departure in international Government brings home the conviction, to a student of its working, that a new Alsace-Lorraine has been created containing the germs of disease which may spread until the whole body politic of Europe is infected. M. Clemenceau, in pleading for a more logical, if more ruthless arrangement, told his colleagues at the Peace Conference that if they were not careful the Saar would become a European Morocco—“a hotbed and forcing-ground for continual Franco-German conflicts,” which is a terse and apt description of what it is to-day. Mr. Lloyd George desired above all to guard against the creation of a new Alsace-Lorraine; and that old

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

danger centre is reproduced in a concentrated form in the Saar. President Wilson dreamt of a new Jerusalem, and a city of racial hatreds has grown up on his foundation.

France sees in the Saar only a problem affecting French interests. Germans look at it as only of vital concern to Germany, but the problem is one of world-wide import. The League of Nations stands trustee of the three-quarters of a million people in the Territory, and every member of the League has a share in its responsibility. The United States cannot escape from a moral responsibility: President Wilson was the author of the League's first attempt at government. At the time—March and April 1919—the future of peace and European civilisation was involved in the fate of the Saar. Mr. Wilson was not able to see his solution through; he left the child of his dreams in the care of foster parents who had mixed feelings regarding it.

When the momentous decision was arrived at, the Big Four of the Supreme Council, who had taken matters into their own hands, were reduced to three and the chief member of the trinity, for this purpose, was ill. Mr. Wilson yielded on points in a compromise because he was nearly worn out. He told his territorial experts that, while he was willing to give France any indemnity in kind to which she was entitled, "I have



### *Appeasement or Chaos*

no right to hand over to her people who do not want to go to her, or to give them a special Government, even if it is better for them, if they do not want it." He afterwards compromised on this ideal of Wilsonism. Mr. Lloyd George accepted the settlement on the assumption that the United States would be a member of the League, and as such would likely be represented, as well as Great Britain, on the body ultimately set up to administer the new State.

The withdrawal of America was the first misfortune which befell the Saar. Mistakes followed, partly owing to the astute diplomacy of France, and partly to the lessened interest taken by other nations, including Great Britain, in the new development.

Clemenceau was the only one of the Big Three who stuck to a logical course. While he gave way under pressure, the spirit of his policy has been maintained and its objective never lost sight of.

The agreement on the Saar, which always had a suggestion of unreality about it, was followed by the adoption of a compromise Constitution, containing equivocally framed clauses open to more than one interpretation, according to the spirit behind the interpretation. One article provides that the Governing Commission, which

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

was to function under the Constitution, was to be the sole interpretative authority. Another article made the President "the Executive of the Commission." The meaning of this latter clause is obvious: the President, or Chairman, was to be the agent through whom the Commission's decisions were executed. The Commission was intended to have a real collegiate character. The members were equal in power and the President had only the superior status which he acquired as their executive head.

When the League of Nations went beyond the provisions of the Constitution and accepted the recommendation that the French member should be President, the first cardinal blunder was committed, one that has been the source of much of the trouble which has ensued. The French member, M. V. Rault, who had been Prefect of Lyons, became, as a matter of course, President. He was a capable official—of the super-bureaucrat type. Once a prefect always a prefect. He believed in central authority. He concentrated in his own hands all the important ministerial offices. Instead of acting as the Executive of the Commission he turned the other members into his subordinates. On many occasions he ignored them. He reported decisions after he had made them. What was more—and worse—he regarded himself not exclusively as the servant of the

League of Nations, but as the agent and representative of France. He looked to the Central Power in Paris for guidance on some matters, as he had done when he was a Prefect. M. Rault has said quite frankly that his first duty is to safeguard the interests of France under the Treaty, and he also claims the right, and has exercised it, of communicating with the French Government and of complying with that Government's requests for information without the knowledge or consent of his colleagues. M. Rault is an earnest patriotic Frenchman and would consider himself a traitor to his country if he did not do the best for it. The Saar is an incident in his life: France is his whole existence. As Prefect of the Saar under a Central Government in Paris he would be a perfect official.

M. Rault is an unimaginative, stubborn official—an upright man of strong character whose integrity and honesty are not in question. As an exponent of Poincaréism he would be a striking success, but Poincaréism does not make for pacification. It is not surprising, therefore, that the President has been the chief target aimed at in the campaign which the Saar political parties have carried on against their alien Government. He ignores the representative capacity of appointed leaders of the parties and treats them with indifference. He holds that their actions

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

expressing hostility to the system of government in the Saar are inspired from Berlin, and that politically they are branches and tools of a great German conspiracy against France. He thinks that instead of grouching they should consider themselves exceedingly lucky to be governed by an authority of which he is the executive officer, in a district which is largely under the economic domination of France. It is beyond his comprehension to understand why they should not be thoroughly content with their lot, and he considers that he is fulfilling his mandate in looking after their welfare without injuring the higher interests of France.

If M. Rault had ever any desire to really get into close touch with the German Saarois, to understand them, to study their welfare, which the Constitution and various authoritative utterances say should be the Commission's first care, he has been seriously handicapped, inasmuch as he does not know German, the official language of the Territory. The proceedings of the Commission are conducted in French—only interpreted into German for the benefit of the Saar member. A translating staff are employed to supply the President with extracts from the German Press, which are passed on to other non-German speaking French officials and to the military commanders in the Saar and in the

## *Appeasement or Chaos*

neighbouring occupied territories. When the President sees the heads of local institutions and business men and when he receives deputations he has always an interpreter—a Frenchman—to translate for him. It is not surprising in the circumstances to find that all the important administrative posts in the Government are filled with Frenchmen. It would be too heavy a strain on the President for him to conduct business all day through interpreters. Moreover, he is too good a Frenchman to trust a German, however expert a French linguist he may be, to act as his intermediary.

This situation—a President who sets himself up as an administrative autocrat, who considers that he has obligations towards France, who surrounds himself with French officials and holds aloof from the local population—is enough in itself to poison the atmosphere, which was already charged with fears, suspicions, and prejudices.

The high French officials are in a dual position : they are citizens of France, pledged to serve France, and their oath of service to the Governing Commission as the representative of the League of Nations is a qualified declaration of loyalty.

Apart from the selection of the President, the appointment of the other Commissioners influences policy. While each minister is "supreme in his own department," general policy is subject

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

to the decisions of the majority. The President has been fortunate in having as a rule a majority who backed him up in a pro-French policy. It is significant to note that genuine neutrals—men who have not mixed in European politics or have had no association with France or Germany—have taken up a thoroughly detached attitude, resolved only to do their best, in operating a bad instrument, in the interests of the population, and to live up to the lofty ideals of the League of Nations. Thus Mr. R. D. Waugh, the first Canadian member, stood out for high principles and generally found himself in a minority of one. Colonel Espinosa, elected by the Council of the League as a dark horse in March 1924, also free from political affiliations, brought an impartial mind to bear on a complicated situation and opposed the President's preconceived policy. Mr. G. W. Stephens, the Canadian, who now occupies the position of Finance Minister, and who is proficient both in German and French, adopts a course of strict neutrality. Within his own sphere he has proved to be a capable administrator. He has a keener appreciation of German psychology than any member of the Government.

If members of the Commission have other thoughts, interests, or associations than loyalty to the Constitution, the responsibility lies with the League of Nations. The Council has supreme

### *Appeasement or Chaos*

control over appointments: it has allowed its other powers to be whittled down by interpretations of the Constitution.

Only two members of the Council have stood up consistently for protecting the rights of the Saar people—Mr. Branting, ex-Prime Minister of Sweden, and Lord Cecil. They never forgot that the Saar was a world charge and recognised the bearing which its problems have on international affairs. The representative of France, on the other hand, was solely concerned with the effect which the affairs of the Saar had on French interests. At Council meetings there is wire-pulling and bargaining, a policy of give and take. The Saar is a pawn on a large political chessboard. British interests are widespread: it may be that we are at one time more concerned with Dantzig, with the Baltic or the Near East, or Asia Minor. France always pursues a logical course, has a definite policy from which she only deviates in order to return by a circuitous route.

Many members of the League think that the people of the Saar, who, after all, are fairly prosperous, should be content with their lot; they are not worse off materially than their neighbours in Lorraine, and their state is paradisaical compared with the fate which has overtaken their compatriots in other parts of Germany,

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

which might also have befallen them. The social and material conditions of the Saar people have nothing to do with the case. Its settlement was a bargain. It had a bearing on other issues at the Peace Conference, and the inhabitants are entitled to the benefit of every point gained. Their complaint is that they are done out of some of the concessions granted and are afraid that they may lose them all.

The influence of the Governing Commission on the public cannot be estimated apart from the activities of other authorities. Three departments of the French Government participate in running the country. The Mines Administration is an independent organisation, the Customs regime is under another French ministry, and the place is garrisoned with French soldiery under the War Ministry. The Governing Commission has close and friendly relations with each of these foreign authorities. Then there is the police force with its French chiefs, French trade and financial organisations, preponderating French interests in the metallurgic and other industries, the introduction of French currency and attempts to make changes on the French model. In all these things the inhabitants see a well-organised conspiracy to bring about forcible annexation. This fear was burned into them when France took possession of the Ruhr. Their country is



## *Appeasement or Chaos*

within the sphere where France seeks security. Why, they ask, should the French Government carry out costly developments of the mines beyond what is required in order to produce Reparation coal—if permanent possession is not the aim? Why should 80 million francs be spent in building permanent Custom-houses on the German frontier except on the assumption that fiscal union with France will continue after 1935? Why should the Mines Administration build new schools for educating the German children and pay for their education? The schools are not necessary and there is no obligation under the Statute for the French authorities to provide them. It must therefore be part of a Frenchifying scheme: to teach future voters the French language and give them lessons in French-made history. Why should French soldiers be stationed in the Saar when the local gendarmerie are adequate for the maintenance of law and order? Surely in order that France may keep a firm grip on the Territory. Why should the Commission have resorted to various devices to try and create a Saar nationality contrary to the Constitution? Why should a French colonising policy be pushed in every direction—everything French encouraged and the German national spirit and German culture frowned upon and sometimes suppressed?

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

In the region of economics and industry annexation is almost accomplished. The ownership of the mines is itself a determining factor. Coal is the centrifugal force round which the country's prosperity revolves. The control of the Customs is a weapon for pushing trade, and the Saar is linked up with Lorraine as effectively as when both were under Germany. All the economic forces converge in a centralised policy which is annexation. France has not abated one iota of her ambition since M. Clemenceau put annexation in the forefront of his claims at the Peace Conference. Up to now there has been no deviation from this annexationist policy: it is pursued with tenacity and craft in roundabout ways, and by underground methods, in preparation for 1935. That the Saar may be another Alsace-Lorraine has no terrors for France. Germany is now helpless. That the Saar people are becoming more intensely German and will vote in 1935 for rejoining their Fatherland will not deter France from sitting tight if the political situation does not undergo a radical change in the meantime. The French militarists and imperialists who still hold to the Clemenceau Saar policy are no believers in the gospel of self-determination. In place of the Wilsonian shibboleth, making the world safe for democracy they put the slogan security for France. It may

### *Appeasement or Chaos*

be urged that this is alarmist speculation: yet it is the end towards which things are drifting so long as the Government of the Saar remains under dominating French influences. Events may take place when the plebiscitary period is approaching which will give an excuse for military intervention and for continued occupation. There are precedents. The small compact area can be squeezed from three sides. The pressure used is capable of forcing a crisis. France holds the power of life and death over the Saar people. Dear food, high taxation, bad social conditions, may lead to strikes, disturbances, and outrages. The Saarois are a wonderfully patient and subdued people, but they may become exasperated beyond endurance. And it is possible for revolt to be precipitated by sinister methods, intrigue and conspiracy such as were resorted to to organise the separatist movement in the neighbouring Palatinate. The Communists would be willing confederates in any disturbance which would upset the existing order.

If such a crime against international law and treaty rights as forcible annexation were committed, the League of Nations would be a mere helpless onlooker. Such an outrage against humanity would mean the end of the League, and also of the Treaty of Versailles. The Dawes plan and every other plan would be scrapped.

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

Europe would be thrown back into chaos more disastrous for civilisation than the Great War.

The time to avoid the possibility of such a peril, or any further infringement of the rights granted to the Saar people by the League of Nations, or any reasonable cause for complaints of unfairness and injustice in the application of the Statute, is not five or ten years hence : it is now. And the only means by which the League of Nations can save its own reputation and ensure the success of its experiment in government is to exercise to the full its powers of supervision and appointment.

We have seen that the chief mischief has arisen by the appointment of a Frenchman as President of the Commission, under conditions which enabled him to usurp autocratic authority. The chief executive officer should not again be a Frenchman, but a neutral—that is, one who is neither a French or German partisan. There is one selection which would be quite as bad as a Frenchman—the appointment of a citizen of one of the countries with which France has military and political alliances. He would find himself owing a dual allegiance, to his own country and to his ally. He would endeavour to serve the interests of both, which in most matters would be identical. The Saar would come last.

No policy of appeasement which can now be

### *Appeasement or Chaos*

adopted will win the support of electors in 1935 for a continuance of League of Nations government. There will be an overwhelming majority in favour of rejoining Germany. In the meantime the inhabitants are resigned to their fate of political vassalage for another ten years. But during that period the Territory should be made a centre for radiating good-will instead of fomenting racial hatred. It is possible still to make it, as an optimist has expressed it, "one of those fixed points round which it may be hoped the immense European chaos will some day consolidate or crystallise anew."

The people of the Saar would welcome a policy of appeasement. They are law-abiding, industrious, thrifty, home-loving and they want to live in peace. In one of the many memorials which the party leaders have sent to the League, some of them couched in the bitterest language—expressing the measure of their resentment and sense of wrong—there is a statement which includes a pledge for the future. After pointing out that the Commission has, by its lack of "comprehension of our needs and abuse of the power conferred upon it," lost the confidence of the inhabitants, this appeal says:—

"It stands solitary and isolated among the people whose welfare has been placed in its

## *A Danger Spot in Europe*

hands. The fulfilment of its duty in an idealistic spirit would have won for it the respect of the entire world. It was to be the outward manifestation of the high principles of the League of Nations, justice, freedom and self-determination, and in this was to bridge over the wide abyss which separates two great nations. This the Governing Commission has been unable to effect. It has failed to give practical effect to the high ideals which gave birth to the League of Nations. For this reason, though the idea itself may survive, the work of those who were called upon to translate the idea into action was bound to suffer shipwreck.

“And yet the Saar Territory is inhabited by a population which honestly desires that the noble conceptions and great ideals of the League of Nations should be put into effect by a Commission which will pursue this aim honourably. The whole world would pay a tribute of respect to such a Government. Evidence would then be afforded to the entire universe that a solution can be found for one of the most difficult problems in history through the mediation of the League of Nations in a spirit of justice and international reconciliation.”

This petition was signed by the leaders of the parties represented on the Advisory Council: the Central, National Liberal, United Social

Democratic, and the German Democratic parties. It was issued in June 1923, when the Ruhr occupation stimulated an aggressive policy in the Saar, but the atmosphere then created remains to-day. The French Government has not yet exercised a restraining influence. The people will not credit the Commission, as now constituted, with better intentions. They discover insidious Frenchifying tactics in every action it takes and see the schemes for economic penetration gaining ground. So the canker of mistrust and hatred spreads. If one were to seek for an atmosphere exemplifying the exact opposite to that which the friends of the League hoped the experiment would call forth, it will be found in the Saar Valley.

The Governing Commission, subject to the appointment of non-partisan members and freed from a politically tied majority, has it in its power to transform the situation. Without in any way interfering with the vital economic interests of France which must be safeguarded, and its rights under the Treaty strictly observed, the Commission can bring in a new era based on good-will. It has a Constitution to work which can be interpreted in a broad, sympathetic spirit just as in the past it has been interpreted in a narrow, rigid, partisan spirit, and even supplemented by quite unnecessary gratuitous and

### *A Danger Spot in Europe*

provocative qualifications, regulations, decrees and ordinances. What M. Tardieu called a "bad solution," in another sense, has to be eased and made good by an infusion of sympathy and a touch of humanity—not alone for the welfare of the Saar people, but for the sake of world peace and the ideals of the League of Nations—by transforming this key frontier country from a forcing-ground of hate into a nursery cultivating a spirit of amelioration between France and Germany—by replacing the now impassable chasm with a bridge which will lead to the high road of peace and stability in Western Europe.