FAITHFUL TO THE FATHERLAND: JULIUS CURTIUS AND
WEIMAR FOREIGN POLICY, 1920-1932

by

WILLIAM GRANT RATLIFF, B.A., M.A.

A DISSERTATION

IN

HISTORY

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Texas Tech University in
Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Approved

Accepted

Dean/ of the Graduate School

August, 1987

©1988

WILLIAM GRANT RATLIFF

801
T3
1927
No. 80
Copy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE iii

CHAPTER

I. IMMUTABLE PATRIOT. 1

II. ECONOMICS AND FOREIGN POLICY, 1926-1929. 48

III. TOWARD A NEW FOREIGN POLICY. 92

IV. THE MINORITIES QUESTION AND THE LEAGUE
OF NATIONS 149

V. CUSTOMS UNION, FINANCIAL CRISIS, AND
RESIGNATION, 1930-1931 183

VI. EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS 233

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 265

APPENDICES

A. EXTRACT OF THE SPEECH BY FOREIGN MINISTER
CURTIUS TO THE REICHSTAG, NOVEMBER 29,
1929 278

B. THE TREATY OF SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE,
SEPTEMBER 10, 1919 (EXTRACTS). 283

C. EXTRACT OF ADDRESS BY CURTIUS TO THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL,
JANUARY 21, 1931 285

D. EXTRACT OF RADIO ADDRESS BY FOREIGN
MINISTER CURTIUS TO THE PEOPLE OF
THE UNITED STATES, JUNE 21, 1930 290

PREFACE

The ministers, thinkers, and poets--
They are all the same faces time and again.
It's all like it has been before the war
and like before the next--

--Ernst Toller,
Hoppla wir leben, 1927¹

The problem of continuity in German modern history, the existence of a traceable and organic development linking the evolution of the Reich founded in 1871 to its destruction in 1945, is one of the questions of German historiography which has prompted a growing debate for the past fifteen years. Part of this debate has focused on the position of the Weimar period in the general course of German history. Is the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933, to be considered merely as an epilogue to the Wilhelmian era, a democratic interlude between the Second and Third Reichs, a prologue to the Third Reich, or a separate entity, bearing only tenuous links to the eras preceding and following?²

¹Quoted in Susanne Everett, Lost Berlin (New York: Gallery Books, 1979), p. 92.

²The historiographical debate is discussed in the following review articles: Konrad H. Jarausch, "From Second to Third Reich: The Problem of Continuity in German Foreign Policy," Central European History 12 (1979): 68-82; John A. Moses, "From Kaiser to Führer: New Works in Modern German History," Australian Journal of Politics

Generally, the argument for continuity in modern German history espoused by many post-World War II historians, best known as the Bielefeld School, concentrates on two fundamental questions. What are the lines of continuity that link the years 1871 and 1933? Was the progression from Bismarck to Hitler unavoidable, woven into the fabric of German history by forces impossible to change?³

To address these questions, the Bielefelders promote the following concepts: (1) The authoritarian character of German politics following Bismarck was the product of social and economic processes resulting in the primacy of domestic politics as the determinant of state policy in both the external and internal arenas; (2) the ruling elites in Germany, a loose coalition of Prussian Junkerdom and big-business interests, attempted to manipulate middle-class liberalism in an effort to

and History 25 (1979): 112-116; Geoff Eley, "Recent Work in Modern German History," Historical Journal 23 (1980): 463-479; Werner van der Merwe, "Gustav Stresemann in the Debate on Continuity and Discontinuity in German Foreign Policy," Kleio [South Africa] 14 (1982): 5-27; Richard J. Evans, "From Hitler to Bismarck: Third Reich and Kaiserreich in Recent Historiography," Historical Journal 26 (1983): 485-497, 999-1020; and Roger Fletcher, "Recent Developments in West German Historiography: The Bielefeld School and Its Critics," German Studies Review 7 (1984): 451-480.

³Fletcher, "Recent Developments in West German Historiography," pp. 452-453.

eliminate the political influence of the political organizations of the industrial proletariat; (3) Germany repeatedly used social imperialism, the attempt to externalize insoluble domestic problems by means of an aggressive foreign policy, to legitimize the sociopolitical status quo; and (4) a "we versus them" mentality, common in modern German history, culminated in the violent anti-Semitism of the Third Reich.⁴

Criticism of the Bielefeld School has provided the focus for a fierce debate among historians of Germany since the early 1970s. The traditionalist neo-Rankean historians argue that German history has not been qualitatively different from that of the rest of Europe, for such destructive forces as anti-Semitism and militarism have been present almost everywhere on the Continent. The traditionalists insist that international politics possesses a high degree of autonomy and cannot be explained in terms of the primacy of domestic politics. The traditionalists also attack the Bielefelders' penchant for dismissing into insignificance the acts of "great men" in shaping history. Finally, the Bielefelders are criticized for their preoccupation with structures, forces, and social processes to the exclusion of more traditional

⁴Ibid., pp. 457-470.

political history. A major modification of the Bielefeld interpretation of German history argues that the Weimar period, far from being a direct extension of the Bismarck era, was, at least until late 1930, a unique example of German democracy. This argument, espoused by Peter Krüger in Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar,⁵ reasons, inter alia, that the Weimar Republic's foreign policy was markedly less belligerent than has been generally accepted, and that the Republic's statesmen, notably Gustav Stresemann, were truly interested in international conciliation and European cooperation. For this, if no other reason, Krüger contends, the Weimar Republic should be omitted from any Bismarck to Hitler linear development.

Other attacks on Bielefeld historiography have come from New Left historians (among them two English-trained social historians, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley) who dismiss continuity theories as having little relevance for the position of the working class in modern German history. These practitioners of Alltagsgeschichte, the history of the common man and his everyday life, allege that the Bielefelders portray a too static picture of German history that does not allow for change from below.

⁵Peter Krüger, Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985).

The Bielefeld School is criticized for placing far too much emphasis on the manipulative cunning of the political elites and for neglecting the independent effect on the system of the allegedly manipulated groups in German society.⁶

This thesis will address, in case study form, the possible lines of historical continuity in German foreign policy during the Weimar Republic. It will focus on the question of whether domestic politics fundamentally determined Weimar foreign policy and whether the foreign policy aims, and methods for achieving those aims, constitute direct links to German foreign policy during the Kaiserreich and, by extension, to the Third Reich.

The long-neglected political career of Julius Curtius offers an unusual opportunity to investigate the issue of historical continuity in Weimar foreign policy. Curtius was born into an upper-class industrialist family in Rhenish-Prussia during the reign of Wilhelm I. He studied law and economics at several of Europe's most distinguished universities, served as an officer in the German Army during the First World War, and took up a political career in 1920. As an influential member of

⁶Eley, "Recent Work in Modern German History," pp. 464 ff.

Gustav Stresemann's Deutsche Volkspartei, he served in the Reichstag from 1920 until 1926. A middle-conservative German nationalist, he railed against the alleged injustices forced upon Germany by the Versailles Treaty and based most of his political career on efforts at revising the Treaty's most onerous provisions. While serving as Economics Minister from 1926 to 1929, Curtius played an important role in German-Soviet relations and, in 1929-1930, he served as a negotiator in the Young Plan talks for reduction of Germany's war reparations. Succeeding Stresemann as Foreign Minister in late 1929, Curtius was responsible for German-Polish relations and, in 1930-1931, he conducted negotiations with Austria for an economic union. This customs union affair, vigorously opposed by both Britain and France as being the first step to a forbidden Anschluss, or political union linking Germany and Austria, resulted in Curtius's resignation from the Foreign Ministry. This study will survey Curtius's influence on German foreign policy, especially his interest in promoting the policy of Mitteleuropa, the long-desired dominance of Germany in Central Europe. The success of this policy depended upon the revision of the Versailles Treaty, and Curtius's turn, in September 1930, to a dependency on domestic politics as the prime mover behind his foreign policy efforts. Finally, this work will

address any possible qualitative difference between Curtius's direction of German foreign policy and that of the Hitler period.

This paper is based on the available Curtius papers in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Curtius's three published memoirs, and the public documents which span the years 1920-1932 (including the Reichstag debates and cabinet protocols). For purposes of citation, the published collections of Foreign Office records covering Curtius's tenure as Economics Minister and Foreign Minister have been used. Wherever possible, original documents and microform collections residing in the Bundesarchiv, Public Record Office in London, and the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University, have been consulted.

I would like to express my appreciation to the members of my committee, Professors James Brink, Idris Traylor, George Flynn, Brian Blakeley, and Wendell Aycock for their support and counsel during my graduate studies at Texas Tech University. Their careful reading of a draft presented to them during a summer term, admittedly an inconvenient time of year, yielded valuable additions to this study. To Professor Otto M. Nelson I extend my deepest gratitude and heartfelt appreciation. As chairman of my committee and director of this work he has exhibited

patience and consideration beyond the call of duty. His sage advice and careful guidance over the past seven years will never be forgotten.

Without the assistance of many librarians and archivists in both the United States and Europe this study would have been impossible. Particularly helpful were Mrs. Agnes Peterson and staff at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and Marianne Leonharz of the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz. Thanks also are due to Joan Weldon, whose expert typing skills and helpful advice expedited the completion of this project. Finally, to my parents, whose support and encouragement were unflagging, I owe a special debt which can never be repaid.

CHAPTER I

IMMUTABLE PATRIOT

Arriving in Berlin in early 1920 to begin his service as a Reichstag delegate for the conservative Deutsche Volkspartei (DVP, or German People's Party), Julius Curtius would have noticed many changes in a city in transition from Imperial capital to capital of the new German Republic. The city still bore scars from months of revolution following the 1918 Armistice. Freikorps, right-wing paramilitary units, still occupied parts of the city. The patrons in Berlin's famous sidewalk cafes talked mainly of the ongoing food and fuel shortages, the "vindictive" peace settlement, and the likelihood of a bleak future. The city's cabarets, however, were beginning to flourish, and Europe's avant garde artists and writers, intent on shocking the bourgeoisie, were making Berlin their headquarters. At the Capitol Cinema, across from the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, surrealist films, such as Fritz Lang's The Spiders, and Between Two Worlds, or Robert Wiene's Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, were playing to full houses. Jazz was becoming increasingly popular; the Club Tingle-Tangle imported the hottest bands from

Harlem; and new clubs were opening daily. The artist George Grosz was just beginning to sketch the stout, vulgar war profiteers, languid dance-hall girls, and cynical war veterans. Within a few more months, the National Socialist swastikas would be decorating alley walls. The Kaiser was gone, self-exiled to Holland, leaving in his place a Republic for which few Germans held much enthusiasm. Yet the linden trees, symbolic of Imperial grandeur, still stood on the broad avenue leading from the Brandenburg Gate to the Alexanderplatz. At the Mozartsaal, the Berlin City Orchestra was still playing Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner to standing ovations. Opposite the west facade of the Reichstag Building stood the national monument to Prince Otto von Bismarck, facing defiantly westward, the Iron Chancellor's hand resting on the hilt of his sword.¹

The forty-three year old Julius Curtius, a recent survivor of four years of warfare as an artillery officer on the western front, took little interest in Berlin's new bohemianism. A corporate attorney since 1904, Curtius had earned degrees in law and economics from the universities of Kiel, Strasburg, Bonn, and Paris. In 1920, he nurtured a fierce interest in regaining his Fatherland's

¹Gerhard Masur, Imperial Berlin (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 2-10; Everett, Lost Berlin, pp. 66 ff.

lost glories. The frivolities of cabaret Berlin and the nihilism of the avant garde artists appalled him. Throughout his political career, which included service as Economics Minister from 1926 to 1929, and Foreign Minister from 1929 through 1931, Curtius carried with him an intense nationalist perspective on postwar European reconstruction. He had a much greater affinity for Wagner-loving, under-the-linden-trees Berlin, than for the jazz-age city.

Born in 1878 into a wealthy industrialist family in the manufacturing city of Duisburg during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm I, Curtius (the original family name Korte was changed in the eighteenth century) was imbued with German nationalism at an early age. Duisburg, situated on the Rhine at its confluence with the Ruhr twelve miles north of Düsseldorf, was nineteenth-century continental Europe's largest inland river port and a center for manufactures of steel, machinery, chemicals, shipbuilding, and coal production. Both Curtius's father and grandfather, who founded the Ultramarinfabrik (the region's largest chemical company) in Duisburg, exerted an enormous influence on the city's economic, political, and social life. From the 1870s until the end of the Kaiserreich, Rhenish-Prussian industrialists such as the Curtiuses felt themselves the most patriotic element of German society. The Curtius and other well-to-do Duisburg families considered

themselves the chief defenders of German Kultur, not only against the envious French or Belgians, but also against the increasingly vociferous international socialist elements of the German working class.²

Entering Gymnasium in 1889, Curtius was subject to further nationalist influence. Beginning in 1877, Gymnasium faculty, as a result of government policy, had become the apostles of German patriotism. The Prussian curriculum of the Duisburg schools emphasized an overt nationalist element in language, literature, and history studies. This emphasis was guaranteed because the faculty, as state officials, were constantly observed to ensure that their students were fully indoctrinated. Curtius's higher education was also suffused with nationalism, as university professors were appointed directly by the Imperial government. The Law curriculum, in particular, was dominated by conservative-nationalist values. This educationally-inculcated political conservatism was enhanced in Curtius by his adherence to Evangelical Church

²Paul Kosok, Modern Germany: A Study of Conflict-ing Loyalties (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 37; Roger Chickering, We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), pp.133 ff; Frederick O. Hertz, The German Public Mind in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History of German Political Sentiments, Aspirations and Ideas, trans. Eric Northcott (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1975), pp. 163-178; Louis L. Snyder, Roots of German Nationalism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp.112 ff.

doctrine which, throughout the Imperial period, was dominated by government-approved clergymen who preached patriotism, nationalism, and loyalty to the Fatherland.³

With his Prussian-influenced, industrialist family background and his politically illiberal education, it is little wonder that Curtius was not gemütlich. During his adult life, this natty, small-framed, oval-faced, dark-complexioned, corporate attorney was characterized as serious, intelligent, level-headed, energetic, and socially wooden. Following his marriage in 1905 to Adda Carp, a Duisburg industrialist's daughter, the couple moved to Heidelberg, where Curtius taught international law at the university. Interested in politics since his schoolboy days, Curtius joined the National Liberals, the party of the propertied and educated bourgeoisie, and the pillar of Wilhelmian nationalism. Like the majority of National Liberals before 1914, Curtius championed an imperialist Weltpolitik and, during World War I, he approved of annexationist war aims. Following his war service, Curtius, in June 1920, entered the Reichstag as the German People's

³Kosok, Modern Germany, pp. 158-165, 197; Ralf Dahrendorf, Society and Democracy in Germany (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967 [1965]), pp. 236-237; Sterling Fishman, The Struggle for German Youth: The Search for Educational Reform in Imperial Germany (New York: Revisionist Press, 1976), pp. 2-3; Friedrich Paulsen, German Education, Past and Present (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), pp. 192 ff; Frederic Lilge, The Abuse of Learning: The Failure of the German University (New York: Octagon Books, 1975), *passim*.

Party delegate from Baden, which encompassed Heidelberg in its electoral district.

Founded in December 1918 by Gustav Stresemann, a longtime National Liberal Party leader, the DVP served as a union of the prewar National Liberals' rightist elements and other pre-Weimar conservative parties. The DVP received strong support from big industrialists, such as the multi-millionaire Hugo Stinnes, professionals, intellectuals, and other non-monarchist conservatives. Curtius vigorously supported the party manifesto, which proclaimed the inviolability of private property, the necessity of Versailles Treaty revision, and support for big business. The DVP was a non-racialist party, supportive of pensions for disabled war veterans, and favoring female suffrage. Yet, the party's salient characteristic was its appeal to business circles. Maintaining a motto of what was good for industry was good for the nation, by 1930 ten DVP deputies held among them seventy-seven company directorships.⁴

Curtius entered the Reichstag as the German People's Party's chief opponent of the Social Democratic

⁴Wilhelm Mommsen, ed., Deutsche Parteiprogramme (Munich: Olzog Verlag, 1960), p. 520. See also Lothar Albertin, Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik: eine vergleichende Analyse der Deutschen Demokratische Partei und der Deutschen Volkspartei (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972); and Wolfgang Hartenstein, Die Anfänge der deutschen Volkspartei, 1918-1920 (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1962).

Party's (SPD) efforts at nationalization of most of Germany's heavy industry and, from 1925 to 1932, he was one of the party's chief spokesmen on foreign policy. From 1920 until his retirement, Curtius opposed all of the Versailles Treaty provisions regarding Germany's obligation to pay war reparations, the devolution of Germany's overseas colonies, demilitarization, foreign occupation of German territory, and the restructuring of Germany's boundaries, especially in the east. . Curtius supported the party's overall goals of a "union of all German peoples," including the Austrian Germans, such a union being specifically forbidden by several postwar treaties. He also supported the objective of Germany's reacquisition of colonial possessions by peaceful means "in the interests of economic health"; and Germany's right to "safeguard the rights of German minorities in foreign lands."⁵

Curtius also shared with party leaders an aversion to "extreme democratization." Curtius opposed the subordination of the government to the amorphous "will of the people" through plebiscites and referendums, which might result in extreme "social leveling." Curtius accepted the philosophy of popular participation in government, but he was suspicious of egalitarianism. He argued that the principles of true democracy required freedom for the

⁵Mommsen, Deutsche Parteiprogramme, pp. 520-529.

people's Reichstag representatives to exercise their own judgments and not be subjected to "the whims of mass opinion." He also rejected any movement for the redistribution of wealth on Marxist terms and, on many occasions, he led the DVP Reichstag Fraktion in opposing such legislation.⁶ Through the 1920s, for example, Curtius fought Social Democratic bills to increase business and personal taxes, the revenue to be earmarked for social services. Here and elsewhere, Curtius demanded that such "Marxist tampering" be quashed. To him, such measures were "confiscatory" and would cripple the German economy by decreasing the amount of capital available for investment. This was especially important, noted Curtius, when so much of the nation's wealth allegedly was being siphoned off in reparations payments. He also used such occasions to impugn the patriotism of left-wing Reichstag delegates by suggesting that the socialists were more interested in fomenting a financial collapse resulting in a Marxist revolution than in alleviating alleged social suffering.⁷

⁶Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, Politisches Archiv, Nachlass des Reichsaussenministers Dr. Gustav Stresemann, microcopy T-120, National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C., reel 3069, serial 6896, frames 134553 ff (hereafter cited as Stresemann, Nachlass reel/serial/frame). The Stresemann papers were also viewed in the Public Record Office, London, and Stanford University, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace.

⁷Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstages (Berlin: Norddeutschen Buchdruckerei, 1871---), 356: 8613-8622 (hereafter cited Verhandlungen).

In line with Curtius's anti-SPD efforts was his attack on his domestic political nemesis, the Reichswirtschaftsrat. This economic council had been created by Article 165 of the Weimar Constitution in 1919, largely at the insistence of the Social Democratic Party. The council served as an extension of the previous workers' councils of the 1918-1919 provisional government. The Reichswirtschaftsrat's task was to assist in the execution of nationalization laws, particularly in coal and railroads. This infuriated the conservative political parties and their leaders, not least the DVP and Curtius. In his first major published work, Curtius criticized both the council's political motivation and its democratic legitimacy.⁸

Searching for legal precedent with which to attack the council, Curtius compared the SPD's Reichswirtschaftsrat to an earlier Prussian extra-parliamentary economic council instituted by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck in 1881. Bismarck's Volkswirtschaftsrat (People's Economic Council) was intended to supplant some of the economic responsibilities of the Prussian Landtag. Its members, largely industrialists and Junkers, were selected by the Imperial

⁸ Julius Curtius, Bismarcks Plan eines Deutschen Volkswirtschaftsrat: Historisch-Politische Studie von Dr. Julius Curtius, Heidelberg (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, 1919).

government. The council members did not represent political parties but economic interests, a situation, noted Curtius, similar to the largely socialist, working-class dominated Reichswirtschaftsrat.⁹ As Chancellor Bismarck had intended his council to originate and to supervise all state finance bills, keeping in mind the economic interests of its members, so, wrote Curtius, the Marxists on the current council had the same authority and social intention. Curtius excoriated Bismarck for promoting the extension of the Volkswirtschaftsrat into a national collateral parliament (neben-Parlament), able to influence national policy out of all proportion to its size.¹⁰ Curtius noted a parallel to the socialist Reichswirtschaftsrat, especially the danger of allowing "non-experts" to exert near-legislative power over the Reichstag. The ability to control long-term economic policies, such as the SPD's nationalization program, he argued, was tantamount to indirect control over all governmental policies, internal and external. The task for the conservative parties in 1920, Curtius wrote, was to address the question of how the Reichstag was going to prevent the takeover of its constitutional powers by a politically-dominated, appointive body. "Quite

⁹Ibid., p. 55.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 17-19.

rightly," Curtius noted, Bismarck's Volkswirtschaftsrat was thwarted when the Reichstag eventually refused to grant money for its operating budget.¹¹ And, due largely to Curtius's opposition, the Reichswirtschaftsrat never succeeded in most of its nationalization projects.

In November 1920, for example, the Reichswirtschaftsrat proposed the total nationalization of Germany's coal industry. The Reichstag began debating the nationalization measure on 20 November with SPD delegate Rudolf Hilferding introducing the bill, which called for a rapid process of government takeover with minimum compensation for coal mine owners. Curtius spoke for the conservative delegations, attacking the bill on both economic and political grounds.¹² He cited Independent Socialist (USPD) and SPD meetings wherein socialist leaders demanded that the Reichswirtschaftsrat be used to further the proletariat's goal of wide-ranging nationalization of most German industries "in the interests of the class struggle."¹³ Curtius warned the assembled delegates that such a policy would cripple Germany's economy, playing directly into the hands of the Reich's former enemies.

¹¹Ibid., p. 55.

¹²Verhandlungen, 345: 1142.

¹³See Schulthess' Europäischer Geschichtskalender (Munich: Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), 36: 248-249.

"Obviously," exclaimed Curtius, "the socialists would like nothing better than a permanently weakened German economy at the mercy of its creditors."¹⁴ The framers of German foreign policy, he continued, knew full well the implications of allowing these "social experiments" to be performed on an economy already lamed by Allied reparations demands. Curtius then questioned the patriotism of the bill's supporters. Ignoring catcalls from the left-wing delegations, he quoted former Social Democratic Party Chancellor Herman Müller as having declared at a party congress: "We Social Democrats are not nationalists, we are Europeans, cosmopolitans."¹⁵ To Curtius, having been reared in the old Prussian-nationalist tradition, the socialist position was untenable. "What better evidence," he shouted, "that the socialists in government have no intention of regaining Germany's rightful position in Europe!"¹⁶ Closing his address with a flourish, Curtius prophesied that, to the "dreadful word nationalization," soon would be added another word, "chaos." "Nationalize German industry after the wishes and principles of Marxism," he warned, "and after a short time the machinery of our economy will grind

¹⁴Verhandlungen, 345: 1142.

¹⁵Ibid., 345: 1143.

¹⁶Ibid.

to a halt, ending with the arteries of our economic life, which are already pulsing weakly, running dry."¹⁷

The nationalization bill was voted down (the Reichswirtschaftsrat was abolished in 1934), and Curtius continued his opposition to SPD Sozialpolitik, agreeing to compromise with the left only when the Social Democrats supported "correct" legislation. One such rare instance of Curtius-SPD accord was the controversial "Schools Bill," proposed periodically during the 1920s. This legislation was intended to permit religious instruction to all denominations (Simultanschule) as opposed to separate schools for Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Reformed. Both the DVP and the Social Democrats favored the bill. Still, Curtius's support for common schools stemmed more from his adherence to the old National Liberal policy of limiting Roman Catholic influence, and it was not based on any idea of rapprochement with socialism.¹⁸ Until his retirement from politics, Curtius, like the majority of conservative nationalists, was reluctant to reach any major accommodation with the SPD, an attitude which severely handicapped the governments of the Weimar Republic.

¹⁷ Ibid., 345: 1144.

¹⁸ Gustav Stresemann, Vermächtnis der Nachlass, ed., Henry Bernhard, 3 vols. (Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1932), 3: 272.

Until 1925, Curtius, along with Hugo Stinnes and other DVP Reichstag delegates with ties to big-business interests, consistently allied themselves with the party's far-right wing. In the DVP's response to radical right-wing coups d'etat, international treaties (especially the 1925 Rhineland Pact), and national elections, Curtius took positions closer to those of the monarchist German National People's Party (DNVP), a party with roots similar to those of the DVP but farther right politically.¹⁹ Yet, while Curtius regularly challenged party chairman Stresemann's policies and, at times, Stresemann's party leadership, he never considered abandoning the German People's Party.²⁰

¹⁹Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1963), pp. 137-139; James E. Dow, "The German National People's Party: In the Cause of Monarchy," Continuity 3 (1981): 37-50. Many historians of the Weimar era have depicted Curtius as a longtime close associate--almost a disciple--of Stresemann, a role Curtius did not fulfill until at least 1925. See, for example, Erich Eyck, A History of the Weimar Republic, trans. Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 2: 102; S. William Halperin, Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933 (Hamden: Archon Books, 1968 [1946]), p. 397; Robert T. Clark, The Fall of the German Republic: A Political Study (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964 [1935]), p. 266; and John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918-1945 (London: Macmillan, 1964 [1953]), p. 233.

²⁰Stresemann, Nachlass, 3088/6922/137842 ff. Curtius believed that efforts to restore the monarchy would severely antagonize the Allies, to Germany's great disadvantage. The monarchy, Curtius averred, had "failed" to protect Germany's hard-won dominant position in Central Europe and no longer deserved the support that it had received in the past.

Curtius's initial clash with Stresemann came in January 1920 when Stresemann decided that the DVP should attempt to enter Chancellor Gustav Bauer's coalition government, which included cabinet ministers from the SPD (Bauer's own party), and from two moderate political parties, the Catholic Center Party and the Democratic Party (DDP). Stresemann reasoned that the conservative parties, led by the DVP, could more easily counter the SPD's influence by conciliation and cooperation than by all-out opposition, the approach Curtius favored. Stresemann argued that no German government could effectively forestall the country's economic and social collapse unless it encompassed both the moderate and leftist parties, especially the largest political entity in Germany, the Social Democrats. Without the SPD, he counseled, the working class would have little stake in economic or political stability. Without a Great Coalition, a united effort by left, middle and conservative parties, the Fatherland might suffer successive general strikes and civil unrest. Furthermore, Stresemann advised, by refusing to cooperate with the Social Democrats, the DVP and the DNVP might find themselves in political limbo, with the danger that future governments would be dominated by parties hostile to business interests.²¹ As an added

²¹Ibid., 3091/6935/140029 ff. For recent works on the DDP and Center Party, see Ellen Lovell Evans, The

benefit, Stresemann reasoned, once the SPD began working with non-socialist parties, their radical elements would decline in influence, the "reasonable elements" would be strengthened and, eventually, the Social Democrats might abandon Marxist, class-struggle ideology.²²

Curtius and the DVP's nationalist, Ruhr industrialist-influenced bloc dissented and called for party participation only in center-right coalitions. Curtius, along with party treasurer Albert Vögler, supported creation of a "National Bloc" to oppose the Social Democrats, their argument hinging on the belief that the SPD was intent on dismantling private ownership of German industries. Thus, any compromise with the SPD, including coalition partnership, would serve only to lend legitimacy to its policies.²³ Stresemann, however, prevailed, managing to win DVP majority support for cooperation. And the DVP would, on several occasions, place ministers in cabinets alongside the SPD, notably in the 1923 Great Coalition, which comprised the DVP, SPD, Center, and

German Center Party, 1870-1933: A Study in Political Catholicism (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981); and Bruce B. Frye, Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic: The History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985).

²²Stresemann, Nachlass, 3091/6935/140076.

²³Ibid., 3091/6936/140297 ff.

Democrats. Curtius opposed DVP participation, even with Stresemann serving as Chancellor in 1923, on specifically economic grounds. Curtius feared that Social Democratic proposals, such as an eight-hour workday, expanded mandatory unemployment insurance, and government regulation of industrial cartels, might cripple Germany's capitalist economic system.²⁴

When, in November 1923, the SPD left the Stresemann government, Curtius and DVP Reichstag Fraktion chairman Ernst Scholz demanded the addition of the nationalist DNVP, thereby shifting the government to the political right. This Stresemann consistently refused to countenance, citing the long-standing Center Party and Democratic Party objection to the monarchist German Nationals. In addition, Stresemann was still concerned about working-class reaction if socialists were omitted from future coalitions. Meanwhile, Curtius considered that the time was ripe for a rightward swing, using the Hitler-Ludendorff Putsch in Bavaria as an augury. Curtius considered the National Socialist Putsch little more than a demonstration of conservative disaffection with socialist influence in the Republic's governments. He argued, therefore, that the DNVP's inclusion in Stresemann's cabinet would bridge "an unnatural cleavage between the German People's Party and

²⁴Ibid., 3159/7394/171304 ff.

the DNVP," with the added benefit of drawing conservative-nationalist support away from the rightist radicals, whom he distrusted almost as much as the socialists. In early November, at a party caucus at which Stresemann was absent, Curtius charged that Stresemann was "attempting to suppress the will of the party," and indirectly suggested that Stresemann be removed as party chairman.²⁵ The measure was defeated, however, when Curtius learned that the DNVP no longer expressed interest in joining the government.

Curtius's rightward tilt was also evidenced by his assent to nationalist paramilitary action against SPD-led governments. In February 1920, right-wing political interests had become increasingly dissatisfied with the peace settlement and the chaotic economic conditions under the government of Social Democratic Chancellor Gustav Bauer and his SPD, Center, Democratic coalition. Among other complaints, the conservative parties, led by the DVP and DNVP, condemned the Bauer government's alleged intention of revising the presidential electoral process by changing the balloting procedure from direct popular to legislative. Curtius also was incensed that the SPD-dominated Bauer cabinet had postponed early spring 1920

²⁵Stresemann, Vermächtnis 1: 194-198; Stresemann, Nachlass, 3159/7394/171465.

Reichstag elections, in apparent contravention of the Weimar Constitution which mandated "prompt" elections. Since the DVP and DNVP were growing in numerical strength, Curtius considered the Bauer government's efforts detrimental to the conservative parties' electoral prospects. The conservative leaders argued that delayed elections might dilute their support, while legislative election of the Reich's president would likely favor a left-wing candidate since the SPD, the largest Reichstag delegation, could outvote the anti-socialist bloc. A Reichstag dominated by the left could impede the election of the conservatives' leading presidential candidate, Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg, a powerful nationalist symbol even among moderates. By early March, General Walther von Lüttwitz, a disaffected former army officer and commander of several paramilitary Freikorps brigades, had become outraged by the Bauer government's electoral tampering and its tentative compliance with Allied disarmament demands aimed at disbanding nationalist Freikorps and Einwohnerwehren (Home Guards). On 12 March, Lüttwitz, along with Wolfgang Kapp, a low-level DNVP politician from East Prussia, marched on Berlin and succeeded in forcing the Bauer government to flee from Berlin to Dresden.²⁶

²⁶Turner, Stresemann, pp. 47-65; Johannes Erger, Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik, 1919-1920 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1967), pp. 154 ff.

The Putschists' aims were to force abrogation of the Versailles Treaty, to scuttle compliance with Allied disarmament demands, and to establish military control of the government, while publicly calling for prompt elections and direct election of the president. Faced with the dilemma of possible civil war or agreeing with these objectives, Stresemann moved to negotiate his party's support for Kapp who, on 13 March, was installed as Chancellor. The same day, the DVP, with Curtius's endorsement, gave qualified support to the Putsch. Stresemann, Curtius, and other party leaders rationalized their compliance with the militarist-nationalist coup d'etat by contending that, while the Putschists' use of violence was regrettable, the Bauer government, by ignoring the advice of the "responsible" German conservatives, was to blame for provoking the Freikorps.²⁷

The DVP's de facto recognition of the Kapp government, while avoiding official endorsement, averred that the previous government had been unable to gain the confidence of the people. The Bauer government, the DVP alleged, had sought to circumvent the constitution in order to ensure its own longevity. Now that a new government had been formed, "all those who desired the reconstruction of the

²⁷Stresemann, Nachlass, 3090/6932/139553; Erger, Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch, pp. 154 ff, 219 ff.

Fatherland" should support it. Citing the Kapp regime's assurance that democratic principles would be respected, the DVP seconded the call for prompt elections that would "ensure the formation of a constitutional government into which all those parties will be drawn which are serious about the . . . preservation of our national honor."²⁸

Curtius's allegiance to the Kapp regime was influenced primarily by his belief that the new government would fight German disarmament. He contended that socialist propaganda had convinced the Allies (correctly, as it transpired) that Germany was again falling under the domination of aggressive militarists. For months preceding the Putsch, Curtius was convinced that Social Democratic leaders had "distorted the facts" by insisting that only rightist paramilitary groups were predisposed to use armed force. "Evident to anyone," Curtius alleged, was the fact that the real danger of armed insurrection came from the left. In wide areas of the Fatherland, he insisted, revolutionary elements were poised to overthrow the constitutional government and replace it with bolshevism. While the majority of Social Democrats were not opposed to the

²⁸Stresemann, Nachlass, 3090/6932/139553; Erger, Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch, pp. 239 ff.

idea of revolution, Curtius conceded, the working class was permanently committed to violent class struggle, inspired and led by "radicals" in the government.

Disarming the Freikorps and Einwohnerwehren would "cripple the defenders of the Republic, especially in the east, where German patriots must be vigilant against foreign encroachment." Bathed in the sweat of conservative-nationalist fervor, he denounced the Bauer cabinet: "Now we find ourselves, by the Allied Diktat and socialist perfidy, in the depths of slavery. My party colleagues and I hope that one day we can declare an end to it."²⁹

Curtius's support for the Kapp government, however, was short-lived. By 14 March, the relocated Bauer government was clearly going to survive, due primarily to the support of a general strike organized by pro-SPD unions. On 17 March, the Kapp government fell, and Curtius joined the rest of the DVP in deciding that party recognition of the Putsch had gone too far. While the DVP was chagrined for having buttressed the Putschists, the DNVP bore the brunt of public scorn since most of the Putsch leaders belonged to that party.³⁰ The erstwhile Chancellor Kapp died in prison before he could be tried for high treason.

²⁹Verhandlungen, 244: 601-603.

³⁰Turner, Stresemann, p. 53.

The Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch marked a major turning point in Curtius's political philosophy. Curtius probably began to abandon his advocacy of the Putschists when the possibility of full-scale civil war between the militarists and the SPD-led workers emerged (the Reichswehr, duty-bound to uphold the Weimar Constitution, remained on the sidelines during the coup). Such a conflict, he reasoned, would be ruinous to the Fatherland and likely would jeopardize Germany's delicate status with the Allies. Worst of all, Curtius was aware that any armed disturbance in Germany would invite French intervention. During the spring of 1920, then, Curtius realized that the Fatherland's power and prestige in Europe could be achieved only by compromise (when necessary), and continued devotion to the conservative establishment that represented pre-war stability. Radicalism, whether from left or right, could lead only to political and economic entropy, resulting in complete national destruction. Thus, in 1920, Curtius began to pay close attention to the effects of domestic politics on Germany's relations with the rest of Europe.

Throughout the 1920s, Curtius remained an ardent nationalist, but he scoffed at anti-Semitic, militant nationalism. The National Socialists he considered no better than bolshevists in disguise. Hitler was deemed a rabble rouser of dangerous radical tendencies, a person whose racist pronouncements were distasteful and whose

policies were likely to jeopardize Germany's position vis-a-vis the Allies. Thus, if Curtius were to help retrieve the Republic's prewar sense of dignity among the world's nations through treaty revision, he was obliged to distance himself from radicalism.

From 1920 to 1931, revision of the Versailles Treaty, or "Allied Diktat," was Curtius's political raison d'etre. Much of his anti-Treaty rhetoric was intended to garner support from the right-wing political parties. During his tenure as a German People's Party delegate, he joined with his nationalist DNVP colleagues in condemning most of the Treaty's provisions, especially the cession of German territories and the payment of reparations. As Minister of Economics from 1926 to 1929, he fought to revise the latter; as Foreign Minister from 1929 to 1931, he sought to reverse the former. In the Republic's early years, no nationalist's condemnation of the Versailles Treaty was more strident than his. By the latter part of the decade, however, he learned to use compromise and conciliation as his weapons.³¹

Curtius found most odious those provisions of the Treaty which ceded parts of German territories holding an

³¹Julius Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister der Deutschen Republik (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1948), pp. 14-50.

ethnic German minority to Poland.³² The Versailles Treaty, signed by the German provisional government on 28 June 1919, called for the cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France, and of Eupen, Malmedy, and part of Moresnet to Belgium; demilitarization of the Rhine area from the river (including the left bank) to a line fifty kilometers east; cession of Posen and part of West Prussia to Poland; and plebiscites to determine the boundaries of Upper Silesia, North Schleswig, and East Prussia. These adjustments, plus the transformation of the port city of Danzig into an independent "free city" and its separation from the rest of the Reich by the "corridor" of Polish Pomorze, appalled Curtius. The union of Austria with the German Reich, or Anschluss, an integral part of the DVP manifesto and advocated by Pan-Germanists in both countries as essential for Germany's future return to prominence in Central Europe, was expressly forbidden.³³

³²For the entire text of the Versailles Treaty see United States, Department of State, Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949, comp. Charles I. Bevans, 3 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1969), 2: 43-241.

³³Stresemann, Nachlass, 3088/6922/137842 ff. For Versailles Treaty provisions, see Etienne Mantoux, The Carthaginian Peace, or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 69 ff, 100-101, 102 ff; Alma Luckau, The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Howard Fertig, 1971 [1941]), p. 201 ff; also Arno J. Mayer, Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

The Treaty required that all German colonies in Africa and Oceania, and "concessions" in China, Siam, Egypt, and Morocco, be relinquished. The industrial Saar region, a center for DVP and DNVP political support, was to be governed by the League of Nations for a minimum of fifteen years and its coal fields were to be administered by France. To ensure execution of the Treaty's terms, Allied troops would occupy the left bank of the Rhine for a period of five to fifteen years. The German Army was to be limited to 100,000 officers and men; the general staff was to be dissolved; and vast quantities of war material were to be handed over. The manufacture of munitions was curtailed, German foreign financial holdings were confiscated, and the German merchant marine was reduced to less than one-tenth its pre-war size. As justification for reparations claims, originally set at 33 billion gold marks, the Allies inserted into the Treaty Article 231, by which Germany and the other Central Powers were named the aggressors in the war and were held responsible for all loss and damage suffered by the Allied Powers.³⁴

³⁴Treaty-mandated reductions in Germany's merchant fleet inspired Curtius to demand a return to Germany's prewar merchant shipping strength, preferably on a par with Britain's, and a guarantee of freedom of the seas. See Curtius's introduction to Paul Kollbach, Deutsche Handelsflotte und Versailler Vertrag (Berlin: Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlungen, 1929).

As the Treaty greatly reduced Germany's military and economic potential, most of Curtius's objections stemmed from his desire for German security, both financial and political, which he deemed a symbiotic relationship. As a member of the Reichstag's multiparty committee charged with recommending methods for compliance with the Treaty's provisions requiring the liquidation of Germany's colonial possessions, Curtius dissented from the committee's majority (mostly SPD) position that disposal of colonies would ultimately benefit the national economy, i.e., a drain on the treasury would be eliminated, the resulting savings to be used for domestic purposes. Curtius preferred to try to retain colonial territories through negotiation, and he evoked patriotic images to support his view. Siding with the German Nationals in Reichstag debate, he lamented the fact that ostensibly loyal Germans (meaning Social Democrats) seemed willing to cast away the achievements of "heroic" colonial pioneers. The Allies, Curtius contended, had no right to force Germany "into insolvency" by their demands for war reparations, and then strip Germany of a vital source of raw materials and valuable markets for manufactured goods. Overseas possessions, according to Curtius, were essential to the reconstruction of the national economy. Removal of the colonies, "vital national wealth," would inevitably weaken an already ailing economy, leading to the likelihood

of political collapse. The Allied nations were "blind" if they could not perceive the connection between a viable German economy and peace and stability in Europe. The Reichstag's compliance with the Treaty was, according to Curtius, tantamount to "aiding and abetting a robbery." The German colonies, accused Curtius, were "being stolen by the Allied Powers, with the intent of shutting Germany out of world markets." The Reichstag's concurrence, he continued, might be too high a price to pay for peace. "The day will come," he concluded, "when this debt will be paid."³⁵

By this egregious threat, Curtius was warning the Allies that, if the Western Powers refused to revise all of the Treaty's stipulations regarding reparations and their anticipated impact on Germany, then radical elements in the Republic would flourish at the expense of the "rational" conservative political parties. Curtius thus set about joining the vast majority of Germans, from across the political spectrum, but especially the political right, in demanding Treaty revision. Revision of the Versailles Treaty, however, would prove to be a difficult task considering the Anglo-French disinclination for a resurgent Germany dominating Central Europe.³⁶

³⁵Verhandlungen, 360: 11122-11123; *ibid.*, 346: 1890; *ibid.*, 350: 4535.

³⁶See, for example, Henry L. Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), pp. 101-105.

Nevertheless, revisionist efforts gained momentum throughout the Weimar period.

Central to Curtius's revisionist polemic was the abrogation of Article 231, the War Guilt Clause (or Schmachparagraph, the "Article of Shame," as Curtius and most German nationalists termed it). Curtius, well aware that Article 231 had been designed as a justification for damage claims against Germany, argued that the entire structure of reparations would be weakened by a successful repudiation of the War Guilt charge. Curtius and the other revisionists reasoned, therefore, that a refutation of Article 231 would (only in their own wishful thinking) serve to nullify reparations mandates and make easier other Treaty revisions, in boundaries and military rearmament.³⁷

Curtius's uncompromising nationalism was manifested by his attacks on Germany's colonial dispossession and the War Guilt Clause. As an expert on international corporate law and economics, Curtius surely realized that the German colonies had always shown a deficit, that they had never proved to be a source of wealth, and that, on the contrary, they historically had drained revenue from the national treasury. Curtius's ardent nationalist cant, however, blinded him to the economic reality that being rid of the colonies would prove to be an economic asset

³⁷ Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 87-102.

to Germany. Instead, Curtius saw the Versailles Treaty's colonial provisions as a mortal blow to Germany's international prestige. As a pre-1914-influenced German nationalist, Curtius envied the British Empire and desired the same "place in the sun" for Germany. To Curtius, the call for reacquisition of Germany's overseas possessions and concessions was grounded in Bismarckian-nationalist philosophy. In the same vein, a lawyer of Curtius's stature should have known that, in accepting the Fourteen Points and, most especially, in signing the Armistice, the Germans agreed to make reparation for war damages. Thus, Curtius, in attacking Article 231 of the Versailles Treaty, was using war guilt as a rallying point for garnering support for full revision of the Treaty. Abrogation of Article 231, supported by most Germans, was a symbol of nationalism, not a legal "solution" to Versailles Treaty indemnities.³⁸

During a Reichstag debate in March 1921, Stresemann, seconded by Curtius, proclaimed the revisionists' argument. Stresemann and Curtius denied that the Versailles Treaty had any moral basis, and flatly stated that the Allies' war guilt accusation was a "historical absurdity."

³⁸Woodruff D. Smith, The German Colonial Empire (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), pp. 12-19; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Bismarck und der Imperialismus (Cologne: Verlag Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1969), pp. 423 ff.

Stresemann recalled President Woodrow Wilson's 1916 declaration that no one could know "how the war had begun and what had caused the conflict." As evidence of Germany's blamelessness, Curtius, his legal experience in evidence, but not logic, reminded the Allies of their own declaration that the war was being fought against the Hohenzollern dynasty. According to Curtius, even if Germany were guilty of aggressive acts in 1914 which led to world war, the guilt lay with the Empire, not the German Republic.³⁹ What Curtius neglected to mention was that the men who served the Kaiser, men who now held high office in the Republic, were being held responsible for Germany's aggression in 1914. Logic demanded that the German nation be held liable, not the former government. Still, Curtius's apologia was typical of his penchant for spurious legalistic argument in foreign relations debate.

Curtius on several occasions unsuccessfully tried to link German compliance with reparations requirements to Allied disavowal of Article 231.⁴⁰ Throughout the first half of the 1920s, he threatened that Germany would, in future, be obliged to ignore certain Treaty mandates if Germany were not recognized as an "equal" among European

³⁹Verhandlungen, 348: 2672-2673.

⁴⁰Ibid., 389: 6343; ibid., 392: 9445; Karl Bergmann, The History of Reparations (London: Ernest Benn, 1927), pp. 8 ff, 69-80, 219 ff.

nations. By this, Curtius intimated Article 231 to be an attempt to force Germany into the status of pariah nation. He repeatedly insisted that France had conspired for a vindictive peace which would ensure French hegemony in Central Europe.⁴¹ For that reason, he remained convinced that the War Guilt Clause could not be supported by evidence, nor could its validity be maintained before a panel of impartial judges.⁴²

From 1920 to 1924, Curtius maintained his interest in domestic social policy, yet foreign affairs played an increasing role in his political thought. As a member of the DVP Reichstag Fraktion, he again battled SPD attempts to nationalize the German coal industry. In the interests of "economic stability," he opposed attempts to alter the income tax laws (another SPD-sponsored bill) and he fought any increase in the inheritance taxes. In concert with the DNVP, he worked for an increase in pensions for war veterans. On 20 November 1923, he supported the introduction of the Rentenmark, a new currency created by Stresemann's government, to stabilize the monetary

⁴¹See Herman J. Wittgens, "War Guilt Propaganda Conducted by the German Foreign Ministry During the 1920s," Historical Papers (1980), pp. 228-247.

⁴²Verhandlungen, 425: 2814-2815; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 87 ff; New York Times, 13 September 1931, p. 15.

system following the ravages of postwar inflation.⁴³ The Ruhr crisis, however, was the culmination of Curtius's 1920-1925 nationalist perspective.

When Germany lagged behind with its 1922 reparations deliveries to France, French and Belgian troops moved into the Ruhr basin on 11 January 1923. France justified its incursion on the grounds that the peace settlement allowed for punitive measures against Germany if war indemnities were not met. Curtius, along with the vast majority of Germans, was outraged, calling the French action "cruelly vindictive." Nevertheless, Curtius, along with most Germans, resisted the call for armed retaliation. Instead, Curtius supported the efforts of Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno, who called for passive resistance by the region's workers in response to the Franco-Belgian occupation. With the cooperation of trade unions and the leftist political parties, the resistance efforts succeeded in thwarting French attempts at taking over the administration of the area. Violence, however, inevitably erupted. Following the shooting of German workers by French occupation troops (the French used machine guns on a crowd of demonstrators at the Krupp works in Essen on 31 March) Curtius decried the "rape" of the Ruhr. What Curtius found most

⁴³Verhandlungen, 345: 1142 ff; *ibid.*, 356: 8613 ff, 8622 ff, 8171 ff.

galling, however, was the paucity of response from the rest of Europe which, he felt, should have been engendered by French atrocities. To Curtius, this alleged indifference was proof that the Allies did not intend to extend justice to Germany.⁴⁴ Yet Britain could not have intervened militarily on Germany's behalf, and both the British and American governments condemned the French actions. After further violence, Chancellor Stresemann terminated passive resistance on 26 September. In August 1925, France withdrew its troops.

The Ruhr struggle galvanized Curtius's resentment of Allied treatment of Germany. His acrimony persisted in the controversy over Stresemann's 1925 non-aggression treaties with the West. Stresemann's plan for a security pact in Western Europe was grounded in several objectives, with the long-range goal of Versailles Treaty revision. As Foreign Minister since 1923, Stresemann intended the proposed security agreements to prevent any future French occupation of the Ruhr. The proposed pact was intended to deprive France of any further justification, on the pretext of German threats to her security, for application of military sanctions against Germany. Stresemann, Curtius, and other nationalist revisionists also desired that ties

⁴⁴Stresemann, Vermächtnis, 1: 85 ff; Verhandlungen, 394: 11832 ff.

between France and Poland be weakened, clearing the way for future German revanchism in the east. Finally, in the event that the proposed non-aggression pact was rejected by France, world opinion would likely favor Germany.⁴⁵

After lengthy negotiations, the Rhineland Pact, the principal security instrument, was initialed by Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, and Germany at Locarno, Switzerland, on 16 October 1925. With formal signing at London on 1 December, the Rhineland Pact declared inviolable the German-Belgian and German-French frontiers, as fixed by the Versailles Treaty. The agreement, however, provided for no such fixation of Germany's eastern boundaries. The German Rhineland was to remain demilitarized, and war between Germany and Belgium and between Germany and France was forsworn, except in "legitimate defense." Germany would settle its disputes with France and Belgium peacefully, and Britain and Italy would guarantee the security of Germany, France, and Belgium. In addition, Germany concluded treaties of arbitration with France, Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, providing for settlement of disputes through the League of Nations. And,

⁴⁵Stresemann, Vermächtnis, 2: 81; Jon Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 60 ff.

mentioned in the pact's final protocol, but distinct from it, France concluded treaties of mutual guarantee with Poland and Czechoslovakia, providing for French intervention in their behalf if either nation was invaded by a third power.⁴⁶

During the Reichstag's summer-long debate over the pact's ratification, Curtius, speaking for the DVP right-wing faction, raised several objections. In accord with the DNVP, he alleged that the agreements reached at Locarno would deprive Germany of the territories lost at the end of the war. Addressing the Reichstag on 22 July, Curtius charged that the Rhineland Pact, guaranteeing the territorial status quo of German boundaries with Belgium and France, was tantamount to a German renunciation of all moral rights to recover lost territories, such as Alsace-Lorraine and Eupen-Malmedy. Stresemann had abandoned Germany's claims, Curtius alleged, while the Allies offered no quid pro quo. "We all know," he declared,

that the French in 1919 agreed to a time limit on their occupation of the Rhineland. The French have ignored this promise and, in addition, have threatened the security of Germany by establishing alliances with Belgium, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

The French, he alleged, guaranteed the so-called "outer boundaries" of these countries, which included a

⁴⁶Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy, pp. 62-68.

considerable amount of former German soil, and ethnic German inhabitants. Curtius then cited the former French President Raymond Poincare's vow to defend what he termed "the last bastion of French security," the Rhine. "Everyone knows," Curtius scoffed, "that this attitude, validated only through the use of armed force, is absurd." Curtius then likened France's actions in 1918-1919 to Napoleon's aggressive moves eastward in 1805-1806. Curtius closed his address by reiterating his charge that Stresemann had surrendered to Allied pressure and had failed to win any major concessions for Germany. He closed his address with a demand that Germany cease all negotiations with the Allies until the Fatherland was treated as an equal among European nations.⁴⁷

As for German entry into the League of Nations, called for at Locarno, Curtius objected to Germany's participation. Curtius cited Germany's alleged unequal treatment, particularly in disarmament; he charged that while Germany had reduced its military power, the Allies were continually postponing their own promised disarmament. "If Germany is to enter the League," he declared, "let us do so from a position of strength and equality." Germany, he insisted, must make perfectly clear to the Allied governments that German entry into the League of Nations was

⁴⁷Verhandlungen, 387: 3411-3416.

contingent upon a formal assurance of equal rights, in particular the right for Germany to defend itself. "It is obvious," he declared, "that the League must be made to note the difference between full and half sovereign nations. It follows that the necessary prerequisite for our entry into the League must be the clearance (Räumung) of the Rhineland."⁴⁸

Curtius's nationalistic attack was grounded in his basic misunderstanding of Stresemann's methods and aims. After a series of meetings with the Foreign Minister, Curtius eventually perceived the long-term benefits for Germany in the agreements. In November 1925, he backed Stresemann and voted to ratify the Rhineland Pact (the vote was 292 in favor, 174 against, with the DNVP, the Communists, and the National Socialists voting in the negative). Locarno was a turning point for Curtius. After 1925, his foreign policy stridency diminished. While remaining an ardent nationalist, Curtius could discern that the Rhineland Pact opened the way for subtle, long-term foreign policy moves which were likely to strengthen Germany's position in Central Europe. While the Rhineland Pact allowed for few immediate Allied concessions, it did open the way for future settlement of boundary questions. The possibility of French military

⁴⁸ Ibid.

sanctions against Germany, such as a repetition of the Ruhr occupation, declined due to the guarantees of French security. Thus, by blocking French punitive military measures against Germany, the enforcement of Versailles Treaty provisions was made more difficult. By leaving unsettled the question of Germany's eastern frontiers, the Rhineland Pact increased Germany's freedom of action. In addition, the subsequent 1926 Treaty of Berlin, which committed the Soviet Union to neutrality in the event of an attack on Germany by a third country, seemed to clear the way for revision of the German-Polish boundary.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the Presidential election of 1925 cemented the fusion of domestic and foreign policies in Curtius's political thought. With the 28 February 1925 death of Social Democrat Friedrich Ebert, President of the Republic since 1919, new elections were called to fill the office, the duties of which included appointment of the chancellor and his governing cabinet. Because Ebert's term was scheduled to end on 30 June 1925, campaign preparations had already begun. In February, conservative businessman Friedrich von Loebell called for a conference of all non-Marxist parties to consider a "unity" candidate. Its first meeting held on 12 February, the Loebell Committee comprised delegates from the DVP, including Curtius,

⁴⁹Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy, pp. 76, 81-82.

DNVP, Bavarian People's Party, and the newly-created Economics Party, representing mostly banking interests. Not participating in the committee were the "middle" parties, the Center and the Democrats, again due to their aversion to working with the monarchist and reactionary DNVP. By the end of February, the committee had agreed on three possible candidates: General Hans von Seeckt, the officer responsible for carrying out Germany's ongoing secret rearmament; Minister of Defence Otto Gessler; and the man famous for his resistance to French occupation of the Ruhr, the DVP mayor of Duisburg, Karl Jarres.⁵⁰

General von Seeckt was the first potential candidate to be eliminated. Both Stresemann and Curtius objected to his nomination since his close connection to monarchist and militarist factions was sure to excite suspicions in France, thus handicapping future revisionist diplomatic moves. Curtius likewise opposed Gessler, citing the French concern that the German Army controlled the Ministry of Defense.⁵¹ The DVP-backed Jarres seemed the most promising candidate, and the majority of the Loebell Committee supported his nomination. Because the Center and Democrats could not be persuaded to unite behind Jarres, however, Curtius's long-desired goal of a

⁵⁰Turner, Stresemann, pp. 192-193.

⁵¹Stresemann, Vermächtnis, 2: 44.

coalition uniting the middle and rightist parties was lost. As only the DVP and DNVP now supported Jarres, his candidacy suffered. After the 29 March balloting, Jarres, while receiving more votes than any other candidate, failed to win a majority.⁵²

For the subsequent election, not a simple runoff between the top candidates, new nominations could be made. The DNVP, desiring a stronger nationalist candidate, proposed the seventy-eight-year-old Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg. Curtius, once again fearing an unfavorable French response to this symbol of Prussianism, refused to back the Field Marshal. Curtius reaffirmed his support for Jarres, but the former candidate, angered by the conservative parties' lack of unity, on 8 April withdrew from the campaign. On 26 April, with the Loebell Committee's DVP members (including Curtius) now backing him, Hindenburg accepted the nomination, winning the 26 April election by a comfortable majority.⁵³

Curtius's hesitation in supporting Hindenburg (he relented in the interests of political unity) stemmed from his growing realization that Germany's future success in Versailles Treaty revision lay in maintaining a cooperative

⁵²Andreas Dorpalen, Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1964), pp. 66, 69, 75 ff.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 75 ff.

relationship with Britain, France, and the United States, as well as cultivating a peaceful image worldwide. Hindenburg, besides symbolizing Prussian militarism (his election caused concern in London and Paris), was also considered to be an unabashed royalist who, it was alleged, would have turned over his presidential powers to the Hohenzollerns had he not taken the presidential oath of office. While not contemplating sabotaging the Republic, he nevertheless was politically, socially, and emotionally linked to the Republic's most vocal critics. By mid-1925, however, Curtius realized that national unity, as symbolized by Hindenburg, could prove to be a useful weapon against the treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, the expansion of radical-nationalism in Germany sparked in Curtius the need to defend traditional Bismarckian approaches, such as Realpolitik. These, to Curtius, were more likely to be successfully employed in revisionism than was the irrational militancy of the National Socialists. In Curtius's view, supporting Hindenburg achieved two goals: the presentation of a politically united Germany to the Allies, and the undermining of radical nationalism.⁵⁴

By the mid-1920s, Curtius's growing apprehension over rightist militancy drove him to work even more

⁵⁴Ibid.

diligently for revisionism. Revising reparations and working for territorial revanchism, he reasoned, would tend to protect traditional conservatism from extremist contamination. While the majority of conservative, nationalist Germans embraced these same goals, Curtius's old political allies, the German Nationals, were moving rightward into the circle of Völkisch, or extreme nationalist and racialist, parties. Culminating with the 1928 election of Alfred Hugenberg to the DNVP chairmanship, the party's philosophy had become much closer to that of Hitler's National Socialists than to the philosophy of the German People's Party. Hugenberg, the millionaire former director of Krupp's industrial concerns, publisher of rightist newspapers, and owner of UFA, Germany's largest moving picture company, had long espoused militant nationalism and anti-republicanism. Yet, Curtius had begun to disavow the DNVP several years before Hugenberg acquired the party chairmanship. Curtius's break with the party stemmed from the Hugenberg wing's inveighing against "urbanism" and "sophisticated intellectualism" which, according to the Völkisch parties, were "weak" attitudes inimical to "true" Germanism. These "defects," Hugenberg charged, were prevalent among Curtius-type conservatives. The German Volks, asserted the DNVP, must be kept safe from cosmopolitanism and racial contamination, especially from the "inferior" Semitic races. This racial element,

coupled with Hugenberg's obsessive attacks on Marxism, forced Curtius to break with the DNVP. Curtius derided Völkisch anti-Semitism, and he considered Hugenberg's rabid anti-socialism an unnecessary distraction from Germany's pressing need for Versailles Treaty revision. While Curtius was no friend of Marxism, by 1925 he judged French contentiousness and Polish "occupation" of German lands to be the Fatherland's greater menace. Thus Curtius, while a Reichstag delegate, and later as Minister of Economics and Foreign Minister, struggled to maintain a delicate balance between neutralizing Völkisch attacks on the Weimar Republic's alleged submission to Versailles Treaty "tyranny," and forging an image of conciliation and cooperation with the Allies.⁵⁵

By December 1925, Curtius, cognizant of the DNVP's growing affinity with National Socialism, dropped his objection to moderate coalition governments and expressed

⁵⁵Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 87-100; George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), pp. 248-250. Although Curtius was unlikely to have been any less anti-Semitic than most Germans, in none of his public speeches or published writings can one detect a trace of overt racism. For a thorough study of the dearth of anti-Semitism in the German Foreign Office during the Weimar era, see Francis R. J. Nicosia, "Weimar Germany and the Palestine Question," Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 24 (1979): 321-345. For the view of the political editor of the Berliner Tageblatt that the DVP was particularly non-racist, see Arnold Paucker, "Searchlight on the Decline of the Weimar Republic: The Diaries of Ernst Feder, 1919-1931," Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 13 (1968): 161-234.

an interest in serving in such a cabinet. His opportunity came when, on 5 December, Chancellor Hans Luther, former mayor of Essen, dissolved his DVP, DNVP, Center, Democratic, and BVP (Bavarian People's Party) coalition over disputes involving DNVP opposition to the Rhineland Pact. At President von Hindenburg's request, Erich Koch-Weser of the Democrats attempted to fashion a new coalition that would include the SPD. His efforts stalled, however, when the Social Democrats refused to join the government unless they were assured of a legally mandated eight-hour workday for industrial workers. This guarantee, with Curtius's concurrence, was refused. The result was six weeks of interim government until late January 1926, when Luther returned to the chancellorship as head of a cabinet which included the Center, DVP, Democrats, and BVP. This government, with Stresemann continuing as Foreign Minister, Curtius as Economics Minister, and Otto Gessler retaining the Defense Ministry, was to endure for only five months until 17 May 1926.⁵⁶

In his memoir, Curtius outlined the tasks facing this "regime of the middle": fulfillment of the Rhineland Pact, German entry into the League of Nations, and resolution of the continuing economic "crisis," which virtually

⁵⁶Hans Luther, Politiker ohne Partei: Erinnerungen (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1960), passim.

all Germans blamed on the Versailles Treaty and reparations. With only a tenuous ten vote Reichstag majority, Curtius was pessimistic about the coalition's chances for immediate success. Nevertheless, Curtius felt certain that efforts to solve both Germany's reparations burden and territorial disputes would prove fruitful in the long term.⁵⁷

By 1926, Curtius had tempered much of his criticism of Stresemann, and their professional relationship became more cordial as Curtius grew to appreciate the long-term benefits of Stresemann's pragmatic, conciliatory foreign policy. Only once would political dissention surface. In January 1927, President von Hindenburg called on Curtius to form a government and take the chancellorship. Curtius promptly began discussions to include the Center Party and the non-Hugenberg faction of the DNVP in his proposed government. He failed, however, when the Center once again objected to inclusion of the German Nationalists. In his memoir, Curtius alleged that Stresemann might have sabotaged his efforts at building a center-right coalition due to the former Chancellor's fear that he might lose control of German foreign policy to Curtius.⁵⁸ Yet this clash failed to split permanently

⁵⁷Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 14.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 50.

the two DVP comrades, and Stresemann would eventually draw Curtius more closely into foreign policy planning.

For his entire political career, Curtius would never compromise his Prussian-influenced, traditional conservatism. Bereft of liberal tendencies, his early years in the Reichstag were characterized by strident criticism of any efforts to fulfill Germany's Versailles Treaty mandates. By the mid-1920s, however, his political philosophy had matured. His pilgrimage to pragmatic nationalism was manifested by his break with the reactionary DNVP, his willingness to participate in "moderate" political coalitions, and his support for Stresemann's policy of conciliation. From 1926 until his retirement in 1931, Curtius would remain, as Hindenburg termed him, "faithful to the Fatherland (vaterländisches Pflichtgefühl).⁵⁹ Yet, tragically for German democracy, beginning in 1930 his attempts at revision of the Versailles Treaty too often were influenced by his ardent nationalism. In 1930-1931, under the pressure of unprecedented economic setbacks, Curtius felt impelled to achieve immediate, concrete foreign policy successes in order to appease the extreme right.

⁵⁹ Droste Geschichtskalendarium, Chronik deutscher Zeitgeschichte: Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1983), 1: 471.

CHAPTER II

ECONOMICS AND FOREIGN POLICY, 1926-1929

Curtius entered the Economics Ministry as a DVP deputy with big-business support, a lawyer with industrialist clients, family ties to industry in Duisburg, and a relationship through his wife's family to the Gutehoffnungshütte, one of Germany's largest mining, iron-smelting, and manufacturing concerns.¹ In January 1926, Curtius was thus widely regarded as the business community's man in the cabinet, a man whose unfailing loyalty to heavy-industrial economic interests surely would influence Reich policy. In his memoirs, Curtius acknowledged this initial perception of his cabinet role. He pointed out, however, that his intentions as Economics Minister and, beginning in October 1929 as Foreign

¹Frau Curtius's father was one of the early nineteenth-century founders of the Gutehoffnungshütte, one of Germany's largest metallurgy conglomerates. Also, Curtius was a director of the Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie, an industrial association founded in 1919 and committed to opposing SPD-inspired Sozialpolitik. The RVDI's lack of political influence was manifested by its inability to prevent the legal sanctioning of the eight-hour day in 1927 and the introduction of unemployment insurance. See Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), *passim*.

Minister, were, instead, devoted to policies based on his perception of the general national welfare, combined with his desire to achieve such fundamental revisionist goals as the clearance of foreign troops from German soil and the return of Germany's eastern territories.²

From 1926 to 1929, however, Curtius concentrated on reversing Germany's trade deficit, vital if Germany were to meet its Dawes Plan reparations annuities without resorting to foreign loans. He also advocated compromising on social issues, such as unemployment relief, in order to promote political harmony between the Social Democrats and the moderate-conservative parties. Seeking an equitable economic program for the German working class and unemployed, for example, Curtius in January 1928 opposed an increase in the price of coal demanded by the mine owners and called for management concessions to the miners.³ A further indication of Curtius's interest in social harmony (Volksgemeinschaft) as Finance Minister occurred during the winter of 1928-1929. In October 1928, the ironworkers' unions in the Rhenish-Westphalian district demanded a pay increase. This action, according

²Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 16 ff; Bernd Weisbrod, Schwerindustrie in der Weimarer Republik: Interessenpolitik zwischen Stabilisierung und Krise (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1978), pp. 386 ff.

³Weisbrod, Schwerindustrie, p. 387; Turner, German Big Business, p. 30.

to the iron mill owners, violated a valid wage contract. Government arbitrators called for a slight increase in workers' wages, which was followed by a lockout of over 200,000 workers. During a Reichstag debate, Curtius supported a Social Democratic proposal to supply government relief to the affected workers and their families. Curtius expressed his support for relief efforts by calling the iron mill owners' actions "repellent." While Curtius's sympathy for the strikers was sincere, he still considered himself an opponent of socialist Sozialpolitik. Nevertheless, this episode provides evidence of his desire to serve more than narrow class interests. In his memoir, Curtius noted the necessity for economic fairness and national unity of Germany's economic fortunes were to increase.⁴

As Curtius entered the Economics Ministry in 1926, the economic outlook for Germany was bleak, due largely to the strain of meeting reparations obligations. By January 1926, German deliveries of coal on reparations account to France, Italy, and Belgium were in arrears, with few prospects for catching up. Trade had declined since 1924. This, coupled with a government policy of

⁴Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 72 ff; Stephen G. Fritz, "The Search for Volksgemeinschaft: Gustav Stresemann and the Baden DVP, 1926-1930," German Studies Review 7 (1984): 249-280.

tax reductions for industry, greatly decreased official revenues. Consumption taxes, indicative of consumer spending, were down from previous years. Unemployment stood at two million, with at least an equal number of workers underemployed.⁵

According to Curtius, essential for achieving the long-term, overall goal of German dominance in Central Europe was continued adherence to reparations payments schedules, while working for a diplomatic solution to the reparations question beneficial to the Fatherland. On several occasions in 1926, Curtius suggested that Germany could use its difficulties in meeting reparations indemnities as a tool to pressure the creditor nations. Speaking at a Düsseldorf wholesalers convention in September 1926, Curtius called for an increase in business input on the economic question, implying that German businessmen, by emphasizing their declining revenues, might influence the western nations to renegotiate reparations payments. Curtius stressed, however, that he was not encouraging agitation against the reparations burden.

⁵ Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich (Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1927), 46: 97 ff. For summarized statistics on the German economy, see The New International Year Book, 1926 (New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1927), pp. 313-314; see also Heinrich August Winkler, Der Schein der Normalität: Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924 bis 1930 (Berlin and Bonn: Verlag J. H. W. Dietz, 1985), pp. 295 ff.

To the contrary, Curtius emphatically stated that, like it or not, Germany must pay its debts. The Economics Minister accentuated the benefits to Germany of the policy of goodwill and cooperation exemplified by the Locarno Agreements and German entry into the League of Nations. At the same convention, Curtius also defined Germany's short-term economic goal as the bringing of German commerce into accord with world commerce, implying the need for equal and fair treatment of Germany, both in economic relations and political affairs with the Western powers.⁶

Curtius's immediate plan for the German economy was twofold: to fulfill reparations indemnities by expanding production through increased exports of manufactured goods and agricultural products to the West and to use Germany's natural geographic advantage in Central Europe to expand trade with the USSR, thus forging closer political ties with the Soviet Union at the expense of France and Poland. Among the most important economic programs contemplated by the Economics Ministry during this period were the breakdown of European customs barriers and the emphasis on bilateral trade agreements. Curtius's attitude toward tariffs, however, was flexible. The Economics Minister considered lower tariffs essential if Germany

⁶Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 34-36; New York Times, 16 September 1926, p. 7.

were to regain prewar markets and reduce its expanding trade deficit. At the same time, however, he urged limited protectionism for Germany, especially in negotiating bilateral trade treaties.

Curtius's domestic economic policies centered on his pledge for a concerted effort to battle inflation through the maintenance of stable price levels for consumer goods. In addition, the Economics Minister pledged to lower prices for foodstuffs, which were generally above world levels, through increased agricultural production. Intending to appease the Social Democrats, Curtius promised not to subsidize coal mining operations as a means of reducing the cost of German coal in world markets. Instead, to make German coal more competitive, Curtius called for the closing of unprofitable mines, a move not likely to win support among mine owners. The resulting unemployed were to find work in an expanded building industry. For the latter program, Curtius proposed construction of 200,000 new government-subsidized apartments, to be funded through an increase in the homeowners' tax.⁷

⁷Frankfurter Zeitung, 9 March 1926, p. 2; Verhandlungen, 392: 9443-9447, 9503; *ibid.*, 395: 13201. For an assessment of the economic situation in Germany during the 1920s and the difficulties encountered by an export-based economy, see Harold James, "State, Industry, and Depression in Weimar Germany," Historical Journal 24 (1981): 231-241.

Curtius outlined further efforts at curbing unemployment when, in July 1926, he agreed to compromise on several SPD Reichstag proposals. On 9 July, the Economics Minister announced an extension of unemployment compensation for industrial workers, plus an increase in government contract orders, designed to stimulate employment, to major industries. Curtius called for the subsidizing of private construction undertakings in high unemployment areas and the granting of public credits to selected industries. He intended that the resulting savings on production costs would lower prices, thus stimulating foreign sales. Other specific proposals included a loan of 50 million marks for the completion of railroad construction projects and an increase in government subsidies for the completion of the Mittelland Canal linking the eastern and western canal systems via Magdeburg, Brunswick, and Hannover. And, in a further effort to revive the building trades, Curtius announced a government program easing the requirements for private and contract builders to receive government-guaranteed mortgage credits.⁸

These programs, especially the proposed completion of the east-west canal system, were applauded by most political parties, with the exception of the

⁸Schulthess' Geschichtskalender, 67: 130.

Communists and the militant nationalists. Considerable opposition, however, to the Economic Minister's program centered on the difficult question of revenue. Considering Germany's negative trade balance and declining tax base, where was the money to be found for the required subsidies?⁹ With the conservative parties in the Reichstag unlikely to support a substantial tax increase, Curtius was forced to rely on stimulating economic recovery through increased foreign trade as the means for meeting reparations annuities and paying for domestic social and economic programs.

The success or failure of Curtius's economic program ultimately rested upon the Economic Minister's belief that all reasonable nations should follow free trade policies and that the creditor nations should make every possible effort to boost trade with Germany. A testament to the futility of Curtius's optimism was the British government's reluctance to sacrifice its own economic health for Germany's benefit. In March 1926, Curtius testified before the Reichstag Budget Committee that the 1925 Anglo-German trade agreement, in which Germany was granted most favored nation trade status (including elimination of most British tariff barriers against German agricultural products), had been repeatedly violated.

⁹Ibid.; The Times (London) 10 July 1926, p. 13.

During the committee hearing, Curtius accused Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's government of steadily increasing tariff protection of British industry, evidenced by a short-term downward trend in German exports to Britain since 1925. Curtius then notified the Budget Committee of his demand that Britain reaffirm its commitment to the 1925 agreement. But the difficulty in this solution, Curtius alleged, was that "the British government currently refused openly to profess either protectionism or free trade."¹⁰ This ambiguous economic policy was detrimental enough, Curtius averred. Yet, simultaneously, Germany's economic future was impaired "through the reciprocal most favored nation treatment agreed upon by both nations being made steadily more valuable to Britian, while advantages to Germany were undermined at every turn."¹¹

Curtius's chief complaint was based on his understanding that the two nations had agreed not to discriminate against each other's trade, either through customs duties or "rules of classification" in product quality or country of origin. While both nations promised to use the full force of their respective economic ministries to enforce adherence to the agreement, Curtius told the

¹⁰Verhandlungen, 389: 6340-6341.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 6341-6342.

Budget Committee of allegations of British exclusionary practices, particularly regarding the use of country of origin labels. These marks, Curtius alleged, had been intended, with the full knowledge of the Baldwin government, to circumvent the 1925 treaty. Citing what he admitted was an extreme example, Curtius noted that certain London grocery wholesalers had been marking imported eggs "laid in Germany."¹² That British housewives were reluctant to purchase such produce, and other goods labeled as German-produced, was understandable, especially since the emotional wounds caused by the war had had too little time to heal.

Curtius intended the allegations of British unfairness to generate support for Versailles Treaty revision. According to Curtius, the protectionist economic policies of the Western Powers negated the basic idea behind reparations espoused by the Dawes Plan, namely, that the fulfillment of Germany's reparations obligation was possible only through the means of an export surplus. Now that the creditor nations, like Great Britain, were unwilling to compete fairly in open markets, the German government's only recourse would be to ask for Versailles Treaty revision, or at least a drastic change in the Dawes Plan annuities. Until then, however, Curtius

¹²Ibid.

continued to favor adherence to the reparations schedule through attempts at revenue enhancement by a combination of increased taxes and the expansion of German exports through bilateral trade treaties.¹³

As the German economy staggered into 1927,¹⁴ Curtius renewed his efforts to increase export revenues. On numerous occasions during the spring, the Economics Minister spoke before businessmen's organizations on behalf of low tariffs. In May, at the annual meeting of the Hansa League for Trade and Industry in Berlin, Curtius delivered a basic economics lesson, probably intended more for the European press than his business audience. The Economics Minister declared that a customs tariff intended to protect selected areas of domestic production actually weakened the home market, since high tariffs tended to force up domestic prices. Citing the advantages of relatively low prices for consumer goods, Curtius advocated negotiations between Germany and her neighbors to eliminate tariff barriers on mineral and agricultural products.

¹³ Ibid.; The Times (London), 7 March 1928, p. 15.

¹⁴ While the trend in foreign trade turned upward in 1926 with German exports increasing, the balance of trade remained unfavorable. The Economics Ministry had succeeded in keeping the 1926 trade deficit to 133 million marks due to credits obtained in the United States. By early 1927, however, the German balance of trade deficit had increased to over 3 billion marks annually. See Statistisches Jahrbuch, 47: 110 ff.

As prices declined for these basic products, Curtius reasoned, consumers could spend more for other products, thus increasing demand for manufactured goods. This action also could expand Germany's export markets as new products were introduced.¹⁵

Indeed, Curtius was so enamored of this demand-based economic theory that he used it to buttress his support for partial prohibition of alcohol. Curtius endorsed a Reichstag bill introduced in June 1927 which called for limits on the sale of spirits in Germany. Curtius acknowledged that total prohibition might conflict with personal liberties, leading to a decline in respect for law and order as had occurred in the United States. Yet, he observed: "In view of the unquestioned destructive physical and economic effects of excessive drinking, the state was compelled to take steps to at least reduce the damage." The Economics Minister emphasized the economic consequences of excessive alcohol consumption, citing his belief that a loss of workers' productivity resulting from the use of alcoholic spirits was detrimental to Germany's fiscal recovery.¹⁶

¹⁵Berliner Tageblatt, 20 May 1927, p. 2; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 26-28.

¹⁶Verhandlungen, 393: 10914-10916. Curtius was well aware of the effect total prohibition had on law and order in the United States. Instead of a total ban on the production of hard spirits, he called for local option

Beginning in late 1927, Curtius increasingly blamed reparations for Germany's economic woes. Speaking to the Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie (RVDI) in Frankfurt, Curtius defended his economic policies of the past year by declaring that the current trade deficit of 3 billion marks was "relatively good." The real enemy of German economic recovery, he now charged, was the burden created by the use of foreign loans to pay reparations annuities of 2.4 billion marks. Reparations, and the resulting indebtedness, Curtius alleged, had fundamentally altered the ability to plan sound economic policies. Since the war, declared Curtius, Germany had become independent not on its own resources and capital but on the readiness of other nations to accord loans to Germany, "a revolution in normal economic intercourse." The time had arrived, declared the Economics Minister, for Germany to seek reparations redress.¹⁷

elections to reduce the number of neighborhood saloons; outlawing the sale of alcohol (including wine and beer) to minors under eighteen years of age; and strict licensing of all alcohol purveyors. In further debate, the SPD delegation criticized the Economics Minister's call for more control on minors consuming alcoholic beverages as not going far enough. The Communists attacked Curtius for supporting local option, describing such electoral procedures as an indirect method of encouraging the big distillers, brewers, and owners of "gilded palaces" to monopolize the industry at the expense of the small owners. This legislation failed, but prohibition measures continued to be introduced in the Reichstag until 1933.

¹⁷Frankfurter Zeitung, 4 September 1927, p. 2; The Times (London) 5 September 1927, p. 9. The United States

Despite Curtius's admission that the government was virtually impotent in reversing Germany's balance of trade deficit, the Economics Ministry continued to promote expanded trade relations, particularly in Eastern Europe. Again addressing the RVDI, Curtius proclaimed a basic economic advantage inherent in trade with the east. The advantage to Germany, he contended, lay in the likelihood that German manufacturers could procure wider areas for the distribution of their goods in the east than in the highly competitive west. An expansion of markets would also stimulate use of mass manufacturing methods, resulting in lower, more competitive, prices. These simple economic truths, he concluded, coupled with the usual

was the source for most of Germany's borrowed money. U.S. foreign policy in the 1920s was aimed at restructuring a prosperous and stable Europe, and that policy in turn depended upon a German economic revival. Especially active in the effort were private American businessmen, semipublic agencies such as the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and the first postwar U.S. ambassador to Germany, Alanson B. Houghton. While American policy seemed successful at first, Germany's economic health ultimately depended on a continuous flow of capital from the United States, a flow cut off with the advent of the Great Depression in America. See Frank Costigliola, "The United States and the Reconstruction of Germany in the 1920s," Business History Review 50 (1976): 477-502; Sander A. Diamond, "Ein Amerikaner in Berlin: Aus den Papieren des Botschafters Alanson B. Houghton, 1922-1925," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 27 (1979): 431-470; and Manfred Jonas, The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), pp. 181 ff.

German reputation for excellent quality, could not fail to succeed.¹⁸

Curtius's economic boosterism stimulated wide-ranging political criticism. Both SPD and Communist Reichstag deputies attacked the Economics Minister, alleging a lack of interest in working-class problems such as the endemic housing shortage and the loss of working-class buying power. Yet the preponderance of political criticism aimed at the Economics Ministry emanated from the militant political right. While Curtius had been advocating low tariffs and international economic cooperation as the long-term solutions to Germany's economic difficulties, the DNVP, allied with the National Socialists, countered with a demand for "Germanic" isolation. As the cure for both economic and social ills, such DNVP spokesmen as Martin Schiele, an agricultural expert and longtime critic of Stresemann's conciliatory foreign policy, called for a German "self-supporting state," free from all foreign entanglements. Besides demanding a complete abrogation of the reparations system, Schiele proposed increased tariff barriers against all foreign manufactures, plus the permanent ban on all imports of "non-Germanic" potatoes, pork, and sugar.¹⁹ Curtius

¹⁸Frankfurter Zeitung, 4 September 1927, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹Verhandlungen, 392: 9443-9444. By 1930, the National Socialist policy of a self-supporting state had

fended off these attacks in the Reichstag with pleas for reason. Curtius calmly noted that a German "subsistence state" was impractical. Few nations, he noted, were as fortunate as the United States of America in having a virtually inexhaustible supply of natural resources and agricultural plenty. High tariffs might be workable for America, he counseled, but most countries, especially in Europe, in order to maintain basic economic standards, were obliged to obtain what they lacked in natural resources through the exchange of commodities, minerals, and other raw materials. Responding to Schiele's assault on his ministry, Curtius vowed that the German government was determined to direct its efforts towards achieving the most effective distribution of production in Europe, based upon the reduction of tariff levels recommended by the World Economics Conference in Geneva. Any efforts at sabotaging Germany's growing prestige in Europe, achieved through adherence to a rational economic program, Curtius viewed as the pinnacle of folly.²⁰

changed to a demand for German economic and territorial expansion. In the 1920s, Hitler did not believe in the necessity of a national economic program based on international trade. See Hans-Erich Volkmann, "Das Aussenwirtschaftliche Programm der NSDAP, 1930-1933," Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 17 (1977): 251-274.

²⁰Verhandlungen, 392: 9444-9445, 9505.

Curtius paid special attention to the World Economics Conference's tariff recommendations. Throughout 1926 and 1927, Curtius supported the Geneva Conference's preliminary agreement, fixing, by international treaty, a maximum tariff level and establishing a uniform European tariff schedule. These policies, Curtius was convinced, would provide immediate economic benefits for Germany. With all tariffs being more or less equal, he reasoned, Germany would have a relatively free economic hand in Eastern Europe. If Germany, France, and Great Britain all employed similar tariff rates, then Germany's geographic position would provide an advantage in transportation to the east.²¹

The key element in Curtius's eastern economic policy, already begun in the spring of 1926, lay in developing trade relations with the Soviet Union. On 31 March, Curtius announced a government plan whereby Germany would extend a credit of 300 million marks to the USSR for the purchase of German heavy machinery and machine tools. Curtius believed that Germany faced several unavoidable handicaps in foreign trade, the most important being reparations, but also America's advantages in mass production which could capture an

²¹Ibid.; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 32-33, 58 ff; Eyck, Weimar Republic, 2: 127.

ever-increasing share of the European market for manufactured goods. The Soviet Union appealed to Curtius as the most likely field for expanding German trade, especially since Russia had been one of Germany's most important prewar export markets. Again, Curtius depended upon increased exports to the USSR having a twofold effect: decreasing the balance of trade deficit, and, through expanded production, increasing employment.

The problem of where Germany would obtain the proposed 300 million marks to lend the Soviets, Curtius solved when he persuaded American lenders, particularly Clarence Dillon of Dillon, Read, and Company, to provide the money, to be transferred through the Reichsbank and administered by the Economics Ministry. Curtius was careful to assure the Americans that the nature of German goods to be delivered to Moscow, e.g., locomotives and tractors, would offer minimal competition to U.S. industry. In addition, Curtius pointed out that the Russo-German trade agreement, if successful, would aid Germany's ability to gain economic equilibrium, enhancing the Reich's chances for meeting reparations annuities and repaying its foreign loans.²² By late 1927, however,

²²Berliner Tageblatt, 31 March 1926, p. 2; Curtius to State Secretary Kempner, 3 March 1926, Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1934, Series B, vol. 2, part 1, number 217 (hereafter cited Akten).

the economic benefits for Germany had proved ephemeral. German and American financiers had expressed a reluctance to extend further trade credits to Moscow in excess of the original 300 million marks, and German political opinion had become increasingly anti-Soviet. Adding to the Economics Minister's disillusionment was the Wilhelmstrasse's revelation that the Soviet Union, throughout the life of the trade agreement, had consistently transferred machinery orders from German firms to British manufacturers.²³

Yet the economic setbacks with the Soviet Union were secondary to the more important foreign policy goals inherent in the Treaty of Berlin, signed on 24 April 1926. This German-Soviet agreement, reaffirming the 1922 Rapallo Treaty, bound both Berlin and Moscow to a pledge of mutual neutrality. And Soviet neutrality, Curtius acknowledged, was the key to the extraction of political concessions from the Western Powers, notably the revision of the

²³Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 28-30; Harvey Leonard Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, 1926-1933: A Study in Diplomatic Instability (London: Chatto and Windus, 1966), pp. 77-78. During most of the 1920s, the German political parties from left to right opposed trade agreements with the West. Trade with the Soviet Union generally was favored. Except for a short period in the mid-1920s, the Communists were in favor of improved German-Soviet relations. From the SPD to the DNVP, the parties stood for normalization. Trade unions supported improved relations, while the churches were against the USSR; see Karl Dietrich Erdmann, "Die Deutsch-Sowjetischen Beziehungen in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Deutschen Innenpolitik," Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 26 (1975): 403-426.

German-Polish boundary.²⁴ As implied by the Rhineland Pact, Germany had never renounced the goal of ultimately regaining former German lands now within the boundaries of Poland. To Curtius, the USSR represented a counter to his perception of Poland as an aggressive neighbor, allied with sternly anti-German France and enjoying political support from most of Western Europe.²⁵

To protect this advantage gained by the Treaty of Berlin, German-Soviet relations in later years occupied much of Curtius's attention. Yet, while Curtius served as Foreign Minister, relations with Moscow were increasingly dominated by domestic political considerations. From 1929 to 1931, Curtius continued to call for stable relations with the USSR. Yet, with vociferous anti-Sovietism becoming a fixture of radical-nationalist politics, Curtius was forced to maintain a precarious balance in relations with Moscow. Curtius repeatedly rejected Ambassador to Moscow Herbert von Dirksen's advice that the Soviet Union's potential markets were too valuable to be jeopardized by German public opinion.²⁶ In Curtius's view,

²⁴Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, pp. 18-19; Ambassador in Moscow, Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau, to the Foreign Office, 16 November 1927, Akten 7, no. 111.

²⁵Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 155-157; Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, pp. 28-30.

²⁶Ambassador in Moscow von Dirksen to General Consul Schlesinger, 17 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 36. Dirksen advised the Foreign Office that the Soviets

Dirksen failed to appreciate this depth of anti-communist feeling in Germany. Curtius therefore advocated eliminating the one-sided German-Soviet trade balance (by placing restrictions on Russian agricultural imports) to avoid inflaming German anti-Sovietism to a dangerous pitch and thereby giving a political boost to the radical right.²⁷

Indeed, in the wake of the collapse of Soviet-German trade relations in 1927-1928, Curtius considered Moscow's value as a potential weapon versus Warsaw the only positive factor remaining in favor of continuing the Berlin Treaty. "One need only recall the question of the Polish border," Curtius later reported to a cabinet meeting, "in order to be convinced of the need for entente between Berlin and Moscow." Germany, Curtius advised, should not allow emotional anti-bolshevism to interfere with reasoned diplomacy. Yet, at the same time, the German government could not overlook the necessity for gaining some concession from the Soviets that might assuage the militant rightists.²⁸ For this reason,

were convinced that Germany was moving closer to joining an Anti-Soviet bloc of European nations. He also downplayed any influence the Soviet Union might have had on the German Communist Party.

²⁷Curtius to Dirksen, 15 February 1930, Akten 14, no. 104.

²⁸Cabinet Meeting, 20 February 1930, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik, Das Kabinett Müller, Karl Kietrich Erdmann and Wolfgang Mommsen, eds. (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1970), 2, no. 451.

Curtius periodically used his position in the German government to convince the Soviets to allow the emigration of thousands of ethnic Germans displaced during the agricultural collectivization program in the Soviet Ukraine. By the end of 1930, over ten thousand refugees had been relocated in Germany, a policy hailed by the political right and one which cooled radical criticism of Curtius's Soviet policy.²⁹ Curtius used his influence on numerous occasions to head off conservative political attacks directed against German-Soviet cooperation. Throughout the last years of the 1920s, for example, Curtius persuaded DVP members of the Herrenklub, a conservative organization opposed, inter alia, to Soviet religious persecution, to drop demands for an economic boycott of Russia.³⁰ Curtius's action against the Herrenklub was also in response to the organization's earlier demand for a German military invasion of Russia if the Soviets continued their alleged support for the German Communist Party. Curtius was loath to let such political views jeopardize the German military's dependence on the USSR,

²⁹Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 166. Curtius appropriated three million marks for the resettlement program, but tens of thousands of ethnic Germans remained in the USSR. See also Dyck, Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, pp. 170-173, 208-208, 231-232.

³⁰Curtius to State Secretary von Schubert, 22 March 1930, Akten 14, no. 172.

and he supported Defense Minister General Wilhelm Groener's assessment that a politically inspired disengagement from the Soviet Union was, from the military point of view, indefensible. Only accord with Russia, the General argued, gave the Army the opportunity to familiarize itself with the most modern weapons. And Curtius concurred with Groener's opinion that German use of such Soviet bases as Kazan and Lipetsk, where prototypes of aircraft and armored vehicles were tested, was essential for the Fatherland's covert rearmament.³¹

German-Soviet relations declined rapidly after 1931, due largely to the increasing influence of the National Socialists on Germany's foreign policy. Long before then, however, Curtius was aware that the troubled trade agreement between the two nations, plus the continued German trade imbalance with Western Europe, must lead to negotiation for reparations revision. Throughout his career, Curtius would be closely involved in these economic talks, and he would share with Stresemann the political victory they would bring.

³¹Cabinet Meeting, 20 February 1930, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Müller 2, no. 451. For a description of the clandestine rearmament of Germany, directed by alleged defensive needs against Poland, and the use of Kazan and Lipetsk as training sites, see Michael Geyer, "Das Zweite Rüstungsprogramm, 1930-1934," Militär-geschichtliche Mitteilungen (1975): 125-172; and Francis L. Carsten, The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918 to 1933 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 276-284.

Already by September 1928, a Geneva meeting of the League of Nations had called for a commission of experts to study reparations. This commission, termed the Young Commission after its chairman, American financier Owen D. Young, met in Paris from 9 February to 7 June 1929. A proposed reparations settlement was drafted, the Young Plan, which was to become effective on 1 September 1929, subject to ratification by an international conference of the nations involved in World War reparations. This conference was finally scheduled for August 1929 at The Hague.³²

The Young Plan covered three main points: opening negotiations on German demands for evacuation of the Rhineland before 1935, the Versailles Treaty mandated

³²For a general view of the Young Commission, Young Plan, and the conference at The Hague, see Eyck, Weimar Republic, 2: 188-192; Ludwig Zimmermann, Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Ära der Weimarer Republik (Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1958), pp. 360 ff; Carl E. Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences, 1929-1930" (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1964), passim; Arnold Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs for 1929 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 153 ff; and Julius Curtius, Der Youngplan: Entstellung und Wahrheit (Stuttgart: Mittelbach Verlag, 1950), passim. Curtius's memoir of the Young Plan is largely a personal and political attack on Reichsbank President Hjalmar Schacht, chief German delegate to the Young Commission and an "expert" consultant to the German delegation at the first conference at The Hague. As the conference drew to a close in August 1929, Schacht angered Curtius by his attempt to disassociate himself from the German delegation, joining with the radicals in accusing Stresemann of making too many concessions to the Allies.

deadline; the final settlement of reparations based on Germany's ability to pay; and creation of a control commission to oversee conditions in the Rhineland following Allied evacuation.³³ Central to the economic negotiations at this First Hague Conference (a second conference was held in 1930) was the question of how Germany was to pay the "unconditional" annuities of 660 million marks raised from the German government's yearly budget. Because unconditional annuities could not be deferred to subsequent years (a large portion of reparations annuities was deferrable), and because such a large cash payment was likely to be too heavy a burden on the German budget, a special Finance Committee was convened to discuss the possibility of Germany making part of the payment in kind instead of cash.³⁴

³³ Zimmermann, Deutsche Aussenpolitik, p. 360; Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1929, pp. 153-156. For the account of Britain's favorable attitude toward early evacuation of the Rhineland, see the essay on Arthur Henderson, British Foreign Secretary, by H. R. Winkler in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 311 ff. Recent historical works on the Young Plan have altered the contention that Germany was unable to meet its reparations obligations, instead arguing that French demands were far more reasonable and the German ability to pay greater than previously assumed. See, for example, Peter Krüger, "Das Reparationsproblem der Weimarer Republik in fragwürdiger Sicht: Kritische Überlegungen zur neuesten Forschung," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 29 (1981): 21-47.

³⁴ Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1929, pp. 154-156.

The Conference opened on 6 August 1929 with delegates from thirteen countries participating, although only six, Belgium, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and Japan, were represented on the committee dealing with the political settlement of the Rhineland question. Representing Germany as principal delegates were Gustav Stresemann (in poor health, the Foreign Minister had only a few months to live); Minister of Economics Julius Curtius (who would sit on the Finance Committee charged with the payment in kind question); Minister of Occupied Territories Joseph Wirth; and Minister of Finance Rudolf Hilferding. Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Snowden, President of the Board of Trade William Graham, and Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson represented Britain. France sent Foreign Minister Aristide Briand and Minister of Finance Henri Cheron. An observer from the United States, Edwin C. Wilson, First Secretary of the American Legation in Paris, was also present.³⁵

Stresemann's political goal at The Hague was to gain Allied agreement on early clearance (Räumung) of the occupied Rhineland districts.³⁶ With much of the

³⁵Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 39.

³⁶Report by State Secretary von Schubert, August 11, 1929, Akten 12, no. 166; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 91-96; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 42.

negotiation centered on linking reparations payments to evacuation, however, the Political Committee talks stalled.³⁷ Meanwhile, Curtius entered the Finance Committee negotiations determined to prevent Great Britain and France from forcing Germany to use cash reserves in making annuity payments. In the first meeting, Curtius pointed out that the proposed unconditional annuities, if made in hard currency, would drain too much capital from German industry, especially if the annual payments were carried out over the full thirty-seven years of the Young Plan. Instead, Curtius supported the expansion of payment in kind, i.e., the use of commodities, coal, and mineral ores to meet the annuity. The ostensible purpose of Curtius's offer was to ensure German compliance, a guarantee he could not make if the Allies demanded specie.³⁸ The Economics Minister was also interested in the long-term foreign policy objective of engendering a French dependency on German raw materials via deliveries in kind. Moreover, according to Curtius, this dependency would likely stimulate future German exports of manufactured goods to France in excess of reparations allocations.³⁹

³⁷ Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 47.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 56; Winkler, Der Schein der Normalität, pp. 593-595.

³⁹ Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," pp. 60-61.

At the 12 August Finance Committee meeting, Curtius espoused his argument for payment in kind. Responding to the British proposal that deliveries in kind, especially coal, be curtailed, Curtius reiterated his view that payments in kind were vital to Germany's economic health. Curtius carefully delineated the poor state of German foreign trade, citing a substantial decrease in exports from 1913 to 1928. His resentment over the loss of Germany's colonial possessions still evident, Curtius coolly explained to the British delegates that "a deficit in the German balance of trade might take years to reverse, since Germany was unable to rely upon overseas colonial markets for exports," as was Great Britain. Reluctant to continue wailing at the altar of sacrifice, however, Curtius appealed to reason. Payment in kind, he lectured would put Germans to work, and with unemployment totaling three million, any increase in joblessness created by lessened British demand for German coal might cause an epidemic of political unrest, easily capitalized upon by German radicals on the political left and right. And, he reminded his British and French colleagues, epidemics of political unrest as had occurred in Germany in 1918-1919 were often highly contagious. Citing Dawes Plan precedent, Curtius argued that deliveries in kind, in effect since the beginning of reparations, had become a central fixture of the German economy. "In the spirit of conciliation,"

he concluded, the Allied powers should agree that any alteration of the payment program hindering the German economy also would damage the economies of the creditor nations.⁴⁰

By mid-August, the technical aspects of reparations had been resolved, with Germany allowed to continue reparations payments in kind.⁴¹ As yet unresolved, however, was the Rhineland occupation question, Germany's prime objective at the Hague Conference. The premature withdrawal of Allied troops in the occupied territory along the Rhine would mean little, Curtius later wrote, if France retained the right to reoccupy the Rhineland following some real or alleged provocation from Germany, such as a default on reparations payments--as had previously occurred. Thus, the German delegation labored to prevent the creation of any commission which might legally sanction Allied reoccupation.⁴²

Curtius's role in the political settlement was largely as a consultant to Stresemann, the Political Committee comprising the British, French, Belgian, and German Foreign Ministers. Stresemann's ally in the

⁴⁰Finance Committee Report, August 11-13, 1929, Akten 12, nos. 166 and 170.

⁴¹Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 61.

⁴²Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 91-96.

political negotiations was the British Foreign Secretary, Henderson. In earlier meetings between the British and German conferees, the Foreign Secretary proposed that Rhineland evacuation should begin in September 1929, and that by Christmas "not an English soldier should be in the Rhineland." As the other Allies had remained reluctant to agree to any pre-1935 withdrawal, Stresemann counted on Henderson to convert Belgium and France to the British view.⁴³

Most of the Rhineland discussions took place outside the committee hearings, with Stresemann privately attempting to get French Foreign Minister Briand to announce an exact date when France would evacuate the Rhine districts.⁴⁴ At all times, however, Briand was evasive, usually offering the excuse that France had not had sufficient time to complete fortification of her eastern border. Finally, on 8 August, Briand accepted, in principle, the idea of early evacuation while maintaining the French position that occupation guaranteed Germany's adherence to reparations indemnities. Further French objections to immediate evacuation centered on the difficulty of troop movements during winter. Stresemann's

⁴³ Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 5th ser., vol. 229, p. 497.

⁴⁴ Report of Conference Between Stresemann and Briand, August 8, 1929, Akten 12, no. 155.

counter was the argument that, if the French began immediate evacuation of the few thousand occupation troops still in Germany, these troops would all be home before the first snows fell. Yet Briand, considered a master at protracting negotiations until his opponents surrendered, continued to offer fresh excuses. At last, on 19 August, with Stresemann's health declining, the French Foreign Minister made a key concession. Following a personal letter from Stresemann, along with Henderson's persuasion, Briand agreed to begin immediate evacuation.⁴⁵ Briand's concession became a part of the Political Committee's report to the full conference and was included in the International Agreement on the Evacuation of the Rhineland, signed 30 August 1929. Allied troop removal began in September, with Britain and Belgium completing withdrawal in three months. French evacuation, which was somewhat more complex, was not completed until June 1930.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Stresemann, Vermächtnis 3: 555; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," pp. 88-93.

⁴⁶ Report on Correspondence Between Stresemann and Briand, 29 August 1929, Akten 12, no. 221. For a summary of the Young Plan settlements and their political and economic repercussions, see Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929, pp. 272-273. Among other provisions, the conference agreed to fix the total cash value of German annuities at 37 billion gold marks, to be paid at the average rate of about one billion marks per year until 1965. The other major conference decisions involved the restructuring of the annual percentage of reparations payments for the participating nations; for example, France demanded and received an increase in her

The real measure of Stresemann's success, however, was his blocking of French proposals for a committee to investigate treaty violations, especially the possible German remilitarization of the Rhineland. Kept as the sole supervisory authority was the League of Nations, which possessed no instruments for enforcement. This considerable victory for Germany revealed Stresemann not only as a statesman of conciliation, but also as a brilliant diplomatic strategist. Indeed, Stresemann's entire foreign policy, and Curtius's subsequent diplomacy, followed one scenario: an initial concession to be followed by another until, with time being on the side of the skillful diplomat, Germany would have its long-sought Versailles Treaty revision.⁴⁷ After 1933, however, revisionism would be

annual percentage. Curtius's negotiations on the Finance Committee resulted in a compromise whereby reparations payments in kind shipped direct to the creditor countries were to be reduced gradually from 750 million marks annually to 300 million, and were to cease at the end of ten years. See also Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 48-58; and Edward W. Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, 1931 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 5-8.

⁴⁷For a discussion of Stresemann's foreign policy achievements see Turner, Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic, chapter 6. Historical evaluations of Stresemann's foreign policy written since the entire Nachlass became available concentrate on the diplomatic and political skill with which the Foreign Minister was able to conceal within his conciliatory "fulfillment policy" his true nationalist goals. Under the difficult conditions in Germany emerging from the defeat in 1918, the maintenance of stable foreign policy goals against the influence of rightist extremists and French

exploited by leaders far less reasonable and patient than Stresemann or Curtius.⁴⁸

The conclusion of the conference on 31 August resulted in widespread public reaction in Germany. Support for the German delegation's work at The Hague came from the moderate-conservative parties, which applauded Stresemann's success over the Rhineland question. The editor of the moderate-liberal Berliner Tageblatt, for example, praised the wisdom of Stresemann's patience with Briand and the Foreign Minister's astute enlistment of the British delegation on Germany's behalf in the political negotiations.⁴⁹ The heaviest critical blasts emanated from the Communists and the radical right, with the fiercest attacks on the Young Plan and the German delegates coming from the German Nationalists. In the Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, former State Secretary of the Navy under the Kaiser and from 1924 to 1928 a DNVP Reichstag representative, termed Stresemann's policies a "grave mistake," and he demanded an "Anglo-Saxon alliance"

animosity was a remarkable accomplishment. See, for example, the review article by Robert Grathwol, "Stresemann Revisited," European Studies Review 7 (1977): 341-352.

⁴⁸Karl Dietrich Erdmann, "Gustav Stresemann: Sein Bild in der Geschichte," Historische Zeitschrift 227 (1978): 599-616.

⁴⁹Berliner Tageblatt, 1 September 1929, pp. 1-3.

of Germany, Britain, and the United States against France.⁵⁰

Curtius's chance to defend Stresemann's foreign policy came in September following an all-out political assault by Alfred Hugenberg's political followers. Hugenberg, since 1928 chairman of the DNVP, had, since early 1929, plotted against German acceptance of the Young Plan. In June, he formed the Reich Committee Against the Young Plan, which included leaders of the extreme nationalist and racist Pan-German League (who described Stresemann as "degenerate" and "politically decadent"); the right-wing para-military Stahlhelm; and, for the first time as a member of a "respectable" political coalition, Adolf Hitler.⁵¹

In September, this organization sent the Federal Minister of the Interior the draft of a petition, the "Law Against the Enslavement of the German People," later

⁵⁰Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 31 August 1929, pp. 2-3.

⁵¹Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 109-117; John A. Leopold, Alfred Hugenberg: The Radical Nationalist Campaign Against the Weimar Republic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 55-57. Leopold quotes several leading German industrialists, notably Paul Reusch, director of the Gutehoffnungshütte, as regarding the Young Plan's economic settlement as detrimental to Germany, while simultaneously accepting the political solution to the Rhineland question. Thus big business leaders, such as Fritz Thyssen, could join Hugenberg's organization for economic reasons, while maintaining their political independence.

known as the "Freedom Law," for submission to national referendum. The proposed law required the German government to repudiate the war guilt clause of the Versailles Treaty and demanded the immediate Allied evacuation of all the occupied German territories. The proposal forbade the government to assume any financial obligations that would imply a recognition of responsibility for starting the 1914-1918 war. And, most controversial, it required that any government official who signed treaties incurring such obligations be found guilty of treason and subject to imprisonment for up to two years. This punitive measure was indicative of Hugenberg's impetuous thinking; the penalty could apply as easily to Hindenburg, the hero of the right, as to the intended moderate or leftist transgressors. The clause was aimed, of course, at Stresemann, Curtius, and the other German delegates at The Hague. By November, Hugenberg had secured 4,135,000 signatures to the petition for referendum, only eight thousand over the minimum required.⁵²

⁵²Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 112-117; Leopold, Alfred Hugenberg, pp. 68-70; Eyck, Weimar Republic 2: 220-222; For a reprint of 1929 documents on the Freedom Law and an assessment of Hugenberg, see Dieter Gessner, "Dokumentation: 'Grüne Front' oder 'Harzburger Front': der Reichslandbund in der letzten Phase der Weimarer Republik, zwischen wirtschaftlicher Interessenpolitik und nationalistischem Revisionsanspruch," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 29 (1981): 110-123.

Stresemann responded to Hugenberg's Freedom Law with moderation and reason. Stresemann argued that the Young Plan reparations revisions would improve Germany's economic situation. Replying to allegations that he had sold out to the Allies, he declared that thoughtless defiance and violent resistance would never succeed against the Western Powers. The indignant demands for immediate war guilt repudiation he termed "divisive" and, in the long run, detrimental to a favorable view of Germany in world opinion. Moreover, he noted, most Germans, including President von Hindenburg, acclaimed his success in advancing the Rhineland evacuation five years. This achievement, Stresemann noted, was made possible by reason and conciliation, not confrontation.⁵³

Yet the Foreign Minister would not live to defend his policies against the right-wing extremists. Stresemann's last political act was to persuade the DVP executive committee to pass a resolution opposing Hugenberg's referendum. On 20 October, Stresemann received Curtius at his residence for a conversation over the current political situation. For about an hour, the two statesmen discussed the DVP Reichstag delegation's intention to support an unemployment insurance bill introduced by

⁵³Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 110-115.

the Social Democrats. Early the next morning, Stresemann was found dead, apparently of a stroke.⁵⁴

Stresemann's DVP colleague and confidant, Julius Curtius, was appointed his successor as Foreign Minister. Curtius's initial task was to defend the Young Plan against the radical-nationalist political assault. Following Hugenberg's success in gathering enough signatures on his Freedom Law petition, the Reichstag was obliged to vote on whether the measure was to be accepted or rejected. The Freedom Law proposal was placed before the Reichstag on 25 November, and debate was opened on the 29th. Curtius was chosen to speak on the government's behalf, a speech which also served as a crystallization of his political philosophy.⁵⁵

Reading from his notes, but periodically looking up at his radical hecklers, Curtius was humorous, but not so oratorically witty as Stresemann. Yet, aided by what one observer called a "drawling" delivery, Curtius had the Reichstag's rapt attention when he addressed to Hugenberg a series of questions designed to illustrate the absurdities of the referendum campaign.⁵⁶ The new Foreign Minister

⁵⁴Stresemann, Vermächtnis 3: 582-583; Vossische Zeitung, 3 October 1929, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁵Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 105-117. For an extract of Curtius's speech, see Appendix A.

⁵⁶Frankfurter Zeitung, 30 November 1929, pp. 1-2; Verhandlungen 426, 3288-3296.

began with a request that the Reichstag recognize the Hugenberg proposal for what it was, an attack on the authority of the Republic, and founded on the "dishonest assertion" that German foreign policy hitherto had been based on recognition of Germany's responsibility for the war. According to Curtius, Germany had never, and would never, accept sole responsibility for the 1914-1918 war, and President von Hindenburg and the majority of Germans repudiated such an admission. If the majority of the Reichstag rejected the so-called Freedom Law, said Curtius, it did not mean that the delegates accepted the war guilt accusation, as the promoters of the referendum implied.

Curtius then continued:

In the democracies, whose forms of direct legislation by the people have been adopted in the Weimar Constitution . . . foolish ideas have also sprung up, and referendum controversies have taken place, but none of these states . . . has ever had the idea of wanting to conduct foreign policy by means of plebiscites.⁵⁷

Curtius then expounded what he considered to be the basic difference between Germany's reasonable, rational statesmen and the contemptible psuedo-patriots among the militant nationalists. To Curtius, the barrister and corporate director, the question was simple: it was nonsense to place on record in a public petition the declaration that the nation did not want to pay a disputed debt. Of course

⁵⁷Verhandlungen 426: 3288-3290.

Germany did not want to pay, but the salient point, according to Curtius, was that the Fatherland had to pay.⁵⁸

Turning to the Young Plan, Curtius explained the government's position that, while the ultimate solution to the reparations question lay ahead, the Young Plan would enhance Germany's ability to meet the Allied indemnities and, simultaneously, decrease Allied control over German territory. Then Curtius, who cleverly directed all of his criticism at Hugenberg and his coterie, not at the DNVP, whose support the government needed, at least in part, offered several assessments aimed at ridiculing Hugenberg's demagoguery. The Foreign Minister resented Hugenberg's effrontery of demanding that the government forthwith abrogate legally negotiated international accords. To Curtius, the Hugenberg demands seemed more like "staff orders" to the government "troops" in the front lines than a reasonable petition for redress. Curtius then asked Hugenberg for proof of his assertion that, following Germany's rejection of the Young Plan, the Allies would willingly enter into fresh negotiations which would, according to Hugenberg, result in the collapse of the Versailles Treaty. The likely result, lectured Curtius, would be a German default on reparations annuities,

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 3290.

followed by Allied military sanctions, if not a renewal of war between France and Germany. Curtius also scoffed at Hugenberg's bombastic claim that: "as long as the Young Plan casts its shadow over Germany, there would be no order, no freedom, no dignity, no healthy family life, no tax reductions, and no justice."⁵⁹

Calling the Freedom Law " a calamitous delusion," Curtius used the Hugenberg faction as an example of what the Foreign Minister considered a crippling flaw in Germany's parliamentary system. Curtius, referring to the penal clause included in the proposed law, noted that German foreign policy repeatedly had been criticized by the opposition, yet invariably the critics, when asked to produce a positive alternative policy, had been unable to respond. Hugenberg's petition, declared Curtius, was such a case. The Freedom Law, said Curtius, would cripple the further legal, civilized pursuit of Germany's aims, destroy what had already been achieved, and confine Germany to economic and political isolation in Europe.⁶⁰

Following Curtius's address, the Catholic Center Party's Thomas Esser, the Vice-President of the Reichstag, delivered a joint declaration on behalf of the government coalition parties (SPD, Democrats, DVP, Center, and

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 3290-3294.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 3294-3296.

Bavarian People's Party) expressing strong opposition to the Freedom Law proposal. A prolonged cry from the right side of the Reichstag chamber for Hugenberg to defend his Freedom Law and reply to Curtius's criticism brought only silence from the radical-nationalist leader. Hugenberg's silence was, perhaps, due to his often professed contempt for parliamentarianism, or, as the liberal press contended, to his total lack of oratorical skills.⁶¹ On the next day, 30 November, the Reichstag voted on the Hugenberg proposition. The Freedom Law's margin of defeat was overwhelming, with 318 against and only 82 in favor. Out of 78 DNVP deputies voting, only 55 supported Hugenberg, the party chairman. The resulting party schism would cause the German Nationalists to lose most of their political influence among conservatives, a vacuum rapidly filled by the National Socialists.⁶²

⁶¹Frankfurter Zeitung, 30 November 1929, p. 2.

⁶²On 22 December, the Freedom Law was defeated in national referendum, gaining only 6 million of the 21 million votes needed for enactment into law. In 1931, Hugenberg created another coalition of right-wing extremist parties, the Harzburg Front, which accused the government of Chancellor Heinrich Brüning of rapprochement with the Social Democrats. Hugenberg later supported Hitler's appointment as Chancellor and served in the Hitler cabinet as Minister of Economics and Food. In June 1933, however, he resigned his office in a dispute over the National Socialist policy of Gleichschaltung, the integration of all political, social, and cultural institutions under the control of the NSDAP. Leopold, Alfred Hugenberg, pp. 136-137, 151 ff.

From January 1926 to November 1929, the Economics Ministry under Curtius, probably more than any other agency outside the Foreign Office, saw and understood the links between foreign and domestic policies. Curtius's inheritance of the Foreign Minister's office on the Wilhelmstrasse relieved him of having to solve Germany's complex economic crisis, enabling him to concentrate on carrying out Stresemann's revisionist foreign policies.⁶³ An assessment of Curtius's economic program at the end of 1929 would indicate that the Economics Ministry had little impact on the national economy, with Germany in a far from healthy economic condition.⁶⁴ An overview of Germany's finances in November 1929 would have shown a stagnant economy, with high unemployment, declining industrial production, shrinking business income, a serious lack

⁶³ Barbara Kellerman, "Mentoring in Political Life: The Case of Willy Brandt," American Political Science Review 72 (1978): 422-433. The author contends that the mentor/mentee relationship could compel the mentee to attempt to surpass the achievements of the mentor, offering an interesting perspective on Curtius's apparent lack of diplomatic caution during his efforts at building an Austro-German Customs Union in 1931, achievement of which would have strained even Stresemann's powers of diplomacy.

⁶⁴ Helmut Böhme, An Introduction to the Social and Economic History of Germany trans., W. R. Lee (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), pp. 102-113; Karl Hardach, The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1976), pp. 30-37; Rolf Engelsing, Kleine Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutschlands (Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1968), pp. 134 ff.

of capital, and a chronic trade imbalance despite Curtius's years of emphasis on boosting exports.⁶⁵ One basic measure which serves as an example of the economic crisis was the decline in personal income, with only 368,000 out of a total population of 63 million having an income exceeding 8,000 Reichsmarks (equivalent to about 2,000 U.S. dollars in 1929).⁶⁶ In addition, by the end of 1929, the number of bankruptcies had shown a steady increase over the preceding five years, and the bankruptcy list had begun to include more long-established, family-owned, "reputable" firms.⁶⁷

The German economic contraction led also to an insuperable political deadlock. While the Social Democrats sought further means of raising revenue by direct taxation

⁶⁵Hardach, Political Economy, p. 228; Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich, 1929, p. 186; Harold James, The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924-1936 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 98; Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Wallimann, eds., Towards the Holocaust: The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 43. Dobkowski and Wallimann show 1929 unemployment as a percentage of the labor force at 13.3%. By 1931, the unemployment percentage had risen to 34.3%. For the impact of foreign borrowing on the German economy, see William C. McNeil, American Money and the Weimar Republic: Economics and Politics on the Eve of the Great Depression (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 261-269.

⁶⁶James, The German Slump, p. 51.

⁶⁷Dobkowski and Wallimann, Towards the Holocaust, pp. 43-43.

and foreign borrowing to meet the growing problem of unemployment relief, the conservative parties demanded that taxes be reduced, foreign borrowing curtailed, and expenditures for social insurance and other SPD schemes diminished to allow the country to accumulate the necessary capital for the maintenance of industrial growth. With the advent of the Great Depression in October, the future looked bleak for any economic recovery or political unity.⁶⁸

⁶⁸Hardach, Political Economy, pp. 201-214; Engelsing, Kleine Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, pp. 134 ff; James, The German Slump, pp. 56-69.

CHAPTER III

TOWARD A NEW FOREIGN POLICY

Because of his personality and his professional training, there was always more of the lawyer than of the visionary statesman in the style that Curtius brought to the Wilhelmstrasse when he was officially confirmed as Foreign Minister in November 1929. Sir Horace Rumbold, the British Ambassador to Berlin from 1928 to 1933, observed that Curtius, although honest, straightforward, and meticulous when engaged in detailed negotiations, had no sense of political mission. Thoughtful and conciliatory by nature, he was no great leader.¹ Gottfried Treviranus, a member of the German cabinet from 1930 to 1932 serving variously as Minister for the Occupied Territories and Minister of Transport, offered a similarly candid portrait of Curtius. The conservative Treviranus opined that Curtius had found little pleasure either in his legal practice or in the internal struggles of DVP party politics, and he was much happier after his friend and colleague, the late Foreign Minister Stresemann, had

¹Documents on British Foreign Policy, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 262 (hereafter cited DBFP).

arranged his appointment to the cabinet in 1926. But, although he succeeded Stresemann as German Foreign Minister, Curtius, as seen by Treviranus, was "constructed out of different material." To Treviranus, Stresemann was a forward on the soccer team and, of course, its captain, responsible for devising and carrying out team strategy; he took most of his shots at goal and seldom passed the ball to anyone else. In contrast, "Curtius was no sportsman, and he did not possess the impulsive dynamism and the hardness in negotiation" of a Stresemann. Curtius was "more sensitive, a more scholarly type than a politician or a tribune of the people." According to Treviranus, Curtius knew that, following Stresemann's death, other leading German politicians more vigorous than he would attempt to control German foreign policy, perhaps steering it away from the path Stresemann had chosen.² In Treviranus's assessment, Curtius was aware that Heinrich Brüning, when he formed his cabinet in March 1930, intended to exercise personal control over Germany's foreign policy and that Brüning was critical of the timing of the Locarno Agreements and the Young Plan negotiations. Nevertheless, Curtius was determined to retain the direction of foreign policy by asserting his own ideas in the cabinet and,

²Gottfried Reinhold Treviranus, Das Ende von Weimar: Heinrich Brüning und seine Zeit (Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1968), p. 131.

following Stresemann's success in achieving early Allied evacuation of the Rhineland, working for even more important diplomatic goals, such as economic union with Austria and the weakening of Poland.³

Curtius's first duties as Foreign Minister, however, involved the continuation of The Hague Conference negotiations, the first meeting ending with several agreements in principle but with a vast amount of detail left unsettled. At this Second Hague Conference, called for January 1930, Foreign Minister Curtius led the German delegation. Despite the European newspapers' forecast of inevitable policy clashes among the conferees, the second conference lacked the drama of the first, due largely to Curtius having replaced the more flamboyant Stresemann. As the conference opened on 3 January, for example, only a single controversial debate marred the tranquility of the first day, and none followed. At the first session, the Polish representative generated a brief, but heated, discussion by demanding that a recent tentative German-Polish agreement on the liquidation of properties owned by German nationals now living in Poland be included on the conference agenda. Curtius dissented immediately, arguing that an "eastern question" should not be

³For other views of Curtius's diplomatic acumen see Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, p. 9.

incorporated in the proceedings relating to Western European reparations settlement.⁴ In so dissenting, Curtius was motivated by both foreign and domestic policy considerations. The Foreign Minister was determined to prevent Poland from joining the ranks of the former Allied nations and thus destroying Stresemann's careful separation of German eastern and western foreign policy interests. Discussion of the Polish liquidation proposal at The Hague, Curtius reasoned, might enable Poland to link German compliance with the Young Plan to a permanent settlement of the German-Polish frontier. This might also give France an additional bargaining counter to use against Germany. As a matter of domestic policy, Curtius had no desire to risk simultaneously placing the Young Plan and a possible Polish treaty together for ratification before the Reichstag. Political support for each separate measure was difficult enough to attain due to constant radical opposition.⁵ The conference ultimately agreed to a compromise by voting to study the German-Polish liquidation proposal while omitting it from the official Young Plan agenda.⁶

⁴Akten der Reichskanzlei, Müller 2, nos. 400-401; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 135.

⁵Curtius, Der Youngplan, p. 67; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 135.

⁶Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 67-68.

As the conference progressed, Curtius attempted to wrest a major concession from the French delegation, led at the second conference by the new Premier, Andre Tardieu, while Foreign Minister Aristide Briand remained in the background. With France having conceded an early withdrawal from the occupied Rhineland districts at the first conference, the German delegation repeatedly pushed for an agreement on French clearance of the Saar coal-producing region, still occupied by the French and one of Stresemann's aims considered second only to Allied evacuation of the Rhine districts. Curtius held several long discussions with both Tardieu and Briand on the subject, but was rebuffed due to the French Premier's fear of the political repercussions at home that would most likely follow if France was seen to be too anxious to accommodate Germany so soon after the Rhineland evacuation agreement. Curtius was thus forced into a political juggling act. If the Saar negotiations at The Hague were dropped abruptly, the Young Plan settlement might lose Reichstag support from the conservative right. On the other hand, the German delegation's too strident demands for clearance of the Saar region might jeopardize the French government's cooperation in the Rhineland. Curtius finally decided to drop the Saar question on the grounds that he had made no official commitment to the Reichstag regarding an attempt to secure the return of the Saar. He thus circumvented

political opposition at home while adroitly avoiding antagonizing the French and jeopardizing Rhineland evacuation.⁷

A second item on the conference agenda involved the relatively unimportant debate centering on the date when Young Plan annuities were to become due. The Young Plan failed to specify whether the monthly German payments should be made on the fifteenth or the last day of the month. As the creditor nations were committed to debt repayment agreements with the United States based upon mid-month payment, France, Belgium, Italy, and Great Britain demanded the same [fifteenth of the month] date for German reparations payments. Owing to the gain in interest earnings if payments were delayed until month's end, along with a desire to placate the German political right by firm bargaining, the German delegation insisted on delaying payment until the end of the month. Curtius opened his argument in the Reparations Committee by citing as precedent the Dawes Plan payment schedule that allowed Germany to pay at the end of the month. In addition, he explained to the creditor delegations, that the Dawes payments had been made in German currency while annuities under the Young Plan were payable in foreign bills of

⁷Memorandum on Conversation between Curtius and Briand, 4 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 6; Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 68-69.

exchange. The Reichsbank, the central clearing house for German indemnities, needed the extra two weeks to convert Reichsmarks into the mandated means of exchange.⁸ The German delegation heartened when the creditors could not decide on a reply to Curtius's proposal, even after the British and French delegations had consulted members of the original Young Commission about the Plan's intent. The committee remained deadlocked on the payment question, and Curtius's suggestion that Owen D. Young, thought to be sympathetic to the German position, be invited to The Hague to mediate was rejected by the committee chairman.⁹

The payment date problem continued through the next week. Typical of the compromise plans offered was the Italian proposal that Germany place the monthly payments in escrow with the Reichsbank on the fifteenth with the funds there deposited, but not officially transferred, until the end of the month. The German delegation was amenable to this suggestion, but, as expected, the creditor negotiators rejected it.¹⁰ Following a series of meetings on 11 January in which alternative dates were proposed and

⁸Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 137.

⁹Telegram, Pünder to Foreign Office, 9 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 17.

¹⁰Pünder to Foreign Office, 11 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 22.

in response to sharp British criticism that the German delegation was being evasive and uncooperative, Curtius verbally agreed that Germany would make its monthly payment on the fifteenth of each month.¹¹ In return Tardieu accepted a committee proposal that a substantial portion of German tax revenues on tobacco, beer, and liquor previously credited directly to France as reparations under Dawes Plan procedure now be returned to Germany for deposit in an interest bearing account subject to reparations debits at the Bank for International Settlements.¹² This compromise became part of Annex VII of the Agreement with Germany, signed 30 January 1930.

A more serious second conference debate evolved out of the question of possible German default on Young

¹¹Pünder to Foreign Office, 14 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 22.

¹²Pünder to Foreign Office, 11 January 1930, Akten 14, nos. 21-22; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 141. Organization of the Bank for International Settlements, created during the First Hague Conference to serve as a transfer agent for reparations payments, led to Curtius's most bitter denunciation of Hjalmar Schacht. In December 1929, Schacht, acting on his own initiative as Reichsbank President, refused to allow the Reichsbank to join the Bank for International Settlements (the Reichsbank's share was mandated as one-seventh of the total capitalization) on right-wing political grounds, nearly wrecking the entire Young Plan negotiations. After a heated confrontation with Schacht, in January 1930 Curtius persuaded The Hague Conference to compel the Reichsbank to fulfill all requirements of the Young Plan; see Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 59-62; Akten der Reichskanzlei, Müller 2, no. 417.

Plan indemnities as a consequence of the escalating financial crisis, the worsening German budget troubles, trade deficits, unemployment, and right-wing political agitation.¹³ As part of the final Young Plan agreement, France, Britain, and Belgium wanted an assurance that Germany would not, without obvious economic reason, fail to meet its obligations. The possible imposition of Allied sanctions should this occur thus became the leitmotif for the remainder of the conference. By article 430 and paragraphs 17 and 18 of Annex II of the Treaty of Versailles, the creditor nations were granted the right to punish Germany if a reparations default occurred. The issue of punitive measures carried potentially explosive political ramifications in Europe, since the "sanctions" clauses included the possibility of French reoccupation of the Rhineland even after the promised spring 1930 evacuation. On the German side, memories of the Ruhr occupation were still vivid and, as Curtius knew well, any German politician who agreed to the possibility of a French military reoccupation of German lands would face swift censure from across the German political spectrum. Thus, Curtius and the German delegation based their

¹³For a further discussion of financial matters discussed at the Second Hague Conference, especially the French "mobilization" of German reparations into a publicly subscribed bond issue, see Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," pp. 140-143.

strategy against sanctions on attempts to revise the original German interpretation of Article 430, long considered to have been a concession to the Allies in 1919, that sanctions would not be interpreted by Germany as a "hostile action" or casus belli.¹⁴

French nerves fluttered over the possibility that the Tardieu-led delegation might lose France's legal right to reoccupy the Rhineland, especially since the Maginot Line and other eastern defenses against Germany were incomplete. The early drafts of the Young Plan had included clauses which severely limited Allied use of military sanctions, yet the latest draft debated at the second conference allowed military sanctions under circumstances of intentional German abrogation of the Young Plan, while reducing the creditors' right to apply economic pressures against Germany. The fundamental question in the sanctions debate ultimately centered on discerning under what circumstances French military force could be used. The Young

¹⁴Article 430 reads as follows: "In case either during the occupation or after the expiration of the fifteen years referred to above the Reparation Commission finds that Germany refuses to observe the whole or part of her obligations under the present Treaty with regard to reparation, the whole or part of the areas specified in Article 429 will be reoccupied immediately by the Allied and Associated Forces." See Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 129 ff; Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 88-90; Bretton, Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles, pp. 54 ff; Jacobson, Locarno Diplomacy, pp. 357-358; and Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," pp. 146-147.

Plan, for example, abolished the Dawes Plan Reparations Commission which by majority vote could establish the circumstances officially defining a German default. Without the same mechanism for establishing official German default, France could not, by invoking Article 430, legally use military force to enforce reparations payments. Thus, until the end of January, The Hague Conference debate focused on the enforcement options open to the creditor nations in the event that a Hugenberg, or someone like him, announced Germany's abrogation of the Young Plan.¹⁵

During the second conference's final week, the German delegation proposed that the assembled delegates specifically renounce the right to sanctions. In reply, the French delegation moved that the conference recommend a new type of reparations commission, similar to the one in effect under the Dawes Plan, with jurisdiction over the sanctions issue. After two days of talks, this proposal was abandoned, and the Reparations Committee instead placed the reparations-sanctions dispute under the jurisdiction of the Permanent Court of International Justice. Founded by the League of Nations and headquartered at The Hague, the court held jurisdiction over international disputes

¹⁵ Ambassador Hoesch (Paris) to Foreign Office, 21 October 1929, Akten 13, no. 63.

covered by the League of Nations charter. Other than recourse to world opinion, however, the Court lacked any enforcement mechanism for its decisions, a situation which Curtius deemed favorable for Germany considering the benign press engendered by Stresemann's conciliatory foreign policy.¹⁶

Still unsettled, however, was the question of how Germany could prevent French military action even in the face of a Court ruling in Germany's favor. To Curtius, the only reasonable guarantee for keeping French troops out of Cologne and Koblenz was to ensure that the French government was prevented from using any superficial excuse to reenter the Rhine districts. Yet French intransigence on settling the problem caused Curtius to consider taking the entire question to the European press, with emphasis on his contention that the Tardieu government was determined to use the threat of armed conflict to enforce compliance with the ruinous, but legally binding, reparations policy.¹⁷ Tardieu countered by announcing that he would reopen the entire sanctions question in the general meeting of all delegates unless Germany recognized the

¹⁶Hoesch to Foreign Office, 23 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 47.

¹⁷Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 88 ff; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 129 ff; Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," p. 154.

right of the creditor nations to enforce all details of the reparations settlement. This move caused Curtius considerable concern, prompting him to cancel a planned journey to Geneva to attend a League of Nations assembly. Nevertheless, the conference of ministers continued to face stalemate on the sanctions issue.¹⁸

What Curtius failed to achieve through painstaking, pragmatic negotiation, ironically a junior member of the German delegation, Friedrich Gaus, the head of the Foreign Office legal division, did accomplish. Curtius had felt so pessimistic about reaching an accord on the sanctions question that he intended to announce to the conference that Germany would submit to no agreement which included special provisions for sanctions to enforce reparations indemnities,¹⁹ a statement likely to have disrupted the conference. While Curtius was absent from The Hague on his once postponed trip to Geneva, however, Gaus crafted the wording of an agreement which satisfied both France and Germany. In November and December 1929, the French government had demanded that any future German renunciation of the Young Plan would entitle France to gain complete freedom of action to enforce compliance, and

¹⁸Pünder to Foreign Office, 11 January 1930, Akten 14, nos. 21-22.

¹⁹Curtius, Der Youngplan, p. 94.

Germany must recognize that any French measures, including military action, would not be deemed hostile actions, but legal "police" enforcement. The Gaus suggestion, which Curtius fully endorsed and presented to the conference, was for Germany to recognize any such French enforcement measure as legitimate, i.e., not a hostile act of war, in return for French acceptance that any sanctions must follow proof presented before the Hague Court of International Justice that Germany had deliberately taken action which would wreck the entire Young Plan structure.²⁰

This solution held a decided advantage for Germany. As stated under international law, any nation has freedom of action when another nation party to a mutual treaty has renounced that treaty. By stating this obvious tenet of international law in the Gaus plan, Germany gave away nothing. Under the plan's wording, moreover, the German government would have to be found guilty by the Hague Court of committing a breach of the Young Plan which would wholly abrogate it, not merely infringe upon one of its constituent clauses. An additional advantage to Germany was the interpretation that, even if the Hague Court should rule against Germany on a reparations violation, the creditor nations would retain only their "freedom of action," not an automatic right to reoccupy German territory as France

²⁰Akten der Reichskanzlei, Müller, 2, no. 417.

implied was her right under Article 430 of the Versailles Treaty. To add to its advantage, Germany retained the prerogative to challenge in the Court or in the League of Nations any creditor's action which Germany considered unjustified, thus revising Germany's original position that any Allied sanction would be automatically considered legal and non-hostile.²¹ This agreement on sanctions, which Tardieu admitted was a complete reversal from the former French position, was as much a revision of the Versailles Treaty as even Stresemann could have hoped for, short of France's categorical renunciation of the right to send her troops into the Rhine territories. To Curtius, the agreement on sanctions spelled the end of Germany's reputation as an outcast, even criminal, nation, subject to the punitive whims of the Republic's former enemies.

Following the close of the Second Hague Conference on 20 January, Curtius, confident that the German delegation's success at The Hague was the sharp end of the wedge that would break apart the Versailles Treaty, returned to Germany to present the Hague Conferences conclusions to the German people.²² The Foreign Minister addressed the

²¹Curtius to Müller, 13 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 26.

²²The Young Plan as submitted for ratification to the Reichstag included provisions for the evacuation of the occupied German territories; the foundation of the Bank for International Settlements; modification of the Reichsbahn regulations to allow railroad revenues to be

Reichstag on 11 February, his speech taking the form of a long and detailed review of the Young Plan negotiations since 1928, with emphasis on the three main German aims, liberation of the Rhineland, a satisfactory settlement of the Saar occupation, and a final reparations settlement. Curtius frankly admitted failure in negotiating an end to French occupation of the Saar region and he declared that the German government was fully aware of the economic burden which acceptance of the Young Plan laid on the backs of two future German generations. But in the Foreign Minister's opinion, the new plan was a vast improvement over the former reparations settlement. Curtius closed his speech by reminding the assembled deputies that the liberation of the Rhineland and the favorable solution of the sanctions question far outweighed any alleged economic disadvantages contained in the Young Plan.²³

Curtius's position was supported by SPD delegate Rudolf Breitscheid, who placed emphasis on the diplomatic gains won by the German negotiators at both Hague

used for reparations payments; and the special provision for separate payment of annuities due the United States. Accepted by the Reichstag on 11 March 1930, the Young Plan's impracticability and Germany's inability to meet the mandated indemnities soon was recognized by the Allies who, through the Hoover Moratorium in July 1932, effectively ended reparations. See Shepard, "Germany and The Hague Conferences," pp. 166 ff; and Curtius, Der Youngplan, pp. 107 ff.

²³Verhandlungen 426: 3902 ff, 3921 ff.

Conferences. As usual, the attack on the Foreign Minister's policies emanated from the right side of the Reichstag chamber. The assault was led once again by Alfred Hugenberg, whom Curtius had humiliated in November 1929, who rose to speak before the delegates for the first time since 1922. After scuffling between Social Democratic hecklers and Hugenberg's DNVP and National Socialist supporters had been quieted, Hugenberg alleged that the Young Plan would "destroy the freedom and unity of Germany" and "hasten the progress toward bolshevism." The destruction of Germany, Hugenberg opined, was the avowed purpose of the Allies, and "the fate of Carthage" awaited the Fatherland if Germany acquiesced to the tenets of the Versailles Treaty and the Young Plan. Not sparing the vitriol, Hugenberg implied treason when he alleged that the sanctions agreement between the creditor nations and Germany gave France the right to confiscate German "ports, mines, and national treasures" and to reoccupy the Rhineland at her pleasure.²⁴ In reply, Curtius calmly chastised Hugenberg for waiting three months to address the deputies on the Young Plan and scoffed at the radicals' "wild accusations" which, he argued, lacked even the shadow of legitimate, constructive criticism.²⁵

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 3921 ff.

By the end of March 1930, Chancellor Müller's coalition government collapsed over domestic financial reform and the SPD's demands that taxes be increased to help bolster declining unemployment relief benefits. The new government of centrist and conservative parties led by Heinrich Brüning of the Catholic Center Party changed the tone of German foreign policy from conciliation to a position influenced by the greater emphasis on the German nationalism exhibited by a growing percentage of the population.²⁶ Indicative of this abrupt change was DVP chairman Eduard Dingeldey's announcement that the German People's Party, once bound by Stresemann's efforts at international conciliation, would "no longer have to limit

²⁶For Brüning's impact on the Weimar Republic, see Heinrich Brüning, Memoiren 1918-1934, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970); Alfred Vagts, "Heinrich Brüning: A Review and a Memoir," Political Science Quarterly 87 (1972): 80-89; Hermann Graml, "Präsidialsystem und Aussenpolitik," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 21 (1973): 134-145; Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, "Alternativen zu Brünings Wirtschaftspolitik in der Weltwirtschaftskrise," Historische Zeitschrift 235 (1982): 605-631; Karl Dietrich Bracher, "Brünings unpolitische Politik und die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 19 (1971): 113-123; and Karl Dietrich Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie (Villingen: Ring Verlag, 1960 [1955], pp. 287 ff. Brüning's belief that Stresemann's policies had been too trusting and too accommodating and that they were not in line with German public opinion was the foundation for his own philosophy of foreign policy. By late 1930, Curtius fully adopted this foreign policy approach, which was based on rapid achievement of specific aims, including Anschluss with Austria. See Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 107-108, 162-163, 177-187. For further examples, see Chapter V.

ourselves to the language of restraint and of diplomatic reason." In the future the DVP would "best serve the interests of German foreign policy and of the responsible Minister [Curtius]" by speaking directly from the heart.²⁷ Indeed, in the summer and fall of 1930, the German Foreign Office moved toward creating an economic union with Austria in direct conflict with the Versailles Treaty mandate prohibiting Anschluss with Germany. At the same time, however, Curtius worked toward enhancing Germany's world image by joining in the promotion of European disarmament, an idea espoused by Briand of France and which had grown out

²⁷Quoted in Eyck, Weimar Republik 2: 303-304. The SPD organ Vorwärts took note of the philosophical change in German foreign policy apparent following the creation of Brüning's cabinet. The SPD, it said, had stood solidly behind Stresemann's objective of peaceful settlement of the Versailles Treaty question and would similarly support any statesman with the courage to tread the same path, even at the cost of political unpopularity. But the Social Democrats had to doubt if Stresemann's successor could hold the same course "especially since he is a member of the Brüning government." The newspaper went on to criticize the "change of methods" in German foreign policy, especially the apparent lack of patience in the Foreign Ministry; Vorwärts, 29 August 1930, pp. 1-2. The correspondent for the DVP's Kölnische Zeitung noted a change for the worse in Franco-German relations since the evacuation of the Rhineland. In the eyes of France, the paper reported, the German phrase "the policy of understanding" was dropped "like a hot coal" as soon as the last French soldier left the Rhine; Kölnische Zeitung, 31 August 1930, p. 1. Curtius himself admitted a new attitude in German diplomacy when, on 7 September 1930, he was quoted as having begun a new phase in German foreign policy after the Rhineland clearance in June. Germany, he declared, could turn "with freer hands" to its remaining problems, a statement which revealed his intention to follow a more active policy; The Times (London), 8 September 1930, p. 11.

of the almost universal acceptance of the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Agreement. Success in achieving a general disarmament convention in Europe, Curtius reasoned, not only would divert attention from National Socialist gains in the September 1930 elections,²⁸ but, if France were persuaded to limit her armaments to a level of parity with the rest of Europe, including Germany, the Republic would greatly enhance its political leverage in Central Europe, especially against Poland.²⁹ Beginning in 1930, then, Curtius devoted much of his attention to the League of Nations disarmament negotiations in Geneva.

Since Germany's first association with the League of Nations under Stresemann's direction, the value of Germany's membership was judged by Curtius on how well the League could be maneuvered into supporting German

²⁸The general election campaign in Germany in September 1930 was remarkable for an increase in demands for armaments parity in Europe. Of the twenty-four parties which offered candidates, all placed disarmament near the top of their election platforms; Frankfurter Zeitung, 17 October 1930, pp. 2-3.

²⁹Eyck and others contend that the German push for disarmament at Geneva in 1930 was part of the Brüning government's policy of "reactivating" German foreign policy. Eyck also includes this policy in the German effort, led by Curtius, to confront Poland over alleged mistreatment of ethnic Germans; see Eyck, Weimar Republic 2: 301; Michael Salewski, "Zur deutschen Sicherheitspolitik in der Spätzeit der Weimarer Republik," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 22 (1974): 121-147.

national interests.³⁰ Germany had been drawn into the League's disarmament negotiations in 1925, but these early efforts had ended in failure, probably because of the recent memories of the war and their effect on Allied defense planning.³¹ By the late 1920s, however, due to Briand's work, the League had moved closer to serious limitations on armed forces in Europe, an idea which the German government, handicapped by the Versailles Treaty's severe restrictions on the Reichswehr, worked to exploit by advocating a "more equitable distribution" of arms in Europe.³² The driving force behind Germany's desire to work within the League for arms reduction was, of course, the fact that the German army of the 1920s could neither deter invasion nor, and this factor likely motivated Curtius most of all, could it lend the support necessary

30

See, for example, Christoph Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 150. For Curtius's opinion, see Verhandlungen 348: 2672-2673.

³¹For the British Foreign Office view on European disarmament, see DBFP, series IA, vol. 3, no. 200, and vol. 4, no. 219; also Francis P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 217-228.

³²For an analysis of Germany's overall policy toward arms limitation in the 1920s, see Rolf Richter, "Der Abrüstungsgedanke in Theorie und Praxis und die deutsche Politik, 1920-1929," Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau 18 (1968): 442-466.

for a forceful foreign policy.³³ By 1930, then, the Foreign Office, supported by the Defense Ministry, pursued a policy based on avoiding a direct confrontation over abrogation of the German disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty. Instead, it promoted a reduction in the disproportion of armaments among Germany, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Italy.³⁴

Foreign Minister Curtius, while maintaining a primary interest in forging an economic confederation with Austria, worked diligently on the disarmament issue, both in Germany and Geneva. Curtius's initial efforts began with the opening of the 59th session of the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva in May 1930. Following discussions on topics ranging from tariff reduction to riots between Muslims and Jews at Jerusalem's Wailing Wall, the Council agreed to consider a Curtius-sponsored amendment to the League of Nations covenant that would bring the covenant into harmony with the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The British and Italian delegates, especially British Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, applauded the proposal

³³Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 151. For the contemporary view of one diplomat that Germany's lack of an effective military force had a profound effect on its foreign policy, see Akten 1, pt. 1, no. 144.

³⁴See Gaines Post, Jr., The Civil-Military Fabric of Weimar Foreign Policy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 303-316, 349-352.

and called for its unanimous passage by the League Assembly.³⁵ The details of the Curtius amendment were left to the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference, a commission in existence since 1925 and charged with examining the practical problems involved in disarmament. In September 1930, the commission concluded its draft, which was composed largely of a compromise on specific numerical limitations on troop strength demanded by France, a quota on the number of active-duty troops, a limit on tenure of service, and a ceiling on equipment expenditures. The proposed protocol also called for a prohibition on the use of chemical and bacteriological agents in warfare.³⁶

Curtius and the German government opposed the draft amendment. Despite having originated the disarmament proposal, Curtius declared that Germany would not ratify the draft convention unless all nations in Europe reduced armaments to the same low level. According to the Wilhelmstrasse, the commission's plan would still

³⁵Berliner Tageblatt, 12 May 1930, p. 2; The Times (London), 13 May 1930, p. 15. For a general statement of Curtius's proposals, see League of Nations, Official Journal, 1930 (Geneva: Econ, 1931), Special Supplement No. 93, pp. 88 ff.

³⁶Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 154.

provide Germany's neighbors with a military advantage.³⁷ To Curtius, the proposal's major fault was its emphasis on the future limitations on armaments, not their immediate Europe-wide reduction.³⁸ In subsequent League Council sessions, Curtius resorted to blunt language in criticizing the League's disarmament policies. The proposed Geneva draft convention, he declared, did not begin to address the long-desired goal of a European continent free from the malaise of an arms race. And, the Foreign Minister warned, the German government would be influenced in its attitude toward supporting future League programs if achievement of general disarmament failed.³⁹

Curtius's condemnation was based on his fear that a disarmament agreement among the Great Powers would leave Germany permanently inferior in arms in relation to its neighbors. Curtius also was aware that the increasing National Socialist popularity left the extreme right able to oppose more easily the government's policies, and that moderate political elements were increasingly disillusioned with Germany's perceived second-class position in Europe.

³⁷ John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Disarmament and Security Since Locarno, 1925-1931 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1932), pp. 73, 99-100.

³⁸ Memorandum Weizsäcker to Curtius, Akten 17, no. 1.

³⁹ Schulthess' Geschichtskalender, 1931, p. 41.

Newspapers from across the political spectrum were united in reflecting Germany's dissatisfaction with the failure of other European nations sincerely to carry out a reduction of armaments, and most began to endorse gradual German rearmament. The DVP Kölnische Zeitung, for example, declared that since Germany's own disarmament had been established by international agreement, disarmament was an unconditional and immediate obligation of the victorious powers to Germany. Germany, the DVP organ continued, did not expect the instant removal of arms from Europe, but only a gradual reduction to a level of parity among the Great Powers. Germany also knew, the newspaper concluded, that for as long as the French government maintained its unjustified suspicions toward Germany the basis for serious and satisfactory disarmament did not exist. The conservative Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung contended that the "inequality" of arms in Europe constituted a permanent obstacle to peace, and, the editorial implied Germany should rearm sufficiently to reach parity with her neighbors.⁴⁰ By October, increasingly strident voices from the extremist nationalists demanded that Germany leave the League of Nations if the Republic were denied equality

⁴⁰ These newspapers and others from moderate to nationalist in scope quoted in DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 1, no. 335. British Ambassador Rumbold reported in this November 1930 communication to London that he was impressed by the near unanimity (except the SPD) of German press opinion.

in military affairs. General von Seeckt, former head of the Reichswehr, denounced Stresemann's policy of conciliation and insisted upon an immediate doubling of the size of the Army, plus a guarantee of "qualitative" parity, i.e., the right for Germany to possess the same types of weapons kept by other European powers.⁴¹

The summer of 1930 thus witnessed a significant change in the Wilhelmstrasse's attitude regarding the most effective means of achieving foreign policy goals. After May 1930, Stresemann's method of accomplishing a steady erosion of Versailles Treaty restrictions through the promotion of reciprocity and cordial relations at Geneva and the use of patient, subtle diplomacy with Germany's former enemies began to be replaced by a more strident, impatient diplomatic method.⁴² And Curtius, who, from 1925 through 1929, had supported Stresemann's policies that led to the Rhineland evacuation and reparations

⁴¹Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 154.

⁴²A good example is the foreign policy approach espoused by Bernhard Wilhelm von Bülow, a career diplomat and nephew of former Imperial Chancellor Prince Bernhard von Bülow whom Curtius appointed State Secretary in the Foreign Office in June 1930. Bülow believed the League of Nations to be dominated by the Allies and dedicated to enforcing all possible restrictions on Germany's policies in Europe. Bülow pressed for a much more active and less harmonious approach in Germany's relations with France and Poland; see Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 156.

revision, in 1930 found himself espousing a new German attitude toward the League of Nations, that of "loyal opposition."⁴³ By October, Curtius's uncompromising position on the proposed disarmament convention which, he alleged, had been influenced by France's desire to maintain perpetual military superiority over Germany, could be seen as an outright challenge to the French government and a clear break from Stresemann's foreign policy of conciliation.

Curtius delivered his most forceful foreign policy declaration on German-French relations during a November 1930 speech to the Reichstag. In a reply to Tardieu's defense of the Disarmament Commission's recommendations, in which the Premier implied that France could never accept military equality with Germany, Curtius declared that Germany's foreign policy aims were directed wholly toward the achievement of "national freedom and moral and material equality" for the German people. Then, with greatest indignance, Curtius bristled at what he interpreted as the French Premier's position that Germany, even after twelve years of peace, still maintained no political rights in Europe without the consent of France. "How else could I interpret it," Curtius explained,

⁴³Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 2, no. 504.

when from so authoritative a French source it is announced that there can be no question of a German treaty right to general disarmament because of France's belief that the policies of the conquered are a matter for the discretion of the victors.

What Germany aspired to, Curtius noted, was an all-encompassing cooperation for the elimination of the causes of war, for the revivification of the world economy, and for the relaxation of the existing tensions in Europe.

Attempting to refute Tardieu's contention that Germany had not disarmed sufficiently,⁴⁴ the Foreign Minister charged that the French government apparently was determined to enter upon a course in which France was disavowing the basis which had constituted the foundation of all disarmament discussions since 1919, the Versailles Treaty. And by so doing, Curtius alleged in his lawyerly fashion, the French were attempting to revise the Treaty for their own ends and thus were guilty of the greatest hypocrisy when they accused Germany of revisionism: "The French Premier is too familiar with the Treaty of Versailles," Curtius declared,

⁴⁴Curtius knew that Germany, at least in spirit, effectively had circumvented most of the Versailles Treaty limitations on the German military; see Barton Whaley, "Covert Rearmament in Germany 1919-1939: Deception and Misperception," Journal of Strategic Studies 5 (1982): 3-39.

to have overlooked the paragraphs which were the prelude to the chapter on the disarming of Germany, for there it is written plainly that German disarmament is to be followed by general disarmament, a mandate which finds reiteration in the Locarno Agreements which postulate that the peace and security of Europe depends on speedy general disarmament. Now that Germany has fulfilled its Treaty requirements, we must demand that the general disarmament prescribed by the Versailles Treaty must follow without delay.

Germany, Curtius continued, demanded the speedy convocation of a universal disarmament conference which would compel every power "to lay its cards on the table." If the French Premier demanded the right for France to surround herself with a belt of gigantic fortifications, Curtius added, it was only just that Germany, which was itself encircled by arms-bearing neighbors, should also be entitled to security.⁴⁵

Curtius then put forth an opinion which firmly placed his imprint on German foreign policy. "It is the conviction of the German people," he said, "that the Treaty of Versailles has numerous detrimental features which cannot remain perpetuated if Europe is to live in peace and security." The foreign Minister then concluded:

These bad features were dealt with at length by the late Dr. Stresemann and it has become a fact for the world at large that the German people are not satisfied to accept any further delays in the revision of these detrimental features. The French government errs if it assumes the

⁴⁵Curtius's speech excerpted in Frankfurter Zeitung, 21 November 1930, pp. 1-3.

policy of revision has been projected light-heartedly by Germany . . . and [the French Premier] commits the gravest error as a statesman when he charges that certain German revisionist policies are tantamount to war. If that be the case, then one must seriously assume that all hope for a peaceful future, not alone for Germany, but for Europe at large, might as well be abandoned.⁴⁶

Curtius's speech was viewed by the press of the middle parties as the opening gun in a new campaign for Versailles Treaty revision. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, for example, lauded Curtius for his initiative in Treaty revision, demands for which the newspaper's editorialist noted had never been expressed so clearly. The Berliner Tageblatt agreed with Curtius's renewed emphasis on Germany's legal and moral rights which, the paper observed, was bound to provoke "an international echo." Not all political comment was favorable, however, with the SPD organ Vorwärts calling Curtius's demands for revision "unrealistic and precipitous."⁴⁷

By the end of 1930, with little progress having been made on the disarmament question, the League of Nations agreed to convene a new Disarmament Conference to open in February 1932. Yet the failures of interim negotiations were an indication of the cross purposes

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Newspapers quoted in Frankfurter Zeitung, 21 November 1930, pp. 2-3; and New York Times, 21 November 1930, p. 3.

at which the European nations worked. The French continued to give priority to their own national security interests, a stance impossible to reconcile with German demands for military parity. In July 1932, after reaching limited agreement on the use of air attack on civilian targets and the prohibition of chemical weapons, the disarmament negotiations waned until, in 1933, with Hitler's assumption of power, Germany left the Disarmament Conference and, on 14 October 1933, departed from the League of Nations.⁴⁸

The lack of progress in disarmament in 1930, however, enabled Curtius to focus the Wilhelmstrasse's attention on two foreign policy projects which were the touchstones of Curtius's revisionism: Anschluss with Austria and revanchism toward Poland. An opportunity to begin the latter process did not present itself until early 1931; Curtius already had opened negotiations to achieve the former during the January 1930 meetings at The Hague.

⁴⁸For discussions of the German position during the latter stages of the League of Nations disarmament negotiations see Andreas Hillgruber, Germany and the Two World Wars, William C. Kirby trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 49 ff; Klaus Hildebrand, The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich, trans. Anthony Fothergill (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1973), p. 32; and Gerhard L. Weinberg, The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-1936 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

The desire for some sort of political union between Germany and Austria was, throughout the 1920s, favored by a majority of Germans and Austrians.⁴⁹ Calls for union were made by Pan-Germanists before 1914, and again in 1919 by Austrians wishing to join the new German Republic. During the formation of new political parties in Germany after the 1914-1918 war, the desire for Anschluss was often part of party platforms, including the manifesto of the DVP. Yet, achievement of Anschluss between Germany and Austria would be proved difficult owing to the views of France, Czechoslovakia, and Italy that such a confederation would place Germany in a dominant position in Southeastern Europe. Furthermore, the legal barriers against uniting Germany and Austria imposed by Article 80 of the Treaty of Versailles, Protocol Number One of 4 October 1922 in the League of Nations, and especially Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain, all of

⁴⁹For the most informative accounts of the Austro-German customs union affair, see Julius Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich: Das Scheitern des Zollunionsplan von 1931 (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1947); Oswald Hauser, "Der Plan einer deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion von 1931 und die europäische Föderation," Historische Zeitschrift 179 (1955): 45-92; Norman M. Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project in German Diplomacy" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1974); F. G. Stambrook, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Project of 1931: A Study of German Methods and Motives," Journal of Central European Affairs 21 (1961): 15-44; and Anne Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair of 1931," Central European History 13 (1980): 34-59. See also, Chapter V, note 1.

which sought to guarantee Austrian economic and political independence unless by consent of the League of Nations Austria voluntarily relinquished its sovereignty, were formidable. Consequently, the Western Powers considered Austria bound to abstain from any act likely to compromise its political independence from the German Republic.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, as early as 1922, the Austrian government and Austrian industrial organizations insisted that economic union with Germany would not jeopardize Austrian independence.⁵¹ The most powerful motive in Austria in favor of Anschluss (aside from the usual Pan-Germanist sentiments) was the opinion that rump Austria would be unable to maintain a viable economy without close economic ties to Germany.⁵²

The German view during the early 1920s was based on Stresemann's overall strategy of revisionism. Until the end of 1929, both Stresemann and Curtius held that a

⁵⁰See Appendix B for excerpts from the Treaty of Saint-Germain, 10 September 1919.

⁵¹Orde, "The German Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 36.

⁵²For the opinion of an Austrian diplomat and businessman that Anschluss with Germany was necessary and attainable see the files of Richard Riedel, National Archives Microcopy T-84, Roll R-16. Beginning with frame 44045, Riedel declares that Austrian interests would be served best by close economic and political ties to Germany, but that the treaty limitations on Austro-German Anschluss would be difficult to overcome.

settlement of the problems with the Western Powers over Rhineland occupation and reparations held priority. This was due to the obvious danger to these negotiations which might follow from an overly zealous and possibly illegal attempt at Anschluss which the Allies were certain to consider a blatant German grab for southeastern hegemony.⁵³ Nevertheless, the Anschluss idea was kept alive in Germany during the Locarno and Young Plan years by the promotion of Austro-German cultural exchanges and preparatory work on the coordination of the two nation's legal systems. The widespread circulation of German-subsidized newspapers in Austria, particularly the Wiener Neueste Nachrichten and the Reichspost, also helped to promote the concept of confederation.⁵⁴ Three other factors favoring Anschluss pushed the Wilhelmstrasse into action by 1929. The European-wide economic depression which could be used as an excuse for moving toward an Austro-German customs union; the popularity of the Paneuropa movement espoused by Briand of France; and the expanding influence of the Austrian Heimwehr, a fascist organization which, the German Foreign Office feared, might influence Austria toward closer

⁵³Stambrook, "German-Austrian Customs Union Project," p. 18.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 19.

political ties with Fascist Italy, thus creating an Italo-Austrian stranglehold on Southeastern Europe.⁵⁵

As Curtius took over the Foreign Ministry in late 1929, his conviction that the time was advantageous for talks with Austria on the Anschluss question was strengthened by a 25 December communication from Hugo von Lerchenfeld, the German envoy in Vienna. Lerchenfeld declared that the Second Hague Conference, due to open in January 1930, would give Curtius an excellent opportunity for holding secret conversations with Austrian Chancellor Johannes Schober, an advocate of Anschluss and considered a "good German" as well as a "good Austrian." And in Lerchenfeld's opinion, Austria was one of the truly "active factors" in Germany's diplomatic future, with Vienna currently leaning in favor of an economic union with Germany. Such an economic union, Lerchenfeld advised, was a necessary prelude to a political union, a view espoused by Schober and others in Austrian government and financial circles.⁵⁶

In late December, therefore, Curtius, acting on Lerchenfeld's advice and aware that Schober was considering official visits to Rome and Paris, visits which might

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 21; Curtius, Bemühung, pp. 13 ff.

⁵⁶Report of State Secretary Schubert, 28 December 1929, Akten 13, no. 226.

derail the Foreign Minister's customs union plan, considered it "urgently desirable" that the Austrian Chancellor include Berlin in his European travel plans. Indeed, Curtius felt the situation so pressing that he made rare use of a personal telephone call to ask for and to receive Chancellor Müller's permission to extend an invitation.⁵⁷ Curtius thereupon dispatched a telegram to Lerchenfeld instructing him to inform the Austrian Chancellor that the German government would welcome the inclusion of Berlin in his itinerary. Curtius also requested that Lerchenfeld provide the Wilhelmstrasse information on the length of Schober's sojourn and some indication of the appropriate agenda.⁵⁸ On the last day of December, Curtius informed Lerchenfeld that the proposed encounter with Schober at The Hague would be an excellent time to begin preliminary talks on a possible economic union and to finalize details on the Chancellor's Berlin stopover. Curtius, however, still was concerned about Schober's planned visit to Rome where Mussolini's government might try to steal a march on German plans for Austria. As Curtius complained to Lerchenfeld: "The Rome journey of

⁵⁷ Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 115.

⁵⁸ Akten 13, no. 226; Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 115; Stambrook, "German-Austrian Customs Union Project," p. 22; Orde, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 40.

the Federal Chancellor is vexing to me." Yet the Foreign Minister hoped that success at the Second Hague Conference meetings with Schober would stifle right-wing criticism of the Foreign Office for letting the Austrian Chancellor get away to Rome before first visiting Berlin.⁵⁹

Curtius and Schober conducted their initial foreign policy talks at The Hague on 4 January, with the topic at this and subsequent meetings revolving around the appropriate dates for later discussions. In his memoir of the Austro-German customs union affair, Curtius proclaimed the conference at The Hague a favorable opportunity for an initiative in commencing practical efforts toward closer relations between the two nations. Curtius's first priority regarding the Austrian question was to gain Schober's definite commitment for a meeting in Berlin, there to hammer out an initial trade agreement that would serve as the first step toward broader economic union.⁶⁰ At the Hague Conference, Curtius found Schober eager to visit Berlin and willing to conclude commercial treaty

⁵⁹While Curtius was adamant that his policies were not affected by domestic political concerns, a desire to appease the radical right played a significant role in his overtures to Austria; Curtius, Bemühung, p. 33. See also Orde, "The German Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 57 for the opinion that the Curtius Foreign Ministry was, in 1930 and 1931, competing for nationalist support in Germany among the center and moderate-conservative parties.

⁶⁰Curtius, Bemühung, pp. 12-14.

negotiations. The Austrian Chancellor continued to keep Curtius at arm's length by his references to French and Italian overtures to Austria. Curtius was often distressed, for example, to hear Schober's accounts of the ongoing French pressures on him formally and irrevocably to renounce the idea of Anschluss with Germany. In addition, Schober related to Curtius that the Austrian government had been warned by Eduard Benes, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, that Czechoslovakia would look with utmost disfavor on Austrian attachments, economic or political, to any other country, especially Germany. Curtius's reaction was to express confidence in Schober's ability to deal with these outside influences, and the Foreign Minister assured the Austrian of his readiness to engage in a detailed examination of all the problems relevant to an Austro-German customs union, regardless of the protestations of third countries.⁶¹

On 14 January at The Hague, the German Foreign Minister and the Austrian Chancellor continued their trade treaty negotiations, with Schober attempting to bargain for German concessions on the relatively minor point of allowing increased Austrian cattle and timber imports by reminding Curtius that Mussolini had been pressing for an

⁶¹Schubert to Foreign Office, 4 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 5.

early meeting in Rome to discuss Italo-Austrian trade. With little else to discuss before the upcoming Berlin meeting, both Curtius and Schober agreed to postpone further talks. At an official press conference, Schober announced that both he and Curtius had agreed in principle to improved Austro-German relations and that his Berlin visit should aim at achieving economic and political agreements which would be compatible with the two countries' status as linguistic and geographic neighbors. And, in what Curtius considered to be a major German victory, the Austrian Chancellor promised that, despite his hints of succumbing to French and Italian pressure, Austria intended to resist all attempts at forcing a renunciation of the Anschluss concept.⁶²

Immediately following the Second Hague Conference, Curtius began to prepare for Schober's end-of-February Berlin visit which was now complicated by the announcement of an Austrian-Italian agreement. On 7 February, Schober and Mussolini had concluded, without the Wilhelmstrasse's knowledge, a treaty for the conciliation and judicial settlement of disputes between the two countries, with

⁶²Neue Freie Presse (Vienna), 23 February 1930, p. 2; Orde, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 41; Stambrook, "German-Austrian Customs Union Project," p. 22; Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 120.

provisions for a future trade pact.⁶³ Still, Curtius was confident that while Schober was in Berlin from 22 to 24 February the proposed Austro-German trade treaty could be finalized, with only a short step remaining to fulfillment of a formal customs union between the two countries. By February, moreover, Curtius had become convinced that Anschluss was possible, if the plan could be presented as an economic necessity. In an opinion paper written ten days prior to the Austrian Chancellor's Berlin arrival, the Foreign Minister admitted that political Anschluss was not immediately attainable due to continued French interference, but that close economic ties through a customs union could ensure that the foreign policies of Germany and Austria would not diverge too widely. Thus, a customs union would have almost the same effect as a full political union, or at least would prevent Austria from establishing close alliances with other nations, a situation which would serve to give Germany at worse semi-hegemony in Southeastern Europe.⁶⁴

Chancellor Schober's arrival in Berlin on 22 February was accorded the usual diplomatic hospitality,

⁶³Report by Schubert, 7 February 1930, Akten 14, no. 83.

⁶⁴Foreign Office Position Paper, Akten 14, Appendix I; Schubert to Lerchenfeld, 4 February 1930, Akten 14, no. 78.

with a personal welcome by President von Hindenburg and the leading government officials. Schober returned the warm welcome with an address in which he declared that Germany and Austria "share a common will to build a solid foundation for a future which will make possible a life to which the Germanic people, with regard to their past and to their cultural achievements, are entitled."⁶⁵

German Chancellor Müller responded by stating that:

"The goal of German policy is the implementation of an increasing drawing together of the two German states, so that Germany and Austria will be tied together for all future time."⁶⁶ Following Müller's blunt pronouncement on the German vision of the future of Austro-German relations--a blatant public assertion which would have appalled the cautious Stresemann--the German and Austrian delegations commenced their trade treaty talks in the Foreign Minister's conference rooms.

After briefly discussing political questions centering on possible Austro-German protests in the League of Nations on behalf of the allegedly mistreated Austrian minority in the Italian South Tyrol and the German minority in Czechoslovakia, the first day's session returned

⁶⁵Curtius, Bemühung, pp. 23-24. Curtius observed that Schober's speech was the warmest expression of friendship between Germany and Austria he had ever heard.

⁶⁶Ibid.

to economic matters. Schober specifically referred to the need for progress in customs union negotiations. Curtius believed that, due to agreement on what he considered substantial concessions to Austria on allowing agricultural imports, achievement of a full trade pact was assured by 24 February.⁶⁷ Not content with the German actions, however, Schober declared that nationalist political factions in Austria were demanding an immediate customs union, claiming that Germany was hesitant because of the fear of French opposition. Both Chancellor Müller and Schober then agreed that, regardless of European opinion, the Berlin meeting should result in at least a definite first step toward full economic union. Thereupon, the head of the economic section of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, Richard Schueller, interjected that the Austrian government presently was being warned by Austrian economists that extreme caution should be observed in the negotiations. According to Schueller, such reservations were based on the reasonable assumption that the Allies, when confronted with a customs union fait accompli, immediately would negate it under provisions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Record of Austro-German discussions cited in Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 115.

Curtius, agreeing with Schueller that in February 1930 the balance of European opinion would tilt in opposition to an Austro-German customs union, nevertheless counseled that if, in future, "the heavenly constellations" should appear auspicious, Germany and Austria must be ready to take full and immediate advantage of the situation. For this reason, he continued, the foundations should be laid in Berlin for a customs union. In Curtius's opinion, overcoming the difficulties in achieving the customs union would be time consuming, but the two governments should press toward achieving the ultimate goal, without prior notification of the Allies.⁶⁹

Schueller agreed with Curtius's position, suggesting that only through the maintenance of total secrecy regarding the plan's detailed negotiations could untimely European opposition be forestalled. Following Schueller, the German Foreign Office's economics expert, Karl Ritter, explained that, even through the employment of the most stringent security measures, sooner or later the press would expose the customs union's details. Moreover, a premature disclosure would certainly scuttle the entire plan. Ritter then reached a fundamentally correct conclusion which would have a crucial bearing on the ultimate outcome of the customs union affair. The Wilhelmstrasse

⁶⁹Ibid.

had been promoting discussions with Austria before the European states had been prepared diplomatically to accept, even in principle, a German-Austrian union. The more reasonable policy, Ritter contended, would have been first to gain Allied support for German-Austrian economic confederation.⁷⁰ Yet, by 1930, this type of careful, Stresemann-inspired diplomatic strategy apparently was beyond the imagination and talents of the Curtius-led Foreign Office.

At subsequent sessions, Curtius attempted to persuade the German and Austrian delegates that obstacles to the economic union could be overcome. Curtius reminded his colleagues that for years as Economics Minister he had worked for tariff reduction in Europe, a policy favored in principle by most of the European nations. And here in the form of an Austro-German customs union, he declared, was a method for accomplishing reduced tariffs on the

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 134. F. G. Stambrook argues against Eyck's contention that Curtius acted in an unorthodox diplomatic fashion in order to use the completion of a customs union as a surprise diplomatic victory which would undercut radical political criticism of the Müller and Brüning governments. Stambrook contends that such an intention played only a minor part in the quest for Anschluss, as Anschluss was an important, long-desired German foreign policy goal which transcended short-term political considerations; see Stambrook, "German-Austrian Customs Union Project," pp. 40-41. Orde concurs that Mitteleuropa considerations were paramount in developing the customs union scheme; see Orde, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 57.

continent. "A customs union of all Europe," Curtius reasoned, "will, no doubt, never come to being." Such a project would be too grandiose and complicated to work efficiently. Yet the next best approach, a customs union between two neighboring countries, could serve much the same purpose. The Foreign Minister then proposed to use such an argument in favor of the customs union between Germany and Austria as a tool to counter possible French objections when the Austro-German customs union was announced.⁷¹ The Foreign Minister argued further that keeping the economic negotiations secret could be accomplished if both Austria and Germany used only the economic specialists assigned to their respective Foreign Offices. Moreover, Curtius reckoned that good grounds existed for the legal opinion that the peace treaties presented no permanent obstruction to the customs union. The Foreign Minister based his opinion on an earlier memorandum by Austrian Ambassador to Berlin Richard Riedel that a customs union, limited to a specific time period, or which could be terminated at will by either party, could not be considered an infringement of Austrian independence. Such a view would be open to interpretation and criticism by the Allies but, to Curtius's legal mind, even the

⁷¹Record of Austro-German Discussions, 24 February 1930, Akten 14, no. 125; Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 135.

slightest question as to the meaning of Article 88 of the Treaty of Saint-Germain was suitable enough encouragement to push ahead with customs union negotiations. The Foreign Minister, however, did consider waiting for the suitable time, preferably after the official announcement of an Austro-German customs union, before presenting any legal defense of the confederation before the League of Nations.⁷² Following Curtius's presentation, Chancellor Schober, who had played a noncommittal role in the negotiations, agreed with Curtius, and he formally declared his support for implementing the details of a customs union plan without officially notifying the League of Nations or any of the interested European states.⁷³

In the last Berlin meeting on 24 February, Curtius returned to the customs union's legal barriers emanating from Austria's treaty obligations. The Foreign Minister proposed that Riedel's opinion regarding the possible loopholes in the Treaty of Saint-Germain be explored further. Curtius was reminded, however, that the Allies certainly would interpret an Austro-German customs union as the case of a small country being devoured by a large country regardless of the "correct" interpretation of Article 88. Chancellor Müller concluded the day's talks

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

by endorsing the plan to begin work on the details of economic union, taking into consideration an Austrian caveat that hasty preparations resulting in a possible League sanction against the customs union might forever kill Anschluss.⁷⁴ At an official reception following the final meeting, Chancellor Schober placed the customs union proposal in its correct geo-political perspective. Schober declared that a customs union would allow Germany to exercise economic hegemony over the Balkans, since Vienna still retained its position as the primary trading hub in the Danubian basin.⁷⁵

By 30 March 1930, Heinrich Brüning's new German government was determined to pursue a more assertive foreign policy. According to Curtius, the new Chancellor was inclined to ignore French opinion regarding certain areas of German foreign relations, especially with Austria. This reinforced Curtius's own opinion that notifying France in advance of the conclusion of an Austro-German customs union was unnecessary.⁷⁶ Curtius and the Foreign Office thus renewed their efforts at achieving the first step toward Anschluss as soon as possible. The Foreign Minister

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Memorandum by Schubert, 24 February 1930, Akten 14, no. 125.

⁷⁶Curtius, Bemühung, p. 35.

remained worried, however, by Chancellor Schober's continued travels to foreign capitals, especially the planned visits to London and Paris at the end of April. As Curtius continually noted, he could never be certain about the possibility of Austria being influenced by French demands to abort any present or future plans for economic union with Germany.⁷⁷ Indeed, on 8 April, the German Embassy in Vienna reported that the French government intended to conclude an arbitration treaty with Austria during Schober's April visit. While the Austrian government had shown no interest in the French overtures, Curtius remained conscious of the possibility of French meddling.⁷⁸ On 25 April, Curtius was stunned to hear from the German embassy in Paris that a Franco-Austrian friendship pact was imminent.⁷⁹

On the same day, however, Schober assured Curtius that his sojourn in Paris was merely a courtesy visit, and the Austrian Chancellor promised to inform the Wilhelmstrasse of any French proposals.⁸⁰ Curtius was relieved when, on 1 May, the embassy in Paris reported that no treaty talks

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 35-38.

⁷⁸ Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 145.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

had taken place, and that Schober consistently had emphasized the special friendship between Austria and Germany.⁸¹ Finally, on 8 May, Gerhard Koepke, the Western European department chief in the Foreign Office, offered his opinion that Schober, during his Paris visit, had convinced the French government that it had nothing to fear from Austria's friendly relations with Germany. Yet, Koepke warned, Paris still was apprehensive about the possibility of future German-Austrian Anschluss, especially after hearing the public sentiments of the German government leaders and right-wing Reichstag deputies. But overall, the department chief observed, Schober's policies were no cause for concern in Berlin; in his opinion, the Austrians remained stalwartly in favor of a customs union.⁸²

Nevertheless, Curtius was not fully convinced that Austria had not succumbed to French seduction. On 4 June 1930, the Foreign Minister circulated a secret communication to eight embassies in Europe, designed to clarify the German-Austrian relationship. Included in this dispatch sent to Rome, Paris, London, Prague, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Bern was Koepke's analysis of Austro-French relations. Curtius warned his ambassadors

⁸¹Ibid., p. 146.

⁸²Ibid.

that, at present, no reason existed to suspect that Austria was working against German interests regarding a customs union. Germany must, however, remain cognizant that Austria's economic condition was worse even than Germany's and that circumstances might force Chancellor Schober to look elsewhere for financial assistance. The Foreign Minister then instructed the German embassies to keep the Wilhelmstrasse apprised of any foreign overtures to Austria.⁸³ In the same communique, Curtius also informed the embassies that the Foreign Office had reason to suspect Austria of intending to sabotage German economic interests in the Balkans by development of an Austrian-dominated Danubian confederation. Curtius cited as evidence the Wilhelmstrasse's discovery of a message from Vienna to Prague which suggested such a union.⁸⁴ Curtius had been unaware of this Austrian plan, and its discovery enhanced his trepidation over some disaster befalling the customs union project. The Foreign Minister was encouraged only slightly by an Austrian assurance of late June that Vienna would desist from any move which could have as a consequence the irrevocable political or economic separation from Germany.⁸⁵

⁸³ Circular Communication, Curtius to Ambassadors, 4 June 1930, Akten 15, no. 60.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 154.

Curtius was less fearful over possible British pressure on Austria due to Britain's concern for Austria's economic viability. By 1930, the British Foreign Office believed that proscription of a possible German-Austrian economic agreement was impractical and that a customs union linking the two German-speaking states was, in the long run, inevitable.⁸⁶ Curtius was also aware that the British, unlike the French, were not opposed in principle to the reestablishment of major German influence in Central Europe. The Wilhelmstrasse, therefore, was confident that France would have to convince Britain that an Austro-German customs union was detrimental to European stability, a difficult task considering Britain's position that an Allied rebuff of the Anschluss movement likely would inflame radical right-wing nationalist-militarist groups in Germany.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ See, for example, the communications between Rumbold in Berlin to Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, 28 March 1930 to 18 March 1931 in DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 1, nos. 300-358. For the most comprehensive study of British attitudes to the customs union, see M. D. Newman, "Britain and the German-Austrian Customs Union Proposal of 1931," European Studies Review 6 (1976): 449-472.

⁸⁷ Newman, "Britain and the Customs Union Proposal," p. 153. Newman argues that in 1930 British support for Germany during the customs union negotiations was grounded in the long-term foreign policy goal of European stability and the reestablishment of strategic balance among the Great Powers, thus freeing Britain to concentrate in imperial policy and international commerce. By the summer of 1931, however, Britain was forced into a neutral position on the customs union owing to Foreign Office concerns that a German success might cripple the Anglo-French entente.

At last, on 27 August, the preliminary negotiations for the customs union came to fruition when Schober visited the German embassy in Vienna and called for "energetic steps" toward the conclusion of an economic union, a preliminary trade treaty between Austria and Germany already having been agreed upon. An important opportunity for Schober and Curtius to discuss customs union details presented itself when both men attended the fall session of the General Assembly of the League of Nations.⁸⁸ Their first meeting in Geneva being scheduled for 8 September, Curtius nevertheless visited Schober in his hotel one day early, with the two statesmen first discussing the scheduling of future negotiations in Vienna for October. At this first Geneva meeting, Chancellor Schober confided that plans were being made for a series of meetings between Austria and Yugoslavia, and Austria and Romania, but that the German government could rest assured that any future Austrian connection with a Danubian economic union would take place only after an economic understanding with Germany had been finalized. The Chancellor also revealed to Curtius the extent of meetings held in June between himself and Count Stephen Bethlen, the Hungarian Prime Minister, in which Schober had rebuffed a Hungarian

⁸⁸Johnson, "The Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 158.

proposal for economic confederation between the two nations. Schober also admitted that Italy had been pressing all summer for closer Austrian-Italian-Balkan ties. Curtius was impressed by Schober's candor and the Chancellor's continued enthusiasm to put German-Austrian relations ahead of any other. Both men once again agreed to conclude with all possible speed a customs union agreement. Curtius balked, however, at the Austrian's suggestion that substantial German trade concessions to Austria might hasten the process. Schober proposed that, if he could present to the Austrian Federal Council concrete proof of the German government's sincerity in wanting to aid his country's ailing economy, a customs union treaty might be completed as early as September. To the Austrian Chancellor's proposal, Curtius was able to reply only that Germany was too financially unstable, with an enormous and expanding trade deficit and national debt, to assist Austria without the reciprocity inherent in a customs union.⁸⁹

The meeting ended with little concrete progress having been made, yet Curtius marveled at the Austrian's unflagging attempts at wresting concessions from Germany. Schober, however, did succeed in convincing Curtius to attempt to place the German-Austrian customs union in the

⁸⁹Curtius, Bemühung, pp. 27 ff.

context of Aristide Briand's Paneuropa movement, an attempt to create a sort of United States of Europe. To Curtius, this popular effort at forging a federated Europe might provide a convincing argument for an Austro-German customs union if it became necessary to defend the economic federation before the League of Nations. In his memoir, Curtius wrote of his agreement with Schober that the Chancellor's well received address before the League General Assembly on 12 September, in which Schober implied that an Austro-German Anschluss was meant merely as a first step to fulfilling Briand's dream of a peaceful European federation, could be effective in gaining European approval for the customs union scheme.⁹⁰

This impetus for concluding the customs union was lost, however, when an Austrian political crisis intervened. On 25 September, a cabinet dispute involving a nationalist Heimwehr member forced Schober's hurried return to Vienna. The upshot of the crisis was that Schober resigned as chancellor and was replaced by Karl Vaugoin, Austrian Minister of War since 1922. The control of foreign policy fell to Monsignor Ignaz Seipel, an ardent anti-Germanist. For the next two months, Foreign Minister Seipel managed to thwart discussions with Germany on the customs union project, instead turning toward Italy for economic

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

assistance. On 3 December, however, the Vaugoin government collapsed and Schober was returned as Austrian Chancellor. According to Curtius, Schober's first act of government was to suggest immediate reopening of the customs union talks. As a result, detailed negotiations were scheduled for early 1931.⁹¹

Throughout 1930 Curtius, too, was distracted from foreign policy goals by government crises. The Brüning government, established in March following the Müller cabinet disintegration, was severely handicapped due to its minority status in the Reichstag. Numerically, the Brüning cabinet could command only 199 votes out of 491 and its existence depended upon the support of the DNVP. President von Hindenburg, taking a serious view of the government's relative political impotence, authorized the Chancellor to dissolve the Reichstag if the cabinet failed a vote of confidence and to conduct the government under Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, which gave the President virtually absolute power "if public safety and order be seriously disturbed or threatened." Such a

⁹¹Ibid., pp. 27-28; Charles Adams Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 2: 900-904; Clifton Earl Edmondson, The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1936 (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978), pp. 91 ff. See also Stanley Suval, The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era: A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), pp. 42 ff, 147.

recourse was postponed, however, when Brüning survived an SPD-inspired no-confidence vote on 3 April. Yet the difficulties in dealing with the deepening financial crisis made a Reichstag confrontation inevitable.⁹²

Following a Reichstag budget clash between the government and the SPD from 16 to 18 July when Article 48 was invoked by President von Hindenburg and then was countered by a SPD-led vote of 236 to 221 annulling the emergency law, Hindenburg dissolved the Reichstag, ordering new elections for 14 September. The September elections were remarkable chiefly for the immense electoral gains registered by Hitler's National Socialists. The National Socialists polled a vote of over six million out of a total of thirty-five million votes cast, increasing their representation in the Reichstag from 12 to 107, ranking next to the Social Democrats as the second group in the Reichstag.⁹³

In his memoirs, Curtius offered little comment on the constitutional crisis and the September elections,

⁹²The Brüning cabinet represented the Catholic Center, Democratic Party, Economics Party, DVP, Bavarian People's Party, DNVP, and the new Conservative Party. This conservative-nationalist cabinet faced constant opposition from the SPD over proposed new taxation needed to meet both unemployment relief and the accumulated budget deficit of over one billion marks. See Eyck, Weimar Republic 2: 278 ff; Bracher, Die Auflösung, pp. 303-309.

⁹³Ibid.

other than to ridicule the National Socialist election platform which, among other proposals, called for the scuttling of parliamentary government, the abolition of the entire Stresemann-inspired foreign policy, and the elimination of "foreign elements," particularly Jews, from German national life. Nor did Curtius ever admit that, in 1930, the increasing German nationalism reflected in the popularity of radical-extremist political parties influenced his policy of German-Austrian Anschluss. Indeed, such domestic political influence on his attitude toward the customs union was probably extraneous, owing to Curtius's overwhelming belief, in evidence since 1920, that political and economic union between Germany and Austria was essential for the regeneration of German power in Central Europe.⁹⁴ For Curtius, the goal of Anschluss had been part of his political philosophy for decades. What changed in 1930, however, was his approach to achieving this goal.

⁹⁴Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 167 ff.

CHAPTER IV
THE MINORITIES QUESTION AND THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In the midst of the customs union negotiations, Curtius seized the opportunity presented by German complaints of terrorism directed against ethnic Germans living in Poland during the Polish national election campaign of November 1930 to pursue a possible diplomatic victory for Germany in the League of Nations. Curtius was mindful that the minorities question in Central Europe could be used as a bludgeon to separate Poland from her Upper Silesian and Poznanian territories and, in the shorter term, to provide a barometer for European pro-German sentiments. The latter Curtius deemed crucial for the customs union's ultimate acceptance in Paris and London.¹ In the early months of his service as Foreign

¹Leading works on German-Polish Relations, 1919-1933: Josef Korbel, Poland Between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy Toward Poland, 1919-1933 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 68 ff; Wladyslaw W. Kulski, Germany and Poland: From War to Peaceful Relations (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976), pp. 25 ff; Robert Machray, Poland, 1914-1931 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932), pp. 194 ff; Roman Debicki, Foreign Policy of Poland, 1919-1939 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 57-68; Harald von Riekhoff,

Minister, Curtius followed Stresemann's outwardly conciliatory policy toward Warsaw, but in 1930 he altered this approach to include strident demands for better treatment of ethnic Germans residing in Poland following the resolution of the Upper Silesian plebiscite dispute by the League in October 1921.

The German-Polish territorial animosities had begun following the end of the 1914-1918 war and the Versailles Treaty attempts to restructure the boundaries of Europe using national plebiscites. The East Prussian plebiscite of 11 July 1920 had, for example, indicated overwhelming support for continued German affiliation, and the League of Nations assigned East Prussia to Germany with the exception of eight small villages. A further result of this plebiscite was the embarrassment it caused Warsaw, which had high hopes that pro-Polish sentiments would enable Poland to carry every election. Warsaw therefore placed full support behind Polish-nationalist efforts in the Upper Silesian plebiscite. The 20 March

German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), pp. 194 ff; Carol Fink, "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926-1933," Central European History 5 (1972): 330-357 and "Germany and the Polish Elections of November 1930: A Study in League Diplomacy," East European Quarterly 15 (1981): 181-207; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, pp. 131 ff; also Heinrich Brüning and Julius Curtius, Um Deutschlands Zukunft: Zwei Reden (Berlin: Zentralverlag, 1931), pp. 5-11; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98 ff.

1921 voting, however, indicated an approximate 60 percent majority in favor of Germany. In Berlin the outcome was proclaimed a victory for those nationalists (including Curtius during his early years as a Reichstag delegate) who had demanded permanent affiliation of the entire Upper Silesian province with the Reich.² The German interpretation of the plebiscite result, however, contradicted the letter of the Versailles Treaty which mandated that the electoral decision for national affiliation would be made by majority vote by districts, not by a majority vote of the entire region. Because of the Treaty stipulations, the overall plebiscite result was not deemed a final settlement of the issue and, following the outbreak of nationalist violence on both sides in Upper Silesia, the League of Nations in October 1921 announced its decision to partition the disputed region.³ Poland ultimately received only one-quarter of the Upper Silesian land area, but this parcel included 44 percent of the population, most of the industrialized districts, four-fifths of the coal mines, two-thirds of the iron industry, and all of the Upper Silesian zinc mines, which constituted 80 percent of the entire prewar German production of

²Verhandlungen 349: 3324 ff; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, pp. 40-41.

³Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, pp. 47-48.

zinc.⁴ To prevent the disruption of human and economic relations resulting from this alteration of national status, the League required Germany and Poland to follow special regulations for the protection of minority populations residing in the respective countries as a result of the partition, a condition not likely to be met easily by the traditionally hostile neighbors.⁵

The middle-conservative to right-wing parties in Germany used the "minorities problem" to demand from the League redress for the Auslandsdeutschen. Most political figures of the right, including Curtius, were indignant at the loss of territory and mineral resources under the settlement but, as Polish-German territorial revision was probably impossible to achieve in the short run, the immediate focus of political ire became the alleged subjection of Germans to "Slavic domination."⁶ Beginning

⁴Figures taken from Verhandlungen 351: 4733-4772.

⁵Articles 65 through 157 of the Geneva Convention on Upper Silesia covered the protection of ethnic minorities. The minority provisions stipulated the equal treatment of minorities in all areas of national life, including employment, education, and suffrage. The convention was scheduled to expire in 1937. For a complete text see Georges Kaeckenbeeck, The International Experiment of Upper Silesia: A Study of the Working of the Upper Silesian Settlement, 1922-1937 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 572-859.

⁶Stresemann, Vermächtnis 1: 581-582, 598-599; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, pp. 131 ff.

in 1923, therefore, the German minorities residing in Poland organized into a political lobbying group, the Ausschuss der deutschen Minderheiten im Ausland, which, through its connections with radical right-wing parties and newspapers, placed increasing pressure on the parade of Weimar governments to protect the rights of German minorities and to reassert the contention that Central Europe was Germany's rightful sphere of influence. The German governments, however, due to European opinion favorable to Warsaw, had been unable to support the Auslandsdeutschen demands for irredentism. From 1923 to 1925, the Republic could offer only protests against alleged "polonization" of ethnic Germans in Poland.⁷ German government policy toward the minorities during later years, however, often took the form of financial support, a program embraced by Curtius and expanded under his direction as Economics Minister. During the years 1926-1929, Berlin issued subsidies (distributed through front organizations such as the Deutsche Stiftung, a private charity) for the maintenance of German-language schools; payments to German farmers to enable them to keep control of their land; and credits to small businesses and industries. Curtius also extended Stresemann's policy of providing free legal advice to Germans who were

⁷ Ibid.

encouraged to forward to Geneva affidavits alleging Polish persecution. The Foreign Ministry under Curtius lost no opportunity to employ anti-Polish propaganda in exaggerating the conditions in Poland "endured" by the German minority.⁸ Yet this Curtius-inspired propaganda approach to the minorities question was stymied in Geneva, with France in particular insistent on forcing Curtius to follow strict League of Nations procedures for adjudicating European minority disputes.

Beginning in June 1925, League procedures stipulated that "neither representatives of a nation kin to the petitioning minority nor those of a state neighbor to the accused" were eligible for a special committee hearing on the alleged abuse of a minority.⁹ Despite Stresemann's best efforts from 1925 to 1929 to persuade the League to change this policy--which effectively stifled Berlin's efforts at forcing a full League hearing on the Polish "abuses"--the League continued to adhere to formal procedures. By 1929, however, both Stresemann and Curtius had begun to realize that an ongoing "crisis" involving

⁸Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 135.

⁹The German Foreign Office expressed little confidence in Germany's ability to use the forum of the League of Nations to resolve the minorities problem. See Akten 1, part 1, no. 22; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, pp. 135-136.

alleged Polish atrocities against ethnic Germans could be useful in garnering European support for German territorial revisionism, Berlin's maintenance of a large and discontented minority in Poland, therefore, became a valuable revisionist tool. Without such a minority deluging Geneva with complaints, the future restoration of German territories ceded to Poland by treaty and plebiscite would most likely be deemed blatant expansionism. In addition, a discordant German minority would pose a threat to Polish stability and, in the long term, perhaps even lead to Warsaw's renouncing claims to its part of plebiscite-partitioned Upper Silesia. Moreover, Polish belligerence toward the German minority could well convince the League of Nations to consider invoking Article 19 of the League Covenant, allowing the League Council to discuss the revision of treaties whose consequences were a threat to the peace.¹⁰ Thus Curtius and the Wilhelmstrasse worked to increase ethnic tensions in Poland until a crisis evolved which would engender sympathy for the German cause and impel the League to impose revision.

Since 1920, both Germany and Poland had forgone any attempt at reconciliation between their governments

¹⁰ Akten 7, no. 206; Stresemann, Vermächtnis 2: 69, 149, 173; also Helmut Lippelt, "Politische Sanierung: Zur deutschen Politik gegenüber Polen, 1925-1926," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 19 (1971); 323-373.

and their respective minority populations (approximately one million Poles resided within the German Republic's boundaries). In Germany the Polish minority was not systematically oppressed, yet most employers and landlords were unfailingly diligent in exploiting their Polish workers and tenants. The Prussian state government, for example, until the late 1920s failed to provide any support for educational and cultural facilities for the Polish minority.¹¹ The Polish government, on the other hand, was faced with a much larger German minority percentage of its population (between 3 and 4 percent of the total, or approximately one million people) and followed an official policy of de-Germanization, especially in Upper Silesia. Throughout the 1920s, Poland adhered to a program of systematic dispossession of German landowners and businessmen. Included in the Polish government's policy was the outlawing of politically-oriented German minority organizations, an operation openly supported by the majority of the Polish press and in official government declarations.¹²

The result of this racial and cultural animosity was, inevitably, a series of German-Polish confrontations

¹¹Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 194-195.

¹²Ibid., pp. 195-196.

between 1926 and 1929. Especially irksome to Curtius, and the cause of severe German resentment both in Berlin and Upper Silesia, were Polish efforts at eliminating all aspects of German cultural influence in Poland.¹³ In 1926, for example, the Polish authorities in Upper Silesia endeavored to prevent Polish residents from sending their children to German-language schools, a parental practice left from the prewar years. The authorities refused to allow some seven thousand mixed-heritage students the option of enrolling in German schools on the grounds that the children's native language was Polish, not German, and therefore the students were better suited to attend Polish-language schools. An examination was used to determine a child's fluency in German, thus inhibiting mixed-culture enrollment. In Curtius's opinion, the Upper-Silesian authorities' action was a violation of the Geneva Convention, three articles of which guaranteed each Upper Silesian resident the right freely to determine his own ethnic status and to choose the language of instruction for his offspring.¹⁴ By March 1927, the German government had protested Poland's use of language examinations to determine nationality and thus school eligibility, but the

¹³ Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 214.

¹⁴ Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 214-215.

League of Nations mandated a compromise in which a test administered by a neutral examiner could be employed in contested cases. This procedure was to be followed initially in the 1927 school year, however, and when Poland continued to require its own language examination in the following year, Foreign Minister Stresemann, with support from Curtius, protested before the Hague Court. The League of Nations ultimately accepted the Court's compromise ruling that Upper-Silesian ethnic status could not be challenged or investigated by use of a language test. A portion of the Hague Court's ruling declared that the ethnicity of an Upper Silesian resident was a matter based on "obvious cultural affinity." The Court, however, conceded that children of mixed-culture marriages might be fluent in several languages, in which event the subjective will of the parents was to be respected. This compromise, agreed to by both Poland and Germany, settled the Upper-Silesian school dispute, but did little to forestall subsequent ethnic clashes, all of which inflamed German nationalism.¹⁵

Typical of the relatively minor incidents which were exaggerated in both the German and Polish press and

¹⁵Brüning and Curtius, Zwei Reden, pp. 7-8; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Deutsche Tageszeitung, 11 September 1928; League of Nations, Protection of Minorities in Upper Silesia (Geneva, 1927); Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 215-216; Fink, "Germany and Minorities," pp. 340-342.

which exacerbated nationalist tensions on both sides was the April 1929 visit to Oppeln, a Polish-minority enclave in German Silesia, by a Polish musical troupe that included in its repertoire selections from Polish folk operas. The performance was interrupted numerous times by German-nationalist hecklers, and several Polish musicians were assaulted afterward at the Oppeln railroad station. Despite an immediate German apology to the Polish government and German press censure of the miscreant hooligans (the Oppeln police president was also dismissed), the Polish press exploited the incident for full propaganda value.¹⁶ Polish newspapers instigated anti-German demonstrations and, in Warsaw, a hostile mob surrounded the German embassy and threatened German Ambassador Ulrich Rauscher. Polish newspapers labeled the Oppeln affair as "bloody carnage," a "bestial attack," and a "disgraceful pogrom by Huns."¹⁷ German radical-nationalists condemned their own government, including Curtius, for alleged appeasement of Warsaw. When six of the Oppeln mob were sentenced for terms of up to

¹⁶Memorandum Koepke, 7 June 1929, Akten 12, no. 14; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 216.

¹⁷From Polska Zachodnia, the organ of the Upper Silesian Polish nationalists, quoted in Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 217.

eight months, the punishments were described by the National Socialists as "incomprehensibly harsh."¹⁸

Warsaw's continued attempts to quell German-minority political influence notwithstanding, from April 1929 until September 1930, Curtius supported Stresemann-influenced conciliation toward Poland. Throughout 1929 and 1930, Polish arrests of German Volksbund (a minority-nationalist organization) leaders and other ethnic German spokesmen heightened German-Polish government tensions. In February 1929, Otto Ulitz, Upper-Silesian Volksbund president and minority delegate to the Upper-Silesian assembly, was arrested and charged with treason, the specific charge alleging that Ulitz had conspired with other minority leaders to counsel young German-speaking men to avoid Polish military conscription.¹⁹ German nationalist newspapers reacted to the arrest as if Warsaw were intending to crush all German representation in

¹⁸Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 98-101; Völkische Beobachter, 15 October 1929; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 217.

¹⁹The German delegation at the League labelled this charge "preposterous." Stresemann went so far as to compare Ulitz's love of his Fatherland to that of Polish Chief of State Jozef Pilsudski's alleged treason toward Russia during the 1914-1918 war. See League of Nations, Official Journal, 1928 (Geneva: Jent, 1929), pp. 68-71 (hereafter cited LNOJ); Fink, "Germany and Minorities," p. 344.

Poland and took little notice when, several months later, the Polish courts reversed Ulitz's conviction.²⁰

In addition, the later arrests of ethnic German sports and boy's-club leaders, based on Warsaw's suspicions that German youth organizations were receiving special military instruction during their holiday sojourns in Germany, increased tensions. Other Polish charges leveled at minority leaders included espionage, illicit contacts with a foreign government, obstruction of the legal enforcement of Polish government decrees, and treason. The latter charge followed the presentation of medals to German veterans of the 1914-1918 war who were living in Poland, evidence to Warsaw of resurgent German militarism and, perhaps, an indication of secret military societies within the German enclaves. In cases of alleged treason, however, the Polish courts often acquitted the accused, and in cases where convictions were rendered, the punishments never exceeded one year imprisonment.²¹ Still, the

²⁰Fink, "Germany and Minorities," p. 344; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 217-218.

²¹Ibid. The German press, regardless of political cant, continued to report allegations of Polish transgressions against Germans. In January 1931, for example, even the moderate Vossische Zeitung commented on an incident involving two Polish military pilots who were forced down in German territory. While the Vossische Zeitung was charitable in its comments toward the Polish government, implying that the pilots were so inept that they likely misread their compass heading, other newspapers termed the incident "a provocation." See Vossische Zeitung, 10 January 1931; The Times (London), 11 January 1931, p. 15.

numerous arrests during 1929 elicited from German nationalists a feeling of intense suspicion of Warsaw's motives and impelled the German government toward action at Geneva on behalf of the Auslandsdeutschen.

Curtius, long disposed toward demanding redress for German-minority grievances, nevertheless resisted precipitous action against the alleged Polish infractions. At the League Council session in May 1930, he postponed a full debate on the minorities question, due largely to the settlement of the Upper Silesian schools controversy and the successful bilateral settlement of other German-Polish disputes. In early 1930, moreover, Curtius was still unsure in his approach to the League, preferring to follow Stresemann's conciliatory methods. Instead of pressing for a general, permanent settlement of the minority disputes on the order of an amendment to the Versailles Treaty, Curtius determined to follow the League procedure of seemingly endless sub-committee and committee hearings, both to maintain Germany's law-abiding image to the rest of Europe²² and simultaneously to keep alive the minorities issue in domestic politics. In the spring 1930 Geneva meetings, for example, Curtius and the German delegation restricted themselves to requests for a fuller application of the "Madrid Procedures," whereby a committee

²²See above, p. 4.

composed of representatives of three nations, Great Britain, Spain, and Japan, reviewed alleged violations of minority rights brought before them by "interested members" of the League of Nations, a revision of the earlier procedure restricting complaints to those emanating from disinterested countries.²³ Overall, however, the Wilhelmstrasse was careful to balance domestic political considerations with the necessity of not appearing too demanding, the objective being to project a pro-League image.²⁴

After the nationalist-extremist gains in the German national elections of September 1930, however, Curtius adopted a more aggressive strategy at Geneva. The radical right-wing's success, which reflected the German public's discontent with the faltering German economy and the Republic's seemingly ineffective foreign policy, was also built upon concerted attacks on Curtius's alleged mishandling of the "sufferings" and "helplessness" of the Upper-Silesian Germans. In addition to an increasingly radicalized Reichstag obsessed with immediate intervention in Poland, Curtius also was confronted with a growing minority militancy. By the autumn of 1930, minority

²³Cabinet meeting, 21 May 1930, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 1, no. 38; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 146.

²⁴See Kimmich, The Free City: Danzig and German Foreign Policy, 1919-1934 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), pp. 109-116.

delegations and petitions were deluging the Foreign Ministry. In almost every case, the petitioners complained specifically of Curtius's relative inaction on their behalf at Geneva.²⁵

Curtius's new League strategy, certainly influenced by the Brüning government's apprehension of losing the issue of revisionism to the likes of Hugenburg and the National Socialists, would of necessity be more aggressive than his predecessor's at the Foreign Ministry. Thus, by the end of 1930, the minorities question, along with the incipient Austro-German customs union, marked a turning point in Curtius's direction of German revisionism. Yet, Stresemann's minorities diplomacy had been successful; he had called world attention to the "plight" of the "victims" of the peace treaties. And, despite right-wing claims, he had secured for Germans dwelling in Poland a measure of relief from a Polish government controlled by zealous

²⁵DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 1, nos. 307-315; For examples of the pressure placed on Curtius by German-minority organizations in October 1930, see Bracher, Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik, pp. 290-291, 346-347. Curtius replied to radical-nationalist criticism of his minority position by condemning his radical opponents as "inflammatory." To Curtius, the DNVP and National Socialist attacks were harmful to the best interests of the German minority in Poland. Curtius also downplayed National Socialist influence in Upper Silesia when, in fact, Hitler's party was supported by the majority of ethnic Germans in Silesia. See The Times (London), 8 December 1930, p. 11; and Donald McKale, The Swastika Outside Germany (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1977), pp. 4 ff, 27, 57.

nationalists intent upon protecting their new state from the machinations of traditional enemies. Stresemann's fulfillment policies, not predicated on the ultimate use of military force, might well have been employed successfully by Curtius in revising the German-Polish boundaries, if given time. Yet, the extreme nationalist crusade to stamp out "polonization" was such a burgeoning political issue that, inevitably, the Wilhelmstrasse would have to adopt an un-Stresemann-like stridency at the League. By dramatically calling on world opinion in 1931 to condemn the Polish government's minority policies, Curtius and Brüning could make a politically expedient gesture toward gratifying the German right-wing's revanchist impulse while maintaining control over a volatile political issue. An added bonus of this strategy, which Curtius considered to be of equal importance, was the possible leverage against Poland which might be achieved if the League favorably received the new German complaints.²⁶

Curtius's new stridency in presenting German grievances at Geneva, in addition, served to focus world attention on another area where a German minority allegedly was abused, the Sudetenland. Since the inception of the

²⁶Bülow to Rauscher, 18 November 1930, Akten 16, no. 65; Schulthess' Geschichtskalender, 1930, pp. 159-160; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 327-379; Kimmich, Germany and the League of Nations, p. 147.

Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, Berlin retained an interest in upholding the rights of the sizable German minority residing within the Republic's boundaries, an ethnic German population which, according to the 1921 census, comprised 23.3 percent of the total population.²⁷ By 1930, Curtius began to include the German-minority problems in Czechoslovakia in his litany of minority-rights complaints. Curtius's principal grievance centered on Czechoslovakia's alleged attempts, beginning in 1920, to pressure the German government to renounce any claims for compensation made by the German minority issuing from Czech land reforms, specifically Prague's confiscation of German estates in Bohemia. By 1929, most of the land claims had been settled except for some pending German claims amounting to thirteen million gold marks, a sum which Prague deemed relatively insignificant, yet still sufficient to provide a bargaining tool with Berlin. As other ethnic minorities, especially the Hungarians, as late as 1930 still had tens of millions in outstanding land claims pending against the Czech government, the Czech Foreign Minister, Eduard Benes proposed asking Berlin to abandon

²⁷ Radomir Luza, The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of German-Czech Relations, 1933-1962 (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 3; See also Johann W. Bruegel, Czechoslovakia Before Munich: The German Minority Problem and British Appeasement Policy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 58-59.

the German claims. This precedent, in the Czech view, might persuade Hungary to do likewise.²⁸

At the Second Hague Conference in January 1930, Benes sought out Curtius and broached the Czech proposition, i.e., that Germany could count on Czech support in the Young Plan negotiations in return for German renunciation of land claims. Curtius, however, refused to compromise. When the Czech Foreign Minister replied that political pressures at home compelled him to gain even a small concession from Germany, Curtius remained adamant, citing German public opinion against any abandonment of the legal rights of German minorities in Europe.²⁹ Secretly, Curtius's motives for refusing to compromise were more vindictive. For, according to Walter Koch, the German Minister in Prague, Germany could not forget that since 1918 Benes and Czechoslovakia "had stood behind France as a loyal shield-bearer, and that Benes was an obstacle to the proposed Austro-German customs union and to a Central European economic entente under Germany's leadership."³⁰

²⁸Curtius to Chancellery, 29 September 1930, Akten 15, no. 236; F. Gregory Campbell, Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 213.

²⁹Memorandum Curtius, 7 January 1930, Akten 14, no. 13; Campbell, Confrontation in Central Europe, p. 214.

³⁰Koch to Foreign Office, 17 March 1930, Akten 14, no. 155; Campbell, Confrontation in Central Europe, p. 214.

Curtius was therefore attempting to wrest from Prague unrequited acquiescence to the customs union when he refused to yield on Benes's proposal that German land claims be forfeited, a strategy which backfired when the Czech Foreign Minister left The Hague without further negotiation. Curtius's remaining diplomatic maneuver thus centered on his taking advantage of every possible exposure of alleged Czech oppression of ethnic Germans, continually gambling on engendering increased sympathy for Versailles Treaty revision.

An opportunity for Curtius to demonstrate his fervent support for minority rights was presented following anti-German riots in Prague in September 1930. The incident, which touched off a storm of German indignation at Czech "atrocities," involved the presentation of German-produced talking pictures in the Czech capital. The popularity of German-language films apparently fanned a smoldering Czech resentment against the Germanic dominance of Prague's art and entertainment venues, a resentment which culminated in a rampage during which theaters showing German films were ransacked and the cry of "down with Germans and Jews" was often heard. The official Czech government explanation of this anti-German outburst was that the riots were instigated by ultra-nationalist militarists intent upon embarrassing Benes and Czech President Thomas Masaryk. In order to prevent further

incidents, the mayor of Prague, the Czech National Socialist Karl Baxa, banned all German films from the city,³¹ an action certain to increase Berlin's fury over the incident.

When the Prague riots broke out, both Benes and Curtius were attending a League conference in Geneva. The Czech Foreign Minister attempted to reassure Curtius that the riots were an aberration and not reflective of the Czech government's official policy toward the German minority. Furthermore, assured Benes, German films would be reinstated in the capital as soon as possible.³² In Germany the Prague incident fostered an effort to boycott Czech-made merchandise, an effort not encouraged by the German Foreign Office. The Wilhelmstrasse warned that a boycott would adversely affect Germans in Czechoslovakia and instead urged the German press to step up its criticism of the anti-German "persecutions" in Prague.³³ In addition, the Foreign Ministry attempted to prevent German orchestras from playing in the Czech capital and protested the scheduled appearance of Czech operas in Germany and Austria. In an attempt to exploit

³¹Ibid.

³²Curtius to Chancellery, 29 September 1930, Akten 15, no. 236; Campbell, Confrontation to Central Europe, p. 218.

³³Bülow to Koch, 10 October 1930, Akten 16, no. 8; Campbell, Confrontation in Central Europe, p. 218.

nationalist fervor engendered by the Prague affair, Curtius denounced the riots and declared that Czech-German cultural exchanges were to be suspended until "Germans and Germanic culture were respected in foreign capitals."³⁴

The crisis which precipitated Curtius's demand that the League of Nations take punitive action against Poland occurred in November 1930 during the Polish general election campaign. During this election, called by Polish Prime Minister Josef Pilsudski in an effort to strengthen his autocratic regime, members of the German minority in Upper Silesia, especially the leaders of the ethnic-German political organizations, were subjected to violent intimidation and frequent abrogation of their suffrage rights.³⁵ Curtius cited as evidence of Poland's contempt for the Geneva Convention the allegations that minority candidates had been prevented from distributing campaign literature; accusations of Polish authorities arbitrarily invalidating German-minority voting lists on the grounds of insufficient numbers of signatures; approximately thirty thousand individual cases (Curtius's figure) of German minority

³⁴Koch to Foreign Office, 20 October 1930, Akten 16, no. 8; 4 November 1930, 16, no. 41; 1 December 1930, 16, no. 92.

³⁵Curtius's address to League Council, 21 January 1931 in LNOJ, 1931, pp. 165-178, see Appendix C for extract; Fink, "Polish Elections," pp. 182-183, and "Germany and Minorities," pp. 352-356; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 218-219.

voters in the Deutsche Volksbund having their Polish citizenship questioned; and the forced shutting down of the Posener Tageblatt, the German minority's political organ, on the grounds of "unsanitary production standards."³⁶

The German public's reaction to these allegations focused on the plight of ethnic Germans involved in the November elections, yet other minorities, especially Ukrainians, also were restricted. The Polish government's crackdown on ethnic political movements, according to Curtius, was part of the larger campaign to cripple the remaining democratic institutions in Poland.³⁷ The result of the November balloting, he alleged, was proof of the success of Pilsudski's anti-democracy campaign. Using anti-German and anti-Russian propaganda, direct intimidation of left-wing and moderate voters, and blatant ballot stuffing, the Pilsudski regime secured full control of the Sejm, the Polish national assembly. The minority candidates suffered the worst electoral setbacks, with the German representation in the Sejm falling from

³⁶LNOJ, 1931, pp. 165 ff.

³⁷See Fink, "Polish Elections," pp. 181 ff; and Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 219.

twenty-one to five and in the Upper Silesian assembly falling from fifteen to seven.³⁸

Curtius construed these election results and the Polish electoral violations as a direct challenge to Germany's interests in Central Europe. After a series of cabinet meetings from 24 to 26 November, the Brüning government determined that the best course of action was to cease the fruitless protests to the Pilsudski government and instead take Germany's allegations of minority abuse to the League. This action was noteworthy, according to Curtius, because it would mark the first complaint about minority rights abuses brought by a League Council member directly to the League without following the League's official guidelines requiring a prior protest by the minority concerned. Furthermore, the complaint was lodged without prior discussions with London or Paris, the two governments most supportive of Poland in previous territorial and minority disputes with Germany.³⁹ Thus,

³⁸LNOJ, 1931, pp. 165-178; Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 187; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 219.

³⁹Cabinet Sessions, 24-26 November 1930, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 1, nos. 173-180; Curtius to Hoesch, 27 November 1930, Akten 16, no. 83; Fink, "Polish Elections," pp. 184, 187. Fink contends that the Brüning cabinet "ordered" Curtius to demand redress for the alleged election infractions in Poland. Yet, judging from Curtius's 1920-1925 Reichstag record and his desire to placate radical demands for aid to the German minority, the Foreign Minister needed little encouragement to press his 1930-1931 anti-Polish attack.

the German response to the Polish elections marked a new approach in Germany's relations with the League and offered ample evidence of Curtius's abandonment of Stresemann's conciliatory diplomacy. Yet, by tying the Wilhelmstrasse's Poland policy firmly to the volatile minorities issue, Curtius fell deeper into the morass of increasingly militant right-wing politics. According to important revisionist members of the Foreign Office, especially State Secretary Bülow, the minorities fight at Geneva would require a complete victory for Germany, including an official condemnation of Warsaw, to convince the German electorate that the present government was authentically revisionist and dedicated to the reacquisition of former German lands now in possession of Poland.⁴⁰

Indeed, many on the political right insisted upon Curtius's resignation if the Foreign Minister did not win a decisive victory against Poland on the minorities issue. On 28 November, German student clubs demanded that President von Hindenburg use all means at hand to seek revenge for Polish "cruelties." In the Reichstag, National Socialist delegates hurled epithets at Brüning and Curtius and decried the government's "passivity" in the face of

⁴⁰ See Akten 16, nos. 65, 108; Fink, "Polish Elections," pp. 187-188; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 218-220.

Polish affronts. The Reichstag Foreign Affairs Committee urged government retaliation against Warsaw, including a moratorium on trade, and demanded that action be taken to ensure the safety of all Germans residing in "Polish-occupied" lands, including Posen and Pomerania, as well as Upper Silesia. Curtius, therefore, included these additional territories in his litany of allegations at Geneva, weakening his overall case and adding evidence to support accusations in Paris that German foreign policy was being determined by the radical newspapers instead of the government's professional diplomats. And, in fact, Curtius's minority rights presentation in the January 1931 League Council session did tend to reflect radical-nationalist opinions which demanded that the German minority in Poland be granted, in effect, superior status relative to the Polish majority, a position unlikely to win significant support for Germany.⁴¹

By early 1931, the propaganda war over the minorities question had reached a stage which forced the League of Nations to review the German complaints. With Curtius as chairman of the early January session of the League Council, the German case was, surprisingly, greeted with

⁴¹Verhandlungen 444: 332-336; New York Times, 29 November 1930, p. 10; Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 188; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 219-220.

sympathy. Japan, a member of the League's Minorities Committee, supported the German charges against Poland. In addition, the Swiss President of the League's Mixed Commission on Upper Silesia, Felix Calonder, conducted an independent investigation and was "scandalized" by the treatment of the ethnic minorities during the November elections in Upper Silesia. Calonder, to the Wilhelmstrasse's delight, recommended that all German demands be upheld, specifically that the Polish government officials found guilty of election violations be punished severely; that all German victims of discrimination be compensated; and that the Polish governor of Upper Silesia be removed from office. Not surprisingly, the Pilsudski government rejected these findings, and Poland received the backing of League of Nations Minorities Director Pablo de Azcarate of Spain, who advised Poland to obviate the German accusations and Calonder's report by instituting a neutral investigation into the November election troubles.⁴²

Instead, Poland responded by rejecting all outside interference in its affairs and challenged Berlin to deny that its pro-minority stance was merely a cover for German

⁴²Hoesch to Foreign Office, 16-20 December 1930, Akten 16, no. 108; Rieth to Foreign Office, 23-27 December 1930, Akten 16, no. 124; Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 189.

revanchism. Following Azcarate's pleadings, however, the Pilsudski government did institute an "impartial" review, headed by a Polish Interior Ministry official, whose findings indicated that no "abnormalities" had occurred during the Upper Silesian elections. Resentful for having to offer a defense, Polish Foreign Minister August Zaleski, in a message to the League Council on 6 January, denied that government-ordered electoral violations had taken place and vouched for the honesty and thoroughness of the Polish inquiry. Zaleski then announced that any "minor" incidents of intimidation inflicted on ethnic Germans had been in response to Berlin's provocations and German rightist agitation. Zaleski specifically referred to the September 1930 elections in Germany which, he said, had inflamed Polish-German tensions over the minorities question.⁴³ Thus, the League Council meetings were destined to devolve into a Polish-German propaganda battle, with European and world opinion the prize to be fought over. On this contest Curtius wagered his entire revisionist foreign policy program.

The sixty-second session of the League Council, beginning on 21 January 1931, was presided over by Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson. The initial meeting was

⁴³Memorandum Reinebeck, 29 December 1930, Akten 16, no. 126; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 December 1930, p. 2; Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 190; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, pp. 220-225.

devoted entirely to speeches by Curtius and Zaleski. Curtius began with a temperate recitation of German grievances against Poland, emphasizing the numerous allegations of Polish transgressions against the Upper-Silesian minority population.⁴⁴ Curtius recounted to the assembled ministers the German government's reason for bypassing the usual League minority-rights committees and for bringing the question to the Council, i.e., that the allegations of Polish election violations constituted "an exceptional case." Officially-sanctioned acts of terrorism against Upper Silesia's German population had been verified, Curtius asserted, and yet the Polish government had resisted making any corrections. . Curtius specifically cited instances of Polish-nationalist attacks perpetrated by the Union of Silesian Insurgents against German political groups, allegedly with the connivance of Upper Silesian government figures. In regard to Poznan and Pomorze (German Posen and Pomerania), he observed that the "terrorist acts" against Germans were relatively less severe than in Upper Silesia, but nonetheless abhorrent to the Brüning government. The German Foreign Minister then contrasted the treatment of the Polish minority in Germany

⁴⁴Curtius to Foreign Office, 24 January 1931, Akten 16, no. 184; LNOJ, 1931, pp. 165-179; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 21-23 January 1931; Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1932, pp. 365 ff.

with that of the German minority in Poland, and he broached the topic of possible revisions of the German-Polish frontier as the only solution to Polish political violence. This boundary adjustment, Curtius emphasized, would be carried out peacefully and in full accord with international law. Curtius concluded by implying that Polish assurances of future compliance with League of Nations guidelines on electoral procedures were not sufficient compensation. The Council, he argued, should instead take measures to ensure through the use of on-site minority-rights observers that no further Polish "atrocities" were committed. The Council, Curtius demanded, should investigate thoroughly the question of the Polish Insurgents Union connection with high-ranking officials of the Pilsudski government.⁴⁵

Polish Foreign Minister Zaleski replied by admitting that the Geneva Convention had been violated during the November elections, but that the infractions were minor and no worse than what the Stahlhelm, the German nationalist para-military organization, had been guilty of in Polish communities in Germany. The Polish minister averred that only about 10 percent of the German allegations could be documented and that most of the Polish

⁴⁵ LNOJ, 1931, pp. 165-179; Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1932, pp. 365-366.

election "terrorists" already had been punished. Zaleski then attributed the incidents in Upper Silesia to Polish retaliation against German violations of Polish minority rights and the thinly-veiled German threats of border revisionism. Zaleski specifically charged Curtius with inciting Polish reaction by his calls for revanchism. The Polish Foreign Minister closed his oration with the assurance that his government would act forcefully to ensure "peace and tranquility" in Upper Silesia.⁴⁶

Following a luncheon period during which Curtius and Zaleski sat side-by-side chatting amiably, a second round of speeches found Curtius denying Zaleski's insinuation that the German government supported the ultra-nationalist Stahlhelm and other violence-prone anti-Polish organizations. Zaleski reiterated Warsaw's position that, despite German calls for possible future League border revisions, the Polish-German frontier was unalterable. No other Council members rose to speak, and the first session ended inconclusively, the Council members requesting that the Japanese representative, Foreign Minister Yoshizawa, draft a report on the German allegations.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1932, pp. 366-367.

⁴⁷New York Times, 22 January 1931, p. 11; Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 191.

The Yoshizawa report was submitted on 24 January and concluded that Articles 75 and 83 of the Geneva Convention regarding minority rights had been violated in numerous instances during the Polish elections. The report also found valid the German Volksbund's charge that petitions for redress of electoral irregularities, such as the suspension of candidates and the removal of names from electoral lists, had been ignored by Polish courts. It agreed, moreover, that the German appeal to the League of Nations Council had been justified. Furthermore, Yoshizawa accepted the German accusation that the Polish government was at least indirectly responsible for the acts of repression directed against the German minority in Upper Silesia. The report ordered the Polish government to submit, by May 1931, a comprehensive report detailing the investigations into each incident of electoral violations and listing the compensations awarded for damages to persons and property.⁴⁸ The Yoshizawa report was inconclusive on whether or not Warsaw had directed anti-German activities in November 1930, and no further League actions were taken against Poland until

⁴⁸LNOJ, 1931, pp. 237-239; Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, p. 367.

September 1931 when the Hague Court upheld the Yoshizawa findings.⁴⁹

German press opinion was not universally supportive of Curtius's indecisive "victory" at Geneva. Vorwärts, the Social Democratic organ, decried the dearth of British and French support for minority rights in Europe, citing Henderson's and Briand's disinterest in raising the "minorities question" into a Europe-wide referendum on national boundaries. The moderate and conservative press joyfully reported Poland's League Council censure and indicated that the German minority in Poland was well pleased with Curtius's defense at Geneva. The Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung went so far as to advocate full League of Nations discussions leading to the return of the Polish "Corridor" to Germany. The Völkische Beobachter, with typically tortured National Socialist logic, termed the minority-rights question a "socialist policy" and condemned the League proceedings outright.⁵⁰ Within several months of the League's January Polish "humiliation," a Stahlhelm rally in Breslau, German Silesia, attended by 150,000 fervent nationalists, marched past

⁴⁹ See Hague Permanent Court of International Justice, Judgments, Orders, and Advisory Opinions, Series A/B, vol. 1, 1931-1932.

⁵⁰ Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 15 February 1931, Vorwärts, 28 January 1931; Fink, "Polish Elections," pp. 192-193.

the ex-Crown Prince of Germany and the former King of Saxony. Speeches were made demanding the immediate repudiation of the Versailles Treaty and the reincorporation into the Reich of all former German lands.⁵¹

Curtius's policy of escalating German minority-rights demands at the League thus served to harden nationalist revanchist policies toward Poland and Czechoslovakia. By February 1931, Curtius's attention had turned once again to Austria and conclusion of the long-planned customs union. In fact, Curtius ultimately received little credit from nationalists for his minority-rights victory at Geneva, and both Britain and France succeeded in toning down the League's decision against Warsaw, eventually thwarting Curtius's eastern revisionist plans. Yet Curtius had scored a diplomatic victory at the League which even Stresemann would have applauded.⁵² And buoyed by this success, the German Foreign Minister was secure in his belief that the Austro-German customs union would be consummated by summer 1931.

⁵¹Fink, "Polish Elections," p. 196.

⁵²Ibid., p. 197; Riekhoff, German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933, p. 225.

CHAPTER V
CUSTOMS UNION, FINANCIAL CRISIS, AND
RESIGNATION, 1930-1931

While Curtius's "victory" over Poland at Geneva brought him relatively little public acclaim at home, the support of the League of Nations on the minorities issue served the Foreign Minister as a favorable augury for the success of his primary foreign policy aim, the economic and political union of Germany and Austria. Since Austrian Chancellor Schober's initial visit to Berlin in February 1930, the Austro-German customs union negotiations had moved forward slowly, due primarily to a combination of factors, including the primacy of such matters as disarmament, the minorities question, and Europe's worsening financial condition. In addition, there was a lack of any urgency on behalf of the Wilhelmstrasse, with Curtius especially being unwilling to provoke Paris and London by taking precipitous action on economic union. During the summer of 1930, customs union planning was remanded to Karl Ritter, the Wilhelmstrasse's Economics Department chief, and his Austrian counterpart, Richard Schueller, head of the

Economics Section of the Ballhausplatz. The two experts met on 22 September, reaching final agreement the next day on a framework of economic union.¹ The draft of the customs union agreement, presented by Ritter for Austrian perusal on 2 January 1931, contained provisions for the inclusion of other countries in the economic union. These provisions were designed, principally, in order to comply with the Geneva Protocol of 1922, which specifically forbade Austria from restricting its economic independence by granting any exclusive advantages to a single nation. A further clause of the draft agreement provided for the immediate termination of the union by either partner, a German proposal intended to offer the illusion of Austrian autonomy. The ostensible reason was that a one-year term for the customs union was unworkable; Curtius thus proffered an open-ended agreement, to be terminated, with good cause, at any time. By January 1931, Schober, now

¹Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 169. Other major works dealing specifically with the 1931 customs union project: Walter Goldinger, "Das Projekt einer deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion von 1931," in Österreich und Europa (Vienna: Styria Verlag, 1965), Ernst Hoor, Österreich 1918-1938 (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1966); Robert Kann and Friedrich D. Prinz, eds., Deutschland und Österreich (Munich: Jugend und Volk, 1980); Peter J. Katzenstein, Disjointed Partners: Austria and Germany since 1815 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Felix Kreissler, Von der Revolution zur Annexion: Österreich 1918 bis 1938 (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1970); Otto Leichter, Otto Bauer (Vienna: Europa-Verlag, 1970).

Austrian Vice-Chancellor and Foreign Minister, was ready to proceed with a formal Austro-German union, and a meeting between the foreign ministers was proposed, the focus of the meeting being to avoid "surprising" the Western Allies and to plan for a "diplomatic" announcement of the customs agreement.² Schober suggested a meeting between himself, Brüning, and Curtius in Vienna in early March.

On 16 January, however, the Austrian Foreign Minister met with Curtius during a session of the Commission of Inquiry for European Union at Geneva. Curtius formally accepted the invitation to Vienna, and the two ministers discussed an overall strategy for presenting the economic agreement to the rest of Europe. Curtius proposed, and Schober concurred, that the customs union finalization be withheld from both the German and Austrian parliaments and that both cabinets not be notified until the final announcement was ready. Both men agreed that the Vienna meeting should be used to coordinate the diplomatic action necessary preliminary to an official announcement of economic union.³ In addition, Schober informed an interested Curtius of a plan for joint economic talks,

²Memorandum, Ritter, 7 January 1931, Akten 16, no. 141; Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 172.

³Curtius to Foreign Office, 16 January 1931, Akten 16, no. 165; Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 28.

intending to lead to a future covert tariff system, between Austria and Hungary, a proposal which already had been revealed to France without any serious objections.⁴ The realization that French Foreign Minister Briand had found no reason to protest this "violation" of Austria's treaty-mandated independence undoubtedly presented Curtius with evidence that Paris was willing to ignore certain treaty revisions in the interest of economic stability. Curtius, therefore, most likely resolved in January 1931 that French acquiescence to the customs union depended upon how completely Germany could convince the rest of Europe that the agreement was intended solely to provide economic security to Vienna.

When the German visit to Vienna, scheduled for 3 and 4 March, was announced, Curtius disclosed that Chancellor Brüning would be unable to attend the meeting. At the time, Brüning's withdrawal was explained as a conflict of schedules, the German Chancellor being obliged "at the last instant" to attend a regional festival on 6 March. In his memoir on the customs union affair, Curtius implied that he persuaded Brüning to refrain from visiting Vienna on the grounds that the economic negotiations were too politically volatile to risk the

⁴Memorandum, Bülow, 17 January 1931, Akten 16, no. 166.

downfall of the government if, for some reason, the customs union proposal failed. According to Curtius, such a possible political misfortune for the Republic would have to be avoided; thus his recommendation, accepted by the Chancellor, that the full burden of negotiations be carried by the Foreign Minister.⁵ Curtius's self-serving account rightly has been discredited by historians of the customs union affair.⁶ The correct version of the Vienna meeting must consider that, prior to the Chancellor's decision to avoid the Vienna conference, Curtius was on holiday in the Harz Mountains and thus was absent from Berlin during the time of Brüning's decision. Therefore, Chancellor Brüning's own memoir offers a more plausible explanation, i.e., that he never considered taking part in the official visit to Vienna in March 1931, under no circumstances wishing "to give this journey a high political character."⁷ Indeed, the compelling reason given by other Foreign Office professionals involved in Brüning's decision not to participate at Vienna was the Chancellor's recent unhappiness with

⁵Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, pp. 33 ff.

⁶Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," pp. 185 ff; Stambrook, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Project," p. 35; Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 48.

⁷Heinrich Brüning, Memoiren, 1918-1934 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970), p. 264.

Curtius's handling of the customs union project.⁸ Although the specific criticisms are nowhere specified, the upshot of this controversy revolves on the fact that Curtius in early 1931 probably lacked the full support of his own government for the spring 1931 conclusion of the customs union project.

The Foreign Minister himself was plagued by misgivings as he journeyed by rail to Vienna on 3 March. Curtius's primary concern was that Schober's enthusiasm for economic union with Germany could possibly stem from the desire to strengthen his own political position in Austria. Curtius therefore was reluctant to proceed with an irrevocable decision for union until his apprehensions about Schober's motives should be dispelled.⁹ Furthermore, by 3 March, Curtius had decided, on other grounds, to proceed more carefully in the negotiations. From the earliest talks with Schober, Curtius was aware that Austrian support for Anschluss was based largely on economic necessity. Curtius therefore was careful to advise the German delegation to Vienna that the German position was to offer only the vaguest outline of Berlin's ultimate goal of

⁸Bülow to Hoesch, 9 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 6.

⁹Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 36; Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 49; Stambrook, "The German-Austrian Customs Union Project," pp. 35 ff.

political union lest Vienna insist on drastic concessions to compensate for Austria's potential lost sovereignty. The Foreign Minister counseled his negotiators to proceed with discretion, emphasizing to Schober the economic benefits of the customs union and downplaying the desire for eventual closer political ties with Austria. Curtius and Foreign Office Secretary Hermann Pünder, who replaced Brüning for the Vienna talks, were to assure their Austrian hosts that Germany "considered it our duty to proceed in the fullest understanding with Austria and with the greatest consideration for Austrian economic interests."¹⁰ No mention whatever was to be made about future Austro-German relations beyond the conclusion of the present customs union. A further reason for German discretion was Curtius's fear that even a hint of Austro-German political discussions would cause an immediate and severe European reaction (which Curtius, to his regret, failed to predict when the economic union was finally announced). Thus, upon his arrival at Vienna's Westbahnhof, Curtius was saddled with the double burden of possible Austrian wavering based upon Schober's political fortunes and his own desire to avoid any discussion of plans for political union.

¹⁰ Foreign Office Memorandum, 6 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 3.

Curtius's fear that Austrian support for the customs union might prove capricious was unfounded. Both Schober and Austrian Chancellor Otto Ender greeted the German delegation with assurances of Vienna's profound desire for an immediate resolution of the customs union negotiations. After reviewing the historical relationship between the two states, Schober's greeting expressed confidence that the Vienna talks would end in the establishment of the closest possible economic cooperation between Austria and Germany. The Austrian Foreign Minister also took pains to register his belief that the customs union program would not only benefit the two nations involved but would ultimately provide economic benefits for all Europe. As Curtius noted in his memoirs, all of the leading Austrian government figures he met in Vienna expressed great pleasure that the time had arrived for completing the long-sought treaty of economic union.¹¹ Both Curtius and Schober agreed that the initial treaty should be as simple as possible, with the complicated details of day-by-day joint economic affairs to be left for future negotiation.¹²

¹¹Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 37.

¹²No German record of the Vienna meetings exists outside Curtius's memoir and several Foreign Office summaries. For an examination of the record of the Curtius-Schober discussions held by the Neues Politisches Archiv in Vienna, see Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," pp. 49-50.

This preliminary agreement included such provisions as a common tariff law and a common external tariff based upon the current German system. Transitional tariffs between the two signatories were to be kept to a minimum. Separate customs administrations would be maintained to promote the illusion of Austrian sovereignty. The draft customs union proposal sidestepped the obvious fact that trade negotiations with third countries would have to be conducted jointly, an embarrassing infringement of Austria's economic independence and a flagrant violation of the spirit of the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the 1922 Geneva Protocol. For this reason, Curtius earnestly recommended that the preliminary treaty should be signed in advance of the notification of foreign governments, the objective being to demonstrate the two signatories' determination to forge ahead with economic union despite the restrictions imposed by international law. The Austrian negotiators concurred with Curtius's plan to present a customs union as a fait accompli to the rest of Europe. Austrian financial expert Scheuller expressed the sole dissenting opinion, predicting political and legal trouble with London, Paris, and Rome regardless of how innocent the draft treaty linking Austria and Germany appeared.¹³ At the final meeting on 5 March, Curtius

¹³Ibid.

summarized the Austro-German position. The formal signing of the customs union agreement would follow in two to three weeks when the two nations would agree on the diplomatic action pertaining to an official announcement. However, until the protocol was signed and diplomatic preparations had been made, absolute secrecy was to be maintained by both parties.¹⁴ The same day, full agreement having been reached on all major points, Curtius returned to Berlin prepared to present the customs union program to the Brüning cabinet.

The procedure for announcing the Austro-German customs union to Europe was decided at the 16 March session of the German cabinet. Once the draft protocol had been approved by both the German and Austrian governments, simultaneous démarches would be presented in Rome, Paris, and London by the official diplomatic missions of both nations. At the same cabinet meeting, Brüning appeared genuinely satisfied at the results of the Austro-German negotiations, albeit apprehensive about the timing of

¹⁴The effort to keep secret the completion of the customs union negotiations was futile. The Vossische Zeitung and other leading German newspapers had been speculating about a customs union for the past year. From 5 March onwards, most of the European press included reasonably accurate predictions of the substance of the Curtius-Schober economic talks, yet few correctly anticipated the official announcement of a customs union agreement. See Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," pp. 51, 54.

the customs union announcement in the midst of the deepening world financial crisis. Other cabinet officials found reason to question the efficacy of the customs union plan. Ernst Trendelenburg of the Economics Ministry counseled against weakening the German currency through a possible future nexus with the Austrian schilling, but he approved the coordination of tax and social legislation. Trendelenburg also posited a concern shared by other cabinet advisors when he questioned the customs union's proposed tariff arbitration system under which Austria, although far weaker economically than Germany, should nevertheless share equally in setting tariff policy.¹⁵ Democrat Hermann Dietrich, the Finance Minister, opposed using the Hague Court as the final arbiter of commercial treaty disputes between Austria and Germany and he implied that Germany would lose autonomy over its own economic concerns by appealing to an outside judicial body. The Finance Minister instead proposed creation of a customs union parliament, with representation based on population or economic strength, and thus guaranteed to leave Germany in a dominant position. The Minister of Agriculture, Martin Schiele, prophesied the demise of German agriculture if third countries, especially Hungary--which was

¹⁵Cabinet Meeting, 16 March 1931, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 2, no. 263.

capable of outproducing German farmers and undercutting commodity prices--were added to the customs union.¹⁶

Curtius replied to the assembled ministers and advisors that German bureaucratic proficiency would ensure Germany's domination of the economic partnership. The Foreign Minister also dispelled fears that the Hague Court might undermine German sovereignty when he agreed to drop the arbitration scheme from the draft protocol, Curtius ended his cabinet presentation with a declaration of confidence in the customs union idea: "Austria is providing a small dowry, but everyone knows even such unequal marriages have proved successful." Despite the continued misgivings of several cabinet members and expert commentators, the customs union draft protocol was approved and Curtius was encouraged to proceed with final arrangements.¹⁷

In a subsequent cabinet session on 18 March, further reservations over allowing Austria "equality" in economic matters with Germany were answered with Curtius's assurance that the economic "parity" idea had been proved successful in the federal systems of the United States and Switzerland and thus could succeed as well in the context of an Austro-German union.¹⁸ Curtius reacted to

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Cabinet Meeting, 18 March 1931, *ibid.* 2, no. 267.

cabinet concern over the substantial diplomatic risk involved in the customs union project with the advice that, due to European interest in forging closer economic ties among the nations of the continent, epitomized in French Foreign Minister Briand's call for Paneuropa, the current political climate was most salubrious. Then, in a statement fraught with political naïvete, Curtius suggested the customs union plan could also likely soothe the ongoing internal political conflict in Germany, possibly even resulting in the creation of a super-coalition of political parties in the German government, ranging from the Social Democrats to the National Socialists.¹⁹ This grandiose political prediction, besides indicating a fundamental misunderstanding of National Socialist political goals, also underscored Curtius's recurring policy of basing German foreign policy decisions, at least partly, on their likely effect on domestic politics. Clearly, by March 1931, a consistent element of Curtius's economic and diplomatic maneuverings, including German-Soviet relations, reparations negotiations, the minorities issue, and the Austro-German customs union, was his consideration of the political situation in Germany. The other cabinet members' response to the Foreign Minister's hopes for an across-the-political-spectrum coalition

¹⁹ Ibid.

government as a direct result of a fruitful union with Austria remains unrecorded. The remainder of the 18 March session concerned the Foreign Minister's reiteration of the need for secrecy, with Curtius explaining to the assembled ministers that the recent economic talks in Vienna would be explained to the rest of Europe as merely Austro-German brainstorming about a possible Paneuropa tariff truce.²⁰

For the next several days, Curtius's most pressing problem remained the proper means of announcing the customs union to Europe, with the Foreign Minister keenly aware that French and British reaction might hinge on Germany's ability to keep the customs union wrapped in the fiction of a European-wide tariff-reduction agreement. Since January 1931, Curtius had reached the conclusion that Germany could not risk the appearance of being too eager for Anschluss by taking the initiative in informing Paris and London of the conclusion of the Austro-German customs union. The lead, he insisted, should come from Vienna, thus presenting to France and Britain the prima facie evidence of Austria's compliance in the customs union.²¹ In addition, Curtius suggested that Austrian Foreign

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Curtius to Foreign Office, 16 January 1931, Akten 16, no. 165.

Minister Schober stress to the European powers the Austro-German intention that the customs union be a preliminary step to Paneuropa, continuing the strategy of appealing to French Foreign Minister Briand's idea of a European economic confederation dedicated to maintaining permanent peace on the continent.²²

The original early-March plan for announcing the customs union had called for almost simultaneous démarches in Paris, London, and Rome, with the Austrian ambassador always preceding the German envoy with an ambiguous statement omitting any details or legal arguments concerning the final form of the customs union. Almost immediately upon learning of this plan, Schueller in Vienna and Ritter in Berlin objected. The original plan for near-simultaneous démarches, they argued, would appear ridiculous to the European foreign ministries, with first one, then another of the customs union's ambassadors trooping in to announce the Austro-German economic agreement. In addition, the two economic experts cautioned, a general statement of economic union would be insufficient to answer the obvious question certain to be posed by France: "Is this an attempt at Anschluss?" Furthermore, by offering only a meekly-worded, non-specific announcement, Germany and Austria would be giving Paris, London, and

²²Ibid.

Rome ample time to entrench their opposition before Vienna and Berlin could explain fully the details of the customs union program to the rest of Europe.²³

Consequently, Curtius, in the interests of practicality, instructed the German embassies on 18 March to allow the initial customs union announcement to be given in Paris by the German ambassador and in London by the Austrian embassy. The customs union announcement in Rome would be handled by the Austrian envoy. Those ambassadors not making the initial announcements were to follow immediately with a full discussion of the customs union plan, and all envoys were advised to be prepared to answer fully any objections to the economic union, a caveat which implied that all German and Austrian embassies had been fully apprised of the customs union agreement well in advance when, in fact, they had not.²⁴

Despite the detailed efforts at coordinating the 21 March customs union announcement in the European capitals, the scheme nearly failed due to what Curtius termed "Austrian laziness." The German ambassadors had been briefed secretly on the customs union program as early as 9 March and subsequently had been issued twenty-three

²³Memorandum, Ritter, 14 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 12.

²⁴Curtius to Hoesch, 18 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 25; Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," p. 209.

pages of detailed instructions. Yet the Austrian Ambassador in Rome, Lothar Egger, as late as 19 March had not been informed fully of the customs union's details and had only the sketchiest idea of the scheme. Indeed, the Austrian Ambassador had not received his letter of instruction from the Ballhausplatz about the plan for announcing the customs union until two days before the 21 March deadline. To add fuel to Curtius's ire, the letter detailing the announcement plan had come to the Austrian embassy in Rome by ordinary mail, with seal broken, evidence that the communication had been intercepted, probably by the Italian government.²⁵ Regardless of these difficulties, the official démarches proceeded as scheduled and, on 21 March, Paris, London, and Rome were informed that a protocol had been signed linking Germany and Austria in a customs union.

The presentation of the Austro-German customs union as a fait accompli prompted a vehement reaction in France and a more phlegmatic response elsewhere in Europe. The French government immediately denounced the customs union plan as tantamount to nineteenth-century Teutonic empire-building.²⁶ The Czech government, apparently

²⁵Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 41; Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," pp. 213, 215.

²⁶Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, 1931, p. 304. For the view that French vulnerability to

having had some foreknowledge of the planned announcement, on 21 March warned the Austrian Foreign Minister of possible Czech economic retaliation if the customs union were carried through. Privately, however, Czech Foreign Minister Benes admitted that the idea of regional economic pacts was the most feasible means of establishing coherent economic relations in Europe. The most distressing aspect of the Austro-German customs union, according to Prague, was its presentation as a fait accompli.²⁷ The British government expressed keen disappointment in the customs union, but without specific reference to Berlin's penchant for secrecy and noticeably without comment on the Anschluss question. Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, for example, was worried most that the customs union might cause such a European-wide furor that other vital programs, such as disarmament or tariff reform, might be scuttled. Furthermore, Henderson was troubled by the possibility that the customs union controversy might result in political unrest

Germany's potential military strength was a leading cause of France's opposition to the Austro-German customs union, see Carole Fink et al., eds., German Nationalism and the European Response, 1890-1945 (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), pp. 157 ff.

²⁷Koch to Foreign Office, 23 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 38.

in Germany which could be exploited by the radical-nationalist movement.²⁸

Curtius was dismayed by the European reaction, especially the French protest over Germany's efforts at maintaining secrecy during the customs union negotiations and the concerted effort at avoiding Anglo-French consultation. Fearing the repercussions from the customs union's unfavorable reception on 21 March and attempting to provide an excuse for the precipitous announcement of the plan's consummation, commencing on 23 March Curtius offered the explanation that the original plan had called for a May announcement of the Austro-German agreement. A problem arose, Curtius explained to the press, when the May meeting of the Paneuropa commission, the Organization Committee of the Commission of Inquiry for European Union, was rescheduled for 24 March in Geneva. The German government, therefore, reasoned that an announcement of the customs union after the meeting of the Paneuropa commission would have been interpreted as a German attempt to discredit the entire Paneuropa movement. According to

²⁸DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 1, no. 348; vol. 2, nos. 3, 14. The United States reacted cautiously to the customs union announcement, adopting a "watchful" policy which was more attuned to the European economic situation than fearful of a possible Anschluss. See United States, Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1931 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 1: 566.

Curtius, the 21 March démarches were an attempt at preventing charges against Germany of conspiring against the Commission of Inquiry, of which Germany was a member.²⁹ The Austrian government, however, blamed Berlin for forcing Vienna to agree to a premature announcement; Foreign Minister Schober contended that he had counseled postponement of the customs union démarches until May.³⁰ Thus the likelihood of Curtius having concocted the change-of-date story to deflect criticism of the 21 March announcement is enhanced by Schober's failure to support Curtius's explanation.³¹ Moreover, no mention was made of this "crucial" change of date in the cabinet meetings preceding the 21 March démarches.³²

Curtius proposed as an additional, and even less credible, excuse for the 21 March "surprise" the claim that the premature customs union announcement was made necessary when the Viennese press headlined the customs union project's completion, ostensibly in a leading article on 17 March.³³ This hasty explanation, appearing

²⁹Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, pp. 40-41.

³⁰Neue Freie Presse (Vienna), 19 April 1931.

³¹Curtius to Hoesch, 18 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 25.

³²Cabinet Meetings, 16 and 18 March 1931, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 2, nos. 263 and 267.

³³Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 40. See also, DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 1.

in Curtius's memoir and often cited as fact, is, however, simply false. The alleged article detailing the customs union's completion and imminent implementation does not exist in either the morning or evening edition of the 17 March 1931 Neue Freie Presse, Vienna's largest-circulation newspaper, or in any other Austrian publication.³⁴

Curtius's efforts to defuse criticism of the customs union were prompted, at least in part, by German Ambassador Leopold von Hoesch's detailed report of the French response on 21 March.³⁵ According to Hoesch, Briand's reaction was polite, but the French Foreign Minister obviously had severe misgivings about the customs union. While Briand on 21 March declined to mention formally the legal proscriptions against the customs union, he did raise the issue of Austria's likely having violated

³⁴In his memoir Bemühung um Österreich, Curtius referred to the "Wiener Presse" as being responsible for premature disclosure of the customs union agreement. Curtius was most likely, however, referring to comments and general speculations which had been current in all the Viennese newspapers, not to a specific article in the Neue Freie Presse; see Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, p. 40. For a thorough exposure of the Neue Freie Presse legend, see Johnson, "Austro-German Customs Union Project," pp. 218 ff. For the view that absolute certainty about the reasons for the change of date for the customs union disclosure is impossible, see Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," pp. 54-57.

³⁵Hoesch to Foreign Office, 21 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 32.

provisions of the Treaty of Saint-Germain and the Geneva Protocol of 1922, both of which prohibited any compromise of Austria's independence. Hoesch further reported to the Wilhelmstrasse Briand's conviction that the customs union represented a preparation for Anschluss, regardless of how Berlin and Vienna tried to color it. The French government, Hoesch reported to Curtius, was certain that Germany stood to derive little economic benefit from the customs arrangement, and, ergo, Curtius and Germany had ulterior motives. Briand also was offended personally that Foreign Minister Curtius had not informed him of this critical diplomatic move, an understandable response considering Briand's long and intimate friendship with Stresemann. Furthermore, Hoesch reported, the French government had been in communication with London, Rome, and Prague, the other signatories to the 1922 Geneva Protocol, concerning possible concerted action against Austria.³⁶

Curtius then learned of other aspects of French reaction, especially the possible political repercussions following the customs union disclosure. According to Hoesch, Secretary-General Philippe Berthelot of the French Foreign Office was certain that the customs union's

³⁶Ibid. Lack of Italian and British interest in this proposal, however, forced Briand to attempt unilateral sanctions against Vienna.

presentation as "a first step to achieving Briand's goal of Paneuropa" would cripple French public support for European unity. French opinion, already running against Briand's conciliatory policies, would be certain to brand the customs union as an ill-disguised attempt at Anschluss directly attributable to Briand's concessions to Germany. The German action, in Berthelot's opinion, represented an utter paucity of foresight and inevitably would lead to severe strains in French-German relations.³⁷ Hoesch thus concluded that, having consulted with a number of officials at the Quai d'Orsay, the general opinion toward the customs union was unfavorable, with only former Foreign Ministry secretary Yves LeTrocquer terming the customs union program "a welcome overture to a full European customs union."³⁸ One can only assume Ambassador Hoesch included this lone favorable comment as an attempt to lift the spirits of his Foreign Minister.

On 24 March, Curtius received from Hoesch the initial French press accounts of the customs union disclosure. Curtius discovered that French comment had been restrained, probably due to the dearth of detailed information about the Austro-German plan. The leftist

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Hoesch to Foreign Office, 23 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 37.

press continued to offer editorial opinion displaying a degree of understanding of the German reasons for instigating the economic union, yet Hoesch reported an indication of movement toward a more critical tone, even among the moderate papers.³⁹ Le Temps, for example, had abandoned its wait-and-see attitude of 22 March and had begun criticizing the customs union agreement. Le Temps argued that Germany's apparent design for economic hegemony in Southeastern Europe could not be reconciled with Briand's plan for European union as Germany, by already having completed a separate customs arrangement, would assume a commanding position in a pan-European economic organization. In effect, Le Temps argued, the Austro-German customs union had preempted Briand's plan for European economic confederation.⁴⁰

By 26 March, the German Ambassador reported only two newspapers, La Volonte and La République still offering favorable commentary, with the remainder of the French press growing ever more critical and accusatory. The general opinion by 26 March had grown to consider the customs union as, indeed, preparation for Anschluss and thus unacceptable to France. And, the customs union

³⁹ Hoesch to Foreign Office, 26 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 47.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

protocol, in providing for the inclusion of third countries, was tantamount to the creation of Mitteleuropa, Berlin's idée fixe since the days of Bismarck. Finally, Hoesch relayed his assessment that Paris could never accept the customs union as presented in March 1931, for, by so doing, France would be de facto submitting to future German economic domination in Europe.⁴¹

Following Ambassador Hoesch's report, Curtius must have realized his blunder, i.e., his failure to perceive that the French government's assent, and the favorable attitude of the French public, was central to the survival of the customs union. That Curtius failed to lay the necessary groundwork which could have led to French acquiescence is central to understanding the difference between Stresemann's and Curtius's direction of German foreign policy.

In the months prior to the 21 March démarches, Curtius turned aside counsel which warned that, at minimum, the approval of French Foreign Minister Briand for the economic union should be attained before an official announcement. Briand for years had worked closely with Stresemann and had used France's influence to assist in Germany's recovery from its postwar status as a pariah nation. Briand on several occasions had risked censure

⁴¹Ibid.

by his own nation when he contributed to easing Versailles Treaty restrictions on Germany. Without Briand's conciliatory efforts, for example, the Rhineland Pact and the Hague Conferences on reparations might well have been impossible. Curtius, aspiring to exceed his predecessor's revisionist accomplishments, should have known that Briand's aid, or at least acquiescence, was essential for any further alterations of the postwar treaty settlements. Curtius, whether out of ignorance or arrogance, failed utterly to convince France beforehand of the validity of Germany's publicly stated reason for a customs union, i.e., the plan was crucial to the future long-term economic stability of Central Europe. Briand in particular should have been apprised of this argument, and his advice could likely have allowed Curtius to restructure the customs union to allay French fears that the Austro-German economic union was de facto Anschluss.

Curtius, however, never attempted to employ convenient opportunities at Geneva or The Hague to test Briand's reaction to the customs union plan. As early as September 1930, Curtius proposed to Schober that the customs union should be presented publicly as part of Briand's proposal for European economic union. Yet Curtius never approached Briand with this idea, nor did he ask for League of Nations assistance in formulating a tariff union program which might have been acceptable

to Paris. Following the German elections of September 1930, which resulted in the surprising National Socialist electoral gains, Curtius was cognizant of increasing tensions between Germany and France. The Foreign Minister, of course, had been informed through embassy reports of French indignation over Hitler's success and of Briand's contention that the Nazi voting strength was indicative of a repudiation of Franco-German conciliation. Yet no evidence exists to show that Curtius appreciated the gravity of Briand's concern or the personal injury the French leader felt over the German people's apparent ingratitude following the early French evacuation of the Rhineland.

By 1931, therefore, Curtius seemed to have been oblivious to the fact that France was in no mood to accept placidly what amounted to a deliberate insult to France and a serious economic threat to French interests in Central and Southeast Europe. That Foreign Minister Curtius, with the ultimate responsibility of assuring the feasibility of Germany's foreign policy aims, should have ignored evidence that public and political opinion in France had, by late 1930, shifted to the right, seems incredible. Yet, almost continually from 1925 to 1931, rightist French newspapers had argued that French foreign policy since Locarno had been based on the faulty premise of German trustworthiness. Indeed, over the same period,

the right-wing French press proposed increased defense spending and generally agitated for stricter enforcement of Versailles Treaty sanctions. By March 1931, even the left-wing press in France was critical of Germany's alleged ingratitude and recent League of Nations contentiousness. From November 1930 until March 1931, the French Chamber of Deputies debates provided ample evidence, if Curtius had taken heed, of renewed suspicions that Germany was pushing too vigorously for revisionism.

That Foreign Minister Curtius failed to heed his experts' sound advice is evident from the correspondence between Hoesch, the Ambassador in Paris, and the Wilhelmstrasse. Curtius learned in a 6 March memorandum, for example, of Hoesch's opinion that the successful, permanent conclusion of the Austro-German customs union was contingent, not on the general good will of Europe, but on the specific acceptance of the plan by the French government.⁴² Hoesch furthermore specifically warned Curtius that little chance existed that France would cooperate with the customs union scheme in the near future. Nevertheless, Hoesch opined, Franco-German collaboration on political and economic questions, in the long run, was attainable. The change in the relationship between the

⁴²Hoesch to Foreign Office, 6 March 1931, Akten 17, no. 3.

two states wrought in the past seven years was proof. Despite the diplomatic haggling and mutual public denunciations, since 1923 Germany had made significant gains, most especially the early French evacuation of the Rhineland, a feat which had seemed hopeless as late as 1928. Hoesch then communicated to Curtius the Paris embassy's assessment that Berlin's policy in 1931 should follow the same path as that blazed by Stresemann: "to continue to cultivate the relationship of mutual cooperation and official trust with France . . . without France, the fulfillment of Germany's current aims would be impossible." Ambassador Hoesch then specifically criticized Curtius's recent foreign policy impatience and stridency. Hoesch advised his Foreign Minister of the necessity for Germany to recognize that France, as a victorious power, could not be expected to nullify its wartime gains in short order. With patience, however, Curtius could expect, in the long term, to meet all the Fatherland's foreign policy aims, once again making the German nation "a free, equal, and powerful world factor." Hoesch concluded his 6 March communication by counseling "prudence, patience, and good sense" as the guide for Germany's diplomatic actions.⁴³

⁴³Ibid.

That a German ambassador should feel compelled to offer such advice to a Foreign Minister is evidence of Curtius's failure, since 1929, to win the confidence of Germany's professional, experienced diplomatic corps. Indeed, Hoesch's good sense, thoughtful counsel, and cogent advice, particularly his recognition of France as the key to the customs union's success, made little impression on the Foreign Minister. Curtius's apologia for the collapse of the customs union plan in July 1931 indicated that the German ambassadors, notably Hoesch in Paris, had expressed misgivings about the Austro-German economic union. Curtius argued, however, that none of the foreign policy advisors and diplomats whom he had queried specifically about the customs union had denounced the scheme as impossible. In his memoir, Curtius contended that all of the ambassadors involved in the customs union negotiations agreed fully with the Wilhelmstrasse's diplomatic procedures. At no point, Curtius stated, did he meet with outright rejection of the plan, and no specific advice was put forward warning about the possibility of overwhelming French opposition. According to Curtius, Hoesch in particular in September 1930 had agreed verbally with the argument that Germany had no choice but to proceed with the customs union negotiations with Vienna

without prior consultation with France.⁴⁴ As Curtius remembered, Ambassador Hoesch had warned of possible limited French opposition once the completion of the customs union was announced but concluded that France ultimately would reach an understanding with both Berlin and Vienna.⁴⁵

Without a verbatim stenographic account of Hoesch's September 1930 "advice" to Curtius, the conclusion must be reached that Curtius's recollection of the customs union planning was, as most political memoirs are, intended to bolster the author's political reputation. At the very least, Curtius's account is at odds with Hoesch's 6 March 1931 "prudence, patience, and good sense" memorandum. Perhaps Hoesch was reluctant to speak out against the customs union project in September 1930 due to the scheme's obvious popularity. More likely, however, Curtius was so pleased by his minority rights "victory" over Poland and was so determined to attain even greater revisionist gains than had Stresemann, that he refused either to recognize or credit legitimate criticisms of the customs union program.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Curtius, Bemühung um Österreich, pp. 29-33.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁴⁶Evidence that Curtius was obsessed with grandiose European economic schemes and was, therefore, heedless of contrary advice is presented by a 2 May 1931

By early April 1931, France demanded that both Germany and Austria suspend all further customs union implementation until the League of Nations Council of Ministers had been consulted. As Ambassador Hoesch reported to Berlin, the French also intended to thwart fulfillment of the Austro-German economic union by attacking the legality of the agreement and, in the event the accord was upheld by the International Court of Justice at The Hague, France intended to forge ahead with her own program of European economic union, thus undercutting Germany's alleged ambition for economic hegemony.⁴⁷ At bottom, according to Hoesch's assessment of the French government's position, the best France could hope for was, by vigorous protest, to induce Berlin and Vienna to abandon "temporarily" the customs union project.⁴⁸

Particularly worrisome to France was the apparent British acquiescence in the Austro-German scheme,

interview with a Norwegian newspaper. Curtius expressed his wish for the fulfillment of an economic union between Germany and France based on the Austro-German model. "Nothing would be dearer to me," Curtius stated, ". . . a customs union between France and Germany would be a victory of the first order for the economic life of Europe. My greatest hope is that this accord will become a reality." Quoted in The Literary Digest, 2 May 1931, p. 16.

⁴⁷Hoesch to Foreign Office, 10 April 1931, Akten 17, no. 71.

⁴⁸Hoesch to Foreign Office, 2 May 1931, Akten 17, no. 107.

ostensibly in the interests of international economic cooperation to reverse the deepening world financial crisis. In March, for example, the British Ambassador to Berlin Sir Horace Rumbold extended an invitation to both Chancellor Brüning and Curtius for an "informal" consultation at Chequers, the British Prime Minister's country retreat. The primary purpose of the meeting was to share ideas about economic cooperation and the worsening economic situation, especially Austria's imminent banking crisis and Germany's continued difficulty in meeting reparations payments. A secondary, but nonetheless important, purpose of the German visit was, according to Ambassador Rumbold, to enhance the prestige of both Brüning and Curtius, thus strengthening the German government in the face of increasing right-wing radicalism. According to Rumbold, Brüning, unlike Curtius, did not know personally any of the leading statesmen of Europe; thus a visit to Britain would serve to polish his image.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Rumbold to Henderson, 6 March 1931, Arthur Henderson Papers, FO 800, Public Records Office, London. A private memorandum to Henderson from his private secretary, Walford Harwood Montague Selby, offers an interesting commentary on the Foreign Office's view of continuity in German history. Selby's memo refers to prewar Anglo-German relations, with British concessions to German demands, according to the author, leading always to greater German demands: " . . . there are elements still present in the conduct of German foreign policy which are unpleasantly reminiscent of the elements which influenced that policy before the war. It is said we owe the manoeuvre of the German-Austrian customs union to

Brüning and Curtius accepted this invitation, and the visit was planned for 5-9 June, in order to take advantage of the spring weather. Included in the program for the Brüning-Curtius sojourn were accommodations in London at the Carlton Hotel, religious service at Aylesbury near Chequers, and a luncheon at the Anglo-German club in London.⁵⁰

At Chequers, on 6 June, the reparations question dominated the discussion, the Austro-German customs union controversy having been superceded in importance by the economic crisis and the near collapse of Austria's major bank, the Creditanstalt, on 11 May.⁵¹ The internal

Herr von Bülow of the German Foreign Office who has the reputation of being anti-League of Nations in his outlook and is imbued with little else than the old spirit of pre-war Prussian diplomacy. . . . That this spirit is stronger today than then is evidenced by the attitudes of those holding positions in the German Foreign Office." Selby to Henderson, 7 July 1931, Arthur Henderson Papers, FO 800, Public Record Office, London.

⁵⁰Rumbold to Vansittart, 29 April 1931, Arthur Henderson Papers, FO 800, Public Record Office, London. The British Ambassador overlooked few details: "The obvious pleasure of the German Ministers at being asked to Chequers is almost touching. They have now got so far as to settle their journey to England which will be in a Hamburg-America liner from Bremen to Southampton. There is some chaff amongst the Germans with regard to the Chancellor's clothes. He always, apparently, wears a black coat even when he goes for long walks in the country, and his colleague Dr. Curtius feels that he must get a weekend suit suitable for Chequers."

⁵¹By June 1931, concern over the international financial collapse overshadowed the customs union controversy. France took the opportunity of Austria's economic

financial situation in Germany since the customs union announcement was also reaching desperate proportions. The German non-reparations-related indebtedness (but including other external debt) on 21 March reached over 11 billion marks. Unemployment had increased to nearly five million, or about one-quarter of the available work force. Worst of all, withdrawal of foreign short-term credits from Germany had followed revelation of the customs union plan, threatening to bring down the Brüning government. Most likely, French credits were called home for political reasons emanating from the customs union fait accompli, but the French loans formed only a small portion of the withdrawals. British, American, and Swiss short-term credits, comprising the bulk of the credit flight, were pulled out largely for domestic economic considerations. By the first session at Chequers, the Brüning government was prepared to announce Germany's inability to meet its reparations obligation.⁵²

troubles to insist that French assistance for the Creditanstalt be linked to Austrian concessions on the customs union program. See Newman, "Britain and the German-Austrian Customs Union Proposal," pp. 464-465; and Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 149 ff. For the United States' policy see Werner Link, Die amerikanische Stabilisierungspolitik in Deutschland, 1921-1932 (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1970).

⁵² Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 221 ff.

The 6 June meeting, attended by the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson, Foreign Office Secretary Sir Robert Vansittart, Brüning and Curtius, began and ended with a recitation of Germany's financial woes--to which the British delegation was sympathetic--and Curtius's assessment of the growing danger of "revolutionary tendencies" in Germany as a result of the financial crisis.⁵³ The following day, however, was given over to a discussion of possible solutions to Germany's reparations difficulties. Brüning and Curtius began the session with a preliminary declaration of intent to invoke the Young Plan's three-month advance notification requirement prior to German default on reparations annuities. Germany had gone to the utmost limit, Brüning explained, in enforcing new taxation and budget limitations, both of which had fostered political unrest. The German government could go no farther without assistance from the rest of Europe, as continued increased taxation and budget cutbacks might threaten German democracy.⁵⁴

Henderson expressed concern at the seriousness of Brüning's statement, and he advised the German government

⁵³ Ibid., p. 125; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 213 ff.

⁵⁴ DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 51; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, p. 126.

to present its financial problems to the League of Nations Commission of Inquiry into the European Union at Geneva. Curtius questioned the expediency of this action, observing that the Commission's Expert Committee of economists and financiers was limited to discussions of already pending economic questions and was not authorized to entertain new efforts for reparations revision. Curtius also advised against Germany's using the forum of the League of Nations for discussing reparations problems due to the possibility of the United States interpreting such action as a German effort at creating a united front in Europe against American economic interests. In Curtius's opinion, Germany's best recourse lay in an appeal of the reparations question to the Bank for International Settlements, whose duties included supervision of the workings of the Young Plan. Replying to Vansittart's criticism that Germany had not followed economic programs conducive to the acquisition of long-term foreign credits, Curtius declared that Germany was beyond the help of foreign loans and possessed neither the desire nor ability to solve its economic difficulties without significant relief of the reparations burden.⁵⁵

Later in the 7 June meeting the group was joined by the Governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, who recommended further possibilities for redress of the

⁵⁵DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 51.

German economic crisis, including a reiteration that Germany approach the League of Nations, rely on future American intervention, or conduct direct talks with France over reductions in the reparations obligation. Curtius replied that Germany could not wait the expected eighteen months for United States financial intervention. Neither could Germany hope to win French concessions on reparations payments, and, in fact, a German proposal in May for French-German economic discussions on reparations revision had been declined by Briand. The use of the League was again dismissed as unworkable. Finally, agreement was reached on a joint Anglo-German communique calling for international cooperation in solving Europe's economic problems.⁵⁶

As the Chequers meetings concluded, the rest of Europe was discussing press reports of Brüning's 7 June statement which, in effect, amounted to a declaration that Germany could no longer afford the sacrifices necessary to balance the federal budget and to continue reparations payments. This declaration insisted that the German people had reached the limits of privation in order to meet reparations mandates and that the Young Plan had failed. The declaration called for drastic cuts in Germany's reparations obligations and requested immediate

⁵⁶Ibid.

European economic assistance, in the form of short-term loans, to Germany. Curtius's role in the 7 June declaration centered primarily on his contention that the German request for reductions would serve to satisfy the demands from radical-nationalists for forceful action against the reparations mandate. Furthermore, according to Curtius, the 7 June announcement was intended to provoke international concern for Germany's economic plight and to incite calls for a major reparations readjustment, the latter being realized in mid-June with the disclosure of the Hoover moratorium on reparations payments.⁵⁷

The Hoover moratorium, a one-year suspension of the repayment of inter-governmental debts, was announced on 19 June, and it served as the dénouement for Curtius and the Astro-German customs union. The British government made several attempts to persuade President Herbert Hoover to require a German annulment of the customs union as a pre-condition of the proposed moratorium, but he refused to impose such a condition. Indeed, Curtius declined to countenance such a request when put to him by Henderson at Chequers.⁵⁸ France, not likely to benefit

⁵⁷New York Times, 7 June 1931; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, p. 128; Newman, "Britain and the German-Austrian Customs Union Proposal," p. 465.

⁵⁸DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, nos. 93 ff.

from the moratorium, nevertheless endeavored to win political concessions from Germany in return for her acquiescence in President Hoover's proposal. Paris demanded German abrogation of the customs union, along with Berlin's promise to continue with reparations payments to France's allies, Rumania and Yugoslavia.⁵⁹

Curtius's primary role in the London and Paris moratorium negotiations was to deter Anglo-French demands that Germany abandon its ongoing program of naval rearmament, specifically the abandonment of the "cruiser B" project, the proposed construction of a second "pocket battleship," as a prerequisite to moratorium. The halt in construction of this warship was necessary, according to both Britain and France, in order to demonstrate Berlin's good faith attempts at economising and to stifle the growing tendency in Europe toward a renewed naval race. Curtius, however, remained adamant that German cruiser construction could not be halted because Germany's existing warships were obsolete and their replacement was essential. Moreover, Curtius argued that destruction or conversion of "cruiser B" would drop Germany below the Versailles Treaty's already minuscule naval allotment, and the German

⁵⁹Ibid.; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 216 ff.

government, for internal political reasons, could tolerate no reductions in warship construction.⁶⁰

The German financial picture worsened throughout June and July 1931, with a continued withdrawal of foreign credits from Germany and the closing of the Darmstädter und Nationalbank on 13 July. The collapse of the entire German banking industry was forestalled only by a proposed five-hundred-million-dollar emergency loan from the Bank for International Settlements. This long-term credit, however, was dependent upon a Franco-German rapprochement, and talks began among Germany and the creditor nations in Paris on 18 July. The discussions, which included representatives from Belgium, Italy, and Japan, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, French Premier Pierre Laval, Foreign Secretary Henderson, Brüning, and Curtius, proved inconclusive due to French demands for German political concessions, including, once again, negation of the customs union and curtailment of Stahlhelm and National Socialist agitation against France.⁶¹ According to Curtius, the Paris talks reaffirmed that a French loan to Germany would be out of the question without a relaxation of the political tensions between the two countries,

⁶⁰ FRUS, 1931, vol. 1, pp. 109-110.

⁶¹ Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 264-268; Bracher, Die Auflösung, pp. 287 ff.

a goal growing ever more remote with the worsening economic depression. To Curtius, the nature of the French demands indicated the inevitable cancellation of the customs union, all other German alternatives having been rejected by Paris.⁶²

From Paris, Curtius's attention switched to London where, on 20 July, the Seven Powers Conference on the German financial crisis was convened. Curtius tried repeatedly while in London to approach French Foreign Minister Briand with a German proposal to modify the Austro-German customs union in favor of guaranteed Austrian autonomy and the promise to extend the customs pact to all interested European nations. Briand, however, would not listen, due largely to France's bargaining advantage over Germany, Berlin desperately needing French financial assistance. Curtius, therefore, turned his attention to Britain. In talks with Foreign Secretary Henderson on 21 July, Curtius stated the German government's intention to resist the French demands that German warship construction be restricted. Instead, Curtius insisted on a joint Anglo-French declaration of confidence in Germany's future financial stability, intended to help secure short-term financial assistance. The remainder of the Curtius-Henderson meeting involved Curtius's appeal for British

⁶²DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 221.

insistence on the creditor nations' full cooperation in taking immediate, concrete steps to aid Germany's economic recovery, but without Germany's having to risk political dissention at home over a forced acquiescence to French political demands.⁶³ In this last appeal, Curtius was moderately successful. France continued her demands that Germany give up pocket battleship construction and scuttle the customs union, but the London Conference on 23 July issued an official communique stating the participating powers' recommendation of a one-hundred-million-dollar credit to Germany from the Bank for International Settlements, continued maintenance of foreign short-term credits to Germany, and the establishment of an international panel to inquire into Germany's immediate credit requirements.⁶⁴

The London Conference provided only temporary relief for Germany's economic woes and a Brüning-Curtius visit to Benito Mussolini in Rome achieved only limited Italian assistance, specifically the outright purchase by Italy of German coal ordinarily delivered as

⁶³ Ibid.; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 275-277; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 216-220.

⁶⁴ Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 218-220; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 286-288.

reparations in kind.⁶⁵ Yet, the expanding depression and collapse of the gold standard pushed Germany deeper into economic and political crisis. In September, French Premier Laval and Foreign Minister Briand visited Berlin, where the French statesmen and the Brüning cabinet concluded an agreement for the creation of a mixed Franco-German commission designed to promote expanded economic collaboration as a prelude to future joint economic planning. This relaxation of German-French tensions, however, was short-lived. United German nationalist protests against the reception of the Frenchmen as guests of the Fatherland marred the nascent amity between the two nations, and a steady rightward drift of German political opinion continued unabated.⁶⁶

By 23 July, Curtius had become fully aware that the combined financial troubles of Austria and Germany placed the execution of the customs union in jeopardy.⁶⁷ With French pressure on Austria to abandon the customs union increasing daily and with Vienna cognizant that France had pursued the same tactic with Berlin, Austrian Foreign Minister Schober had already, on 16 July, turned

⁶⁵Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 223.

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 225-227.

⁶⁷Memorandum, Curtius, 24 July 1931, Akten 18, no. 77; DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 59; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 295-296.

to the League of Nations for financial assistance in the form of an international (largely French) loan. On 23 July, the Austrian Minister in London, Georg von Franckenstein, informed Curtius that Austria was willing to accept political conditions in return for guaranteed economic assistance. By 28 July, word had leaked that Vienna had inquired directly of the French government for assistance in arranging a loan through the League. This news prompted Curtius to admit privately that the customs union was dead, and it lead him to comment sourly on Austrian "duplicity."⁶⁸ On 31 July, Curtius proposed to Vienna that the only chance of saving the customs union was, once again, to underscore the program's "international" intention and to assure France of her welcome participation in an expanded customs union sphere. Curtius went so far as to propose an amendment to the customs union protocol: "The two governments do not intend, under the present circumstances, to pursue further the realization of their plan; they desire to make an attempt to achieve their aims on a broader European basis."⁶⁹ This last effort proved futile, Paris already having rejected

⁶⁸ Curtius to Rieth, 1 August 1931, Akten 18, no. 103.

⁶⁹ Ibid.; Unsigned memorandum, 12 August 1931, Akten 18, no. 130; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 286 ff.

inclusion in a German-dominated, expanded customs union. There remained only the slim hope that the customs union would be validated by the decision of the Hague Court, scheduled for 5 September. The crucial court decree, however, was to be made two days after the meeting of the Commission of Inquiry for European Union and Curtius would have to face the hostile, French-dominated Commission on 3 September without the added support of a possible "friendly" Hague Court ruling.⁷⁰

The Austro-German presentation before the European Commission, intended to renounce officially the customs union, marked Curtius's last official visit to the League headquarters in the Palais des Nations on the Lac Lemman.⁷¹ Schober, speaking for Austria, declared the customs union dormant, but he did not renounce permanently an economic union with Germany. Furthermore, Schober implied to the Commission that Austria had intended including other

⁷⁰Curtius to Rieth, 1 August 1931, Akten 18, no. 103.

⁷¹Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, pp. 299-301. One of Curtius's last appearances before the League Council involved his membership on the Council of Five, a group of representatives from Great Britain, France, Italy, Germany, and Japan, established on 22 September 1931 to deal with the Manchurian Crisis. Despite a personal appeal to Curtius from Chiang Kai-shek, Germany maintained a neutral position in the Sino-Japanese dispute. See John P. Fox, Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology (London: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 9-11.

European states in the customs union from the beginning, but Austria had been dissuaded by Berlin. Curtius was daunted by German public opinion and press coverage of the customs union affair which, by July, had dismissed all government attempts at rationalizing the plan's collapse and had concentrated on excoriating Curtius for his alleged capitulation to French pressure. Consequently, in his memoir, Curtius claimed that, at Geneva, he refused to allow Austria to make the customs union renunciation unilaterally. Curtius regarded this possibility as unworthy, and he considered it his duty to follow Schober in the distasteful declaration of customs union nullification. In his speech before the Commission, Curtius, too, insisted on emphasizing the fiction that the customs union plan had always been intended as the commencement of Pan-European economic union.⁷² Quite possibly, the Foreign Minister was using this last opportunity as an overture to Briand. Nonetheless, France displayed no interest in a resumption of any form of economic union in which Germany would play a role. With this final humiliation at Geneva, demands for Curtius's dismissal as Foreign Minister in the German press became increasingly strident.⁷³

⁷²Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 203-204; Berliner Tageblatt, 5 September 1931.

⁷³Berliner Tageblatt, 5 September 1931; Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, 6 September 1931.

As a coup de grace to the customs union affair, the Hague Court on 5 September ruled, eight to seven, that the Austro-German customs agreement was in violation of the Geneva Protocol of 1922. Although the Court found no conflict with the Treaty of Saint-Germain, Curtius's last hope for vindication was smashed. Curtius made a vain effort at putting an acceptable interpretation on the Hague Court's ruling, declaring the closeness of the vote an encouraging sign for Germany and taking pains to note that the "non-Latin" judges stood squarely in favor of the customs union. Curtius's argument, however, was accepted only by those Germans seeking a moral victory, and it made no impression on the tide of public opinion relentlessly moving against him.⁷⁴

In October, even Chancellor Brüning privately began to question his Foreign Minister's judgment. In a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Frederic M. Sackett, Brüning termed Curtius's direction of the customs union plan as "most unfortunate," and he denounced Curtius's hasty decision to proceed with the customs union announcement in March without having laid the proper groundwork in Paris.⁷⁵ Still, Brüning resisted further

⁷⁴Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 204-207; Bennett, Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, p. 301; Newman, "Britain and the German-Austrian Customs Union Proposal," p. 466.

⁷⁵FRUS, 1931, vol. 1, p. 329.

criticism of Curtius, publicly placing most of the blame for the demise of the customs union on Austrian "sloppiness" (Schlappmachen).⁷⁶ Ultimately, of course, with the customs union officially interred, Curtius had to bear responsibility for developing the customs union plan and, to avoid embarrassing the entire cabinet, he tendered his resignation as Foreign Minister on 3 October.⁷⁷ Faithful to the end, in his farewell address to the German cabinet on 7 October, Curtius pleaded with the ministers, in the interests of national unity, to stand beside Brüning, who now assumed the additional duties of Foreign Minister.⁷⁸

As tribute to Curtius's style as Foreign Minister if not for his foreign policy accomplishments, British Ambassador Rumbold, upon hearing of Curtius's resignation, wrote:

My principal colleagues and I regret Dr. Curtius's departure from the Wilhelmstrasse. . . . Although he had neither the imagination, the wide outlook, nor the political genius of his predecessor, he was a level-headed man, whilst his quiet and courteous manner made him pleasant to deal with.

⁷⁶Brüning, Memoiren, pp. 266, 383; Cabinet Meeting, 3 October 1931, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 2, no. 504.

⁷⁷Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 207-208; Orde, "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair," p. 47; Stambrook, "The German Austrian Customs Union Project," p. 40; Eyck, Weimar Republic 2: 326 ff.

⁷⁸Cabinet Meeting, 7 October 1931, Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning 2, no. 511.

Rumbold also cited several of the leading German newspapers as holding the same opinion.⁷⁹

Rumbold's description of Curtius's lack of diplomatic vision leaves open the question of Curtius's accomplishments as Foreign Minister. Neither Rumbold nor the European press offered any assessment of Curtius's handling of German foreign policy from the Hague Conferences to the customs union. Perhaps the sole credit to which he is entitled is that, only when carrying through a program already conceived by Stresemann, such as the Young Plan negotiations at The Hague, did Curtius meet with any tangible, long-term success. His League of Nations minority-rights "victory" was, almost immediately, diluted by both Britain and France. The customs union fiasco bears witness to his short-sighted insistence on forging ahead without properly having charted his course. Even allowing him the excuse that few statesmen could have emulated the formidable Stresemann, Curtius must be considered a failure as Foreign Minister.

⁷⁹DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 2, no. 262.

CHAPTER VI

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSIONS

Curtius's resignation as Foreign Minister prompted little comment due to the swift rightward turn in Germany and the ensuing political crises in 1932 and 1933. Brüning's new cabinet, formed on 9 October 1931, was plagued by an almost immediate breakdown of parliamentary government and the rise of National Socialist influence. In the presidential election of 13 March 1932, called due to the expiration of President von Hindenburg's seven year term, Adolf Hitler polled the second highest vote total (11,341,119), and, in the run-off election of 10 April, Hitler received 36.7 percent of the vote, second to Hindenburg's 53 percent. This total marked an extensive gain for the National Socialists (the party doubled its vote of September 1930), especially when combined with their successes in state elections in Prussia, Württemberg, and Hamburg, held 24 April. Illustrative of the burgeoning popularity of radical nationalism, the National Socialists emerged as the largest single party in these local elections. The gain in the Hitler vote, Brüning's failure to approach the Social Democrats for political assistance,

the bleak economic situation and expanding unemployment rate, and especially Hindenburg's withdrawal of political support, forced the collapse of the Brüning Chancellorship. The new government was headed by Franz von Papen, a Catholic nobleman and a former leader of the Center Party, as Chancellor, with Konstantin von Neurath, a notorious nationalist-monarchist, as Foreign Minister, and Lieutenant-General Kurt von Schleicher as Minister of Defense. President von Hindenburg called new elections for 31 July and, in a bitter, violent campaign, the National Socialists won 37.9 percent of the seats in the new Reichstag. The National Socialists thus became the largest single delegation, mostly at the expense of the moderate parties. For example, in this election, the DVP fell from thirty to only seven seats, one of those lost being Curtius's seat for Baden. Finally, with only a modest setback in the subsequent Reichstag election in November 1932, the National Socialists again gained momentum, culminating in the triumph of 30 January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor.¹

Curtius spent most of 1932 outside Germany, traveling first to the Soviet Union in May and June and

¹Bracher, Die Auflösung, pp. 517 ff. Curtius, in his memoir, provides only a cursory account of these political events, as if he had no interest whatever in the fate of the German Republic following his own resignation from political life; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 248-249.

to the United States from October through December. In his memoir, Sechs Jahre Minister der Deutschen Republik, Curtius offered a personal, carefully non-political, view of his sojourn in Russia. With Frau Curtius, the former Foreign Minister journeyed to the Soviet Union in his capacity as President of the East European Studies Society, an organization of businessmen and industrialists intent on forging closer economic ties to Russia. Of the three weeks traveling in the USSR, Curtius spent most of his time in terror of the dangerous and unreliable Soviet rail service (he and Frau Curtius were involved in one serious accident), delivering speeches on the necessity for increased trade between Germany and the Soviet Union, and inspecting tractor factories and other industrial facilities. In Moscow, Curtius paid a courtesy call on German Ambassador Herbert von Dirksen, presenting to him a large parcel of foodstuffs, virtually necessary due to shortages and high prices in Moscow.² Also in Moscow, Curtius and his party were entertained by two operas, Boris Godunov and Eugin Onegin, for which he was full of praise, especially for the Soviet government's obvious attention to the arts. Curtius was both appalled and amused, however, by a Soviet rendition of Hamlet in which the characters of Claudius, King of Denmark, and Hamlet

²Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 242-245.

were portrayed as party commissars. Curtius also was aware of several GPU secret policemen intently watching the German visitors during the performance, perhaps to discern any criticism of a political nature of the play's conversion to a Marxist-Leninist point of view. For the remainder of the Soviet visit, Curtius's only other criticism concerned the failure of the current Stalin-inspired five-year agricultural plan and the extreme distress evident among the Russian peasantry, especially in the Ukraine. Of special interest to Curtius was the separatist sentiment expressed to him privately by many Ukrainians.³

Upon their return to Germany, Herr and Frau Curtius began to plan immediately for their journey to the United States. Curtius and his wife intended to spend a much longer time in the United States (a son was studying at Columbia University in New York) and planned on visiting as many U.S. cities as possible before returning to Germany by the end of the year. Curtius, in his memoir, admitted to a long-held interest in the history of America, and he hoped to cultivate American opinion in favor of Germany, a task made easier by the favorable light in which he was portrayed while Foreign Minister by much of the U.S.

³ Ibid., pp. 246-248.

press.⁴ Indeed, Curtius, early during his tenure as Foreign Minister, was aware of the value of U.S. opinion favorable to Germany's position regarding the reparations question and, he had, at every opportunity, emphasized to U.S. journalists his connection with Stresemann and the image of European conciliation. This public relations effort reached its zenith on 21 June 1930, not long after the successful conclusion of the Second Hague Conference on reparations, when then Foreign Minister Curtius presented a radio address in English to the American people. In this speech, given in memory of Stresemann,⁵ Curtius declared his unswerving admiration for the United States and recalled his efforts while Economics Minister at fostering close relations between Germany and America. Curtius was careful to note the cultural ties between the two nations, and he prophesied even closer relations with the narrowing of the Atlantic Ocean barrier due to innovations in air travel. Curtius then attempted to convince his listeners of Germany's noble intentions, the overall goal of Germany's foreign policy being "a peace honorable

⁴The New York Times continually applauded Curtius's professed spirit of conciliation toward France, calling him "statesmanlike" and "cooperative." See, for example, New York Times, 12 February 1931, p. 20.

⁵Julius Curtius, "Memorial to Gustav Stresemann," International Conciliation 263 (1930): 563-572. See Appendix D for an excerpt of this address.

for everybody, a peace secured not by military armaments but by justice and goodwill and reciprocal sincere understanding." Yet, Curtius declared, Germany had not been treated fairly in the peace treaties following the Great War. However, Germany, through Stresemann's "brilliant leadership," had renounced any idea of revenge. Instead, according to Curtius, Stresemann's conciliatory policies had served as "a shining example" to the rest of Europe of how nation should treat nation. Curtius followed with an appeal for U.S. support for revisionism. Stressing that "an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure," he cleverly associated the Versailles Treaty with the potential casus belli for another European war:

We are less concerned with the question of how a possible violator of the peace ought to be dealt with than with the all-important problem of preventing the outbreak of any armed conflict, the consequences of which nobody is able to foresee. Therefore, we strongly advocate going to the very root of the matter by removing in good time all causes of war.⁶

Moreover, Curtius announced, Germany had "completely disarmed" in compliance with the Treaty requirements, and he renounced the necessity for maintaining a large military establishment. Curtius ended his radio address by calling for the establishment of a Peace Academy as a memorial to Gustav Stresemann, the object of which would

⁶Ibid., pp. 564-565.

be to "clarify and further by means of scientific work international efforts toward the preservation of world peace."⁷

Curtius's speech was an enormous propaganda success. Despite Curtius's implied threat that, if the Versailles Treaty were left unaltered, Germany had a legitimate excuse for future hostile action, editorial comment in the U.S. was overwhelmingly complimentary. Typical of the response was the letter written to the New York Times by Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University and Chairman of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "The appeal made to the people of the United States by Dr. Curtius," wrote Butler,

the broadminded and progressive statesman . . . is the most important happening in the field of international relations since . . . the Pact of Paris to renounce war as an instrument of national policy. Dr. Curtius speaks for the New Germany, which is committed to peace, to economic development, to scientific and intellectual progress, and to increasingly close international relations, not only with her neighbors in Europe, but with the rest of the world. Germany may be

⁷Ibid., pp. 566-573. This Peace Academy was to be located in Berlin at the Deutsche Hochschule für Politik. Among the members enlisted in the U.S. for the organizing committee were former Secretaries of State Elihu Root, Bainbridge Colby, and Frank B. Kellogg, and Vice-President of the United States Charles G. Dawes. The committee managed to raise money for the Stresemann memorial statue at Mainz, but, with Germany's growing nationalist militancy, the Peace Academy project was abandoned in 1933.

counted on with perfect confidence to be one of the strongest and most eager supporters . . . for a closer union of the peoples and governments of Europe.⁸

By late 1932, therefore, Curtius was well practiced in strumming the chords of amity between the United States and Germany and, during his U.S. sojourn from October through December, his leitmotiv remained revisionism, disarmament, and the acceptance of Germany as an "equal partner" among the European nations.

In his memoir, Curtius claimed a quasi-kinship to the United States, citing his grandfather's and father's (in 1893 to the Chicago World's Fair) business trips to America. Thus, a visit to the U.S. was deemed a Curtius family tradition. Curtius wrote of his long study of American history; on several occasions in Sechs Jahre Minister and in his political addresses he made reference to United States political and governmental traditions. A special place in his personal library was occupied by the works of de Tocqueville, George Bancroft, and Woodrow Wilson. So, with travel arrangements made by American Express (as Curtius noted: "mit allen Bequemlichkeiten"--with all the conveniences), and under the auspices of the Carl Schurz Society and the Institute for International Education in New York, Curtius and his

⁸ New York Times, 26 June 1930.

wife visited New York, Detroit, Denver, the Yosemite Valley in the Sierra Nevada, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (where an apparent case of poison ivy temporarily felled the ex-Foreign Minister).⁹

Throughout the many speeches Curtius was obliged to make during his visit, the ex-Foreign Minister called on the United States to join with Germany in demanding that the nations of Europe reform their postwar attitude toward Berlin. Speaking bluntly on occasion, Curtius demanded that German losses due to postwar treaties be taken into account when other nations advised Germany on what steps to take to allay its financial troubles. On at least one occasion, Curtius returned to his political philosophy of the early 1920s and implied that only through the reacquisition of former German overseas possessions, combined with the return of Alsace-Lorraine, the Saar region, and Upper Silesia, could Germany rebuild its economy. Curtius also was quick to illustrate what he considered the ultimate unfairness to Germany. While his nation lay "defenseless" and "unarmed," the neighboring states in Europe were "bristling with armaments." Moreover, Curtius, cognizant of the United States' isolationist majority opinion, never failed to imply that failure to rectify the treaty "injustices" imposed on

⁹Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 249-252.

Germany could spark a new European conflict.¹⁰ Curtius placed blame on France for most of Europe's troubles, judging French "intransigence on disarmament" the "opposite" of "the Anglo-Saxon principle" of safeguarding peace through disarmament. Furthermore, the ex-Foreign Minister opined, the solution to economic depression was blocked by a cabal of nations led by France, which refused to restore to Germany its proper status of equality in Europe. This French-inspired policy, according to Curtius, was based on fear and vindictiveness, both inimical to the maintenance of world peace.¹¹ Yet, on no occasion did Curtius comment on the expanding support for fascism in Germany, potentially a far greater threat to peace in Europe.

Finally, Curtius broached the topic of German-Polish relations on 2 December during a speech in New York City Hall under the aegis of the League for Political Education. In this address, Curtius laid bare his own prejudice toward Poland and attempted, through the

¹⁰San Francisco Chronicle, 4 October 1932, p. 6; Chicago Tribune, 28 October 1932, p. 8.

¹¹Chicago Tribune, 29 October 1932, p. 13. Curtius was careful to avoid any comment on either the political situation in Germany or the 1932 U.S. elections. He did, however, prophesy a possible FDR dictatorship if the U.S. abandoned "sound" economic practices and succumbed to limitations on individual freedom as a solution to the depression; see New York Times, 25 January 1933, p. 10.

selective and distorted use of historical precedent, to justify German claims for revision of the German-Polish boundary.¹² During this exercise, Curtius admitted that the "problem of Eastern Europe" and the relations between Berlin and Warsaw stood at the apex of his political thought. Although Curtius renounced war as a solution to German-Polish tensions, he repeatedly referred to non-revision of Germany's eastern boundary as a potential cause for future armed conflict. The Polish Corridor, accused Curtius, had been carved out of the "northeastern wing" of the German Reich by the Versailles Treaty; the former German province of West Prussia thereby was "given" to Poland without a plebiscite of its population.¹³ Curtius attempted to sketch the historical precedent for continued German possession of all West Prussia. Although he could not deny that from 1466 to 1772 the lands included in the Corridor were under Polish suzerainty (the

¹² Julius Curtius et al., Polish Pomerania: Two Addresses and a Reply (Warsaw: League for the Defense of Peace by Respect for Treaties, 1933), pp. 33-63; Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 252.

¹³ Curtius was misleading in his assertion that all of West Prussia was ceded to Poland. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Poland received fifteen West Prussian counties having an 80 to 90 percent majority of ethnic Poles, while Germany retained all the remaining areas. Furthermore, Curtius continually implied to his American listeners that the city of Danzig was controlled by Poland when, in fact, Danzig and its surrounding areas were placed under the League of Nations authority.

contemporaneous German maps showed clearly this fact),
nonetheless,

in the same historical atlases, the maps of earlier epochs indicated that, from time immemorial until the dawn of written history of Central and Eastern Europe, the same lands were occupied by the settlements, not of the Poles or the Slavs, but of Germanic tribes. From a survey of all available historical maps,

Curtius lectured,

including those of the time after 1772, the final picture appears revealing that, with the exception of a short space of time, during the whole of the history up to the Treaty of Versailles, the territory of the Corridor was under German rule.¹⁴

Turning to a discussion of the city of Danzig, Curtius opined that the port had had a unique historical development. The Baltic port city had "concluded in 1454 a firm alliance with Poland, yet it never became part of Poland." Danzig, noted Curtius, retained its independence, maintained its own legislation, jurisdiction, finances, taxes, tariffs, and flag. Thus, the city had never been under Polish suzerainty. Furthermore, Curtius argued, even if one allowed for Polish hegemony over the Corridor territories from 1466 to 1772, that fact had nothing to do with the "nationality" of the inhabitants. "The Spanish were not Austrians under Charles V, nor were

¹⁴Curtius, Polish Pomerania, p. 39. Curtius's geography lesson refers only to German maps. Other historical atlases indicate Slavic occupation of the Baltic coast dating from A.D. 972.

the Dutch Spanish under Philip II," Curtius declared. According to Curtius, the unimportance of nationality in those days was evident from the fact that, during the three centuries of Polish control, Poland and the Corridor lands were ruled for one century by kings of Lithuania, then for another century by Swedish kings, and for almost three-quarters of a century by Saxon (i.e., German) kings. "Only for a quarter of a century had there been a genuine Polish monarch on the Polish throne."¹⁵ Therefore, Curtius reasoned, if Poland wished to deduce a national Polish claim to the Corridor territories from historical precedent, then Germany could claim the whole of Poland, since for several centuries Poland was a vassal state of the medieval German Empire.¹⁶

Finally, Curtius focused his call for revision of Germany's eastern borders on the population issue, a problem well-suited to his penchant for legalistic argument. According to Curtius, President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points pertaining to Poland provided for an independent Polish state including only territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations.

¹⁵Curtius must have forgotten that England was once ruled by Anglo-Saxon, Danish, Norman-French, Scot, Dutch, and Hanoverian kings, yet retained a national identity nonetheless.

¹⁶Curtius, Polish Pomerania, p. 45.

The prerequisite for each territorial extension of Poland to the mouth of the Vistula was that these lands were inhabited by an overwhelmingly ethnic-Polish population. The fact that such a presumption was not fulfilled appears striking from the historical record.

Curtius alleged that the Versailles Treaty, in assigning the Corridor to Poland, violated President Wilson's fundamental principle. "Without plebiscite," Curtius argued,

one million Germans of the Corridor were forced under a sovereignty in which they did not wish to live. The right of self-determination of nations and claims derived from nationality and a thousand years of national identity were disregarded, and the body of the German state and people as an entity was cut through so that a danger to its very existence was created.¹⁷

Yet, Curtius continued, Poland should not bear the entire blame for this injustice. For all Germans knew that, in 1919, France was intensely interested in weakening Germany by giving territory to Poland. "Thus the situation created by the Versailles Treaty is unbearable for Germany . . . and for the world peace."¹⁸

¹⁷Ibid., p. 49. Once again, Curtius was exaggerating for the benefit of his American audience. Since the total population of the West Prussian lands which formed the Polish province of Pomorze was, according to the official 1910 German census 990,145, Curtius's figure of "a million Germans" may be dismissed as it reduces the ethnic-Polish element to zero.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 50-51. The tone of this statement is strikingly reminiscent of Curtius's early 1920s tirades against the Treaty and the redrawing of Germany's boundary with Poland.

With this last statement, Curtius again drew his American listeners' attention to the possibility of Germany's eventual use of armed force to rectify the alleged territorial "injustices." Furthermore, Curtius revealed what he considered to be the depth of Germany's desire for revision.

From what I saw in the Rhineland and in Baden, which constituency I have represented in the German Reichstag for twelve years, I can state that the whole German people in the west and southwest of the Reich think no differently than the people in the eastern German provinces. They refuse to acknowledge the Corridor frontier which was forced upon Germany.

Curtius concluded by dropping all pretense and set out his true nationalist opinion, a point of view which never lay completely hidden under the cloak of conciliation.

"Not only material values matter in the life of a nation," he declared. Psychological and moral factors play a part in national consciousness. "It was for reason of such realities that by the severance of the Corridor Germany, far beyond mere economic disadvantages, suffered a blow which brought the most severe and ever-increasing disturbance to the people as a whole."¹⁹

Curtius's final sentiments serve as a culmination of the motive for his United States visit. After having worked his way through this misleading, though effective,

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 52-53.

historical and legal argument against the Polish Corridor, Curtius called directly and without ambiguity for Versailles Treaty revision.

Of decisive importance for the peace of the world is not the preparation of a war of sanction against an aggressor who has actually taken to arms, but the removal of all possible causes of war. It should be a matter of course that the society of nations in striving towards such a goal include a revision of unbearable territorial conditions. The Reich expects a revision.²⁰

Curtius's outright demand for U.S. support for revisionism met with favorable comment in American newspapers, except for several letters to the New York Times from Polish nationalists objecting to his historical analysis of Eastern Europe. Western European comment on Curtius's New York address was non-existent, due probably to European preoccupation with German support for National Socialism and the implications of Adolf Hitler attaining the Chancellorship in the immediate future. Curtius and his wife were unable to meet either President Herbert Hoover or President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, since both were too busy campaigning or with post-election affairs during the time of Curtius's visit. Of interest for the remainder of the Curtius stay in New York are the ex-Foreign Minister's observations on the effects of the Great Depression. In his memoirs, Curtius detailed his

²⁰Ibid., pp. 52, 63.

impressions of New York City, describing the hotels where he and his party resided as "thinly occupied," the trains in which they traveled as "near empty," and scenes of "hunger demonstrations" as "frightfully commonplace." Curtius also took note of the agricultural crisis. In the Middle-West ("Iowa--where the tall corn grow," as Curtius wrote in English) he listened to almost continual complaints about the government's farm program, with a decided undertone, to Curtius's ear, of "communist influence" behind some of the farmers' protestations. Finally, in late December, the Curtius family sailed from New York on the Italian liner Rex and arrived in Europe before the new year.²¹

Back in Germany, Curtius resumed his legal practice in Berlin, moving his family to the suburb of Dahlem and, for the most part, thereafter refrained from any political activity or public comment. In Sechs Jahre Minister, he avoided all but cursory comment on Adolf Hitler's accession to power in January 1933 and the subsequent seizure of dictatorial powers by the National Socialists. Curtius always was scornful of National Socialist political philosophy, especially the emphasis on Völkisch ideology, and he found most disagreeable the party's willingness to abandon the procedures of law and diplomacy in

²¹ Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, pp. 254-255.

international relations. For most of his career, National Socialist party leaders had spared little vitriol in attacking Curtius's alleged "surrender" to French and Polish demands, and his adherence to legal groundrules in dealing with the League of Nations won him no NSDAP support, even when his foreign policy goals were essentially the same as those of the radical nationalists. Almost without exception, National Socialist propagandists accused Curtius's economic or foreign policy programs, whether they dealt with international trade, reparations revision, the minority-rights question, or the customs union, of being un-German.²² Yet, the reader perceives from Curtius's memoir, chiefly through the author's lack of detailed critical comment on Hitler's policies, that Curtius grudgingly may have approved of Germany's astonishing economic mobilization, overt rearmament, and ultimate repudiation of the Versailles Treaty. Certainly, however, Curtius who personally was suspected of opposition by the Hitler regime and whose family suffered the effects of the Hitler era, deplored fascist political violence, Third Reich belligerency, and anti-democratic ideology. Yet, even in 1947, Curtius was able to

²²See, for example, Joseph Goebbels's excoriation of Curtius over the conclusion of the Young Plan in Helmut Heiber, ed., Goebbels Reden (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1964), 1: 90-91.

describe Adolf Hitler as merely an "unscrupulous adventurer" (gewissenlosen Abenteurer).²³

Nevertheless, the question of Curtius's attitude to the National Socialist regime is important due to his close association with most of Germany's leading industrialist organizations (often accused of collaboration with Hitler) and his own obvious nationalism. That Curtius proffered no support for Hitler during the era of the Weimar Republic and after is supported by the complete lack of any evidence to the contrary in the available published or unpublished, public or private documents. None of the numerous Foreign Office correspondence provides any evidence of Curtius's tacit approval of Hitler, and a search of all extant archival sources where private Curtius correspondence remains intact reveals no indication that Curtius provided any monetary assistance to the NSDAP, either directly or indirectly.²⁴ Evidence does exist, however, to show that Curtius was deemed a political and philosophical opponent by the Hitler government. Beginning in March 1933, the National Socialists instituted a policy of harassment, arrest, brutalization, and murder

²³Curtius, Sechs Jahre Minister, p. 259.

²⁴Materials consulted in the Bundesarchiv Koblenz include six Nachlässe, among them twelve folios of Curtius's own correspondence, NL 65, and Nachlass Erich Koch-Weser, NL 105, and Nachlass Herman Pünder, NL 155.

of political enemies, including former Reichstag members and other political critics among the left, center, and conservative parties, even a proposed murder attempt on ex-Chancellor Brüning. While Curtius was never imprisoned or otherwise threatened directly (due in large measure to his own discreet existence as a Berlin attorney), his life from 1933 to 1945 never was secure from possible arrest. Curtius appeared on several arrest lists compiled by the Hitler government's security service, the Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA). For example, Curtius is prominently listed in a dossier of political enemies of the Third Reich which appeared under the provenance of Section IV of the RSHA (Gestapo) in 1939. Entitled Erfassung Führender Männer der Systemzeit (Leading Persons in the Weimar Republic), this secret document included brief descriptions of the pre-1933 and post-1933 activities of 553 persons who attained prominence during the Weimar Era and who displayed anti-NSDAP tendencies. The dossiers labeled each person according to category, e.g., Marxisten-Kommunisten, Liberalisten-Pazifisten, Wissenschaftler, Künstler, or Rechtsopposition und Reaktion. Curtius, included in the latter category, was considered suspect due to his continued association with "industrial and agricultural interests" and his ideological "unreliability" (Unzuverlässigkeit). The Gestapo was particularly careful to note details of Curtius's income from his

legal practice and his acquisition in 1938 of a 1,450 acre farm in Grammenthin-Mecklenburg, the former providing evidence of Curtius's continued association with his pre-1933 clients and the latter proving his "suspicious" behavior.²⁵

Further evidence that the Hitler regime held Curtius in no special regard are the comments by leading officials of the Third Reich's diplomatic corps. In 1934, Curtius was denied a Foreign Office pension in the "most insulting" manner for allegedly anti-fascist comments made in the foreign press. In addition, the Foreign Office in 1934 deemed Curtius's previous policies as Foreign Minister "un-German" and accused him of submitting to French pressure during the customs union affair. The ex-Foreign Minister's association with Stresemann and the policy of fulfillment also was cited by the Hitler Foreign Office as tantamount to the subversion of the will of the German Volk. Finally, Curtius was excoriated for allegedly cooperating with the Social Democrats during his Reichstag service and while serving in various Weimar governments.²⁶ As late as 1939, Martin Luther, head of the Foreign Office's "domestic section" (Abteilung

²⁵Records of the Reichsführer SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei, National Archives Microcopy no. T-175, Roll 451, frame 2966806.

²⁶Institut für Zeitgeschichte, comp., Akten der Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP, microfiche, 20506/20403148-149.

Deutschlands), commented in a memorandum relating to Curtius's pension eligibility that the former Foreign Minister had always exhibited a "cool and distant" attitude toward National Socialism. In the same communication, Luther again made reference to Curtius's previous anti-Hitler statements to foreign journalists, indicating they were to be considered subversive.²⁷

Despite the scrutiny of the National Socialist government, Curtius managed, as a private citizen, to aim one more blow at his bête noire Poland, an incident which serves as an embodiment for his views on German-Polish relations. Following his retirement, Curtius, as part of his legal practice, accepted from his friend, Prince Henry of Pless, the chairmanship of a committee whose task was to oversee the reorganization of the Pless family businesses in Poland (Vorsitzender der Sanierung des Pless-Konzerns). The Prince, whose title dated from 1650 and who was descended from both Habsburgs and Hohenzollerns, controlled one of Europe's most magnificent fortunes, including Fürstenstein, a country palace in Upper Silesia containing over six-hundred rooms; the castle of Pless, the family seat, also in Upper Silesia; the castle of Albrechtsburg in Saxony; and many other estates. The Pless family business enterprises near the city of

²⁷ Ibid., 24305/21600350-351.

Kattowitz (Katowice), for which Curtius was responsible as chairman, comprised coal mines, foundries, brickworks, and breweries.²⁸ By the mid-1920s, the Pless holdings had begun to decline, due in part to Prince Henry's contentious relationship with the Polish government over tax liability on the Pless properties, Poland having replaced Germany in the administration of several districts in Upper Silesia following the plebiscites of the 1920s. Moreover, the Prince faced hostility from Warsaw due to his blatant anti-Polish sentiments and his active participation as a spokesman for the German minority's political organization. Thus, by early 1932, Curtius was placed in a position to help defend Prince Henry against alleged Polish government financial harassment, as well as to offer further support for German-minority rights in Poland.²⁹

Beginning in May 1932, the Polish authorities in Upper Silesia began seizing the cash, balances on current account, bank credits, and materials, such as mining equipment, necessary for carrying on the Pless industrial enterprises, all because of alleged arrears in taxes amounting

²⁸For an account of the Prince's marriage to Daisy Cornwallis-West, whose diary provides an intimate look at pre-1914 Europe, see D. Chapman-Huston, ed., The Private Diaries of Daisy, Princess of Pless, 1873-1914 (London: John Murray, 1950).

²⁹Bundesarchiv Koblenz, Nachlass Julius Curtius, NL 65, folio 1, Introduction, pp. 2-3 (hereafter cited Curtius, Nachlass).

(over several years including interest) to 11 million zloty (400,000 pounds sterling in 1934 value). Moreover, the Polish government alleged that Prince Henry had violated laws pertaining to the employment of Polish nationals, specifically that the Pless mining and brewing interests had refused to hire ethnic Poles in managerial positions (a charge which, in 1933, would result in the Prince serving a three months jail term in Poland). According to Curtius, who served as unofficial counsel to Prince Henry in his dealings with the Polish authorities, the true motive behind the Polish accusations was political rather than fiscal. As Curtius wrote to the Prince on several occasions, Warsaw was intent on ruining the Pless industrial and agricultural concerns, perhaps even intending to expropriate the Pless estates, thereby severely crippling the German minority political effort in Polish Upper Silesia. Curtius advised taking the Pless complaints against Poland directly to the International Court of Justice at The Hague, but the plan never reached fruition. In order for Pless to press for a judgment against Poland at The Hague, the support of the German government was crucial. In October 1933, however, the Hitler regime was attempting to conclude a non-aggression pact with Warsaw and pressured Curtius and Prince Henry to drop their legal action, the Hitler government fearing any confrontation with Warsaw which might endanger the proposed

agreement.³⁰ Thus, for Curtius, this last foray into international relations ended in the same disappointing manner as most of his official foreign policy programs.

Curtius continued in his capacity as President of the Pless business concerns until 1939, but his duties remained largely advisory. Throughout the 1930s, his legal practice declined until, by the beginning of World War II, he had retired into relative obscurity, never again entering public life. During the war, Curtius was hard hit. In 1943 his home was destroyed during an Allied bombing raid on Berlin. The losses included all his private papers and correspondence. During the latter stages of the Hitler regime, Curtius's son-in-law and several other relatives, allegedly implicated in the plot upon Hitler's life, were imprisoned. One of his daughters was killed during the Red Army conquest of Berlin in 1945. Following war's end, Curtius, while suffering severe heart disease, managed to complete his political memoir, largely with the aid of reference materials and his own memory. He died on 10 November 1948.

Curtius's entire political career, from his Reichstag service to his direction of the Wilhelmstrasse,

³⁰ Curtius, Nachlass, folio 4, Curtius to Pless, 27 October 1933; Akten, ser. C, vol. 2, nos. 163, 171, 190, 210; Hague Permanent Court of International Justice, Judgments, Orders, and Advisory Opinions, ser. A/B, vol. 2, no. 57.

was grounded in Wilhelmian tradition. Curtius's world view, from childhood to adult, was suffused with pre-1914 values. The Bismarck-era Weltanschauung (with the exception of pro-monarchist sentiments) was molded into his postwar political philosophy. From 1920 to 1925, he was a staunch defender of Prussian tradition; no conservative Reichstag delegate was more strident in his attacks on Social Democratic Sozialpolitik. Few German nationalists were more indignant over the alleged injustices of the 1919 peace settlement. He labored for the foundation of Mitteleuropa in the 1920s as diligently, if not as adroitly, as Bismarck had in the 1870s. Any attempt to draw conclusions regarding historical continuity with the Bismarck era in Curtius's foreign policy, however, should focus on two specific areas. Was Curtius's primary foreign policy aim, Anschluss with Austria, influenced by his concern for domestic politics? And, was Curtius's direction of foreign policy markedly different from the Imperial era's belligerent approach?

The latter question may be addressed by placing Curtius in the framework of Weimar foreign policy constructed by Peter Krüger in Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar.³¹ The Weimar Republic's policies,

³¹Krüger, Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar, pp. 1-16.

according to Krüger, differed from the belligerent foreign policies of the Imperial period and the Hitler dictatorship. Weimar diplomacy was directed by moderate-conservative political parties and was, therefore, remarkably free of militarist bellicosity.³² This departure from the policies of those governments preceding and following, Krüger contends, indicates a major break in the chain of historical continuity.³³

Conclusions drawn from the career of Julius Curtius support only a part of Krüger's analysis. Clearly, from his 1920 election to the Reichstag as a DVP delegate to his retirement in 1931, Curtius was a German nationalist whose political raison d'être was the revision of the Versailles Treaty and the reestablishment of Germany's power in Europe. While shrouded in the Stresemann-directed policy of Treaty fulfillment and international conciliation, Curtius, like Stresemann, in reality directed his efforts towards achieving goals within Germany's self-interest. While Curtius never advocated the use of military force as a direct means of attaining Germany's goals, the absence of overt militarism in his foreign policy does not completely divorce it from that of the Imperial period. Curtius did condone Germany's

³²Ibid., pp. 1-16, 551 ff.

³³Ibid., pp. 551 ff.

secret rearmament, and he publicly called for a European-wide disarmament policy which would have given Germany an advantage over Poland and Czechoslovakia.³⁴

Further assessment of Curtius's career must consider the influence of domestic politics on his foreign policy, and address the factors influencing his turn away from the policy of conciliation. From September 1930 to March 1931, Curtius was able to dismiss cabinet fears that the Austro-German customs union might violate international agreements. Curtius based this view on his confidence in Germany's position vis-a-vis the 1922 Geneva Protocol and the Treaty of Saint-Germain, not on the advice of those professional diplomats, such as Leopold von Hoesch, who warned of certain French opposition to the scheme regardless of Curtius's legal arguments. Curtius's approach is not surprising since his education was based in international law and his profession since 1900 encompassed the practice of corporate law on an international scale. As Edward W. Bennett points out, Germany, beginning under Curtius, preferred to view foreign policy as a legal

³⁴No evidence exists among the available records to indicate that Curtius was influenced by the German military while Foreign Minister. For example, a search of General Hans von Seeckt's papers reveals no communication between the General most responsible for Germany's covert rearmament and Curtius, even though General von Seeckt was a member of the DVP, Curtius's own party.

problem.³⁵ With Curtius directing the Wilhelmstrasse, the diplomatic point of view became less attuned to objective political analysis and increasingly dominated by the perspective of a corporate attorney who seeks out loopholes in the small print, or who counsels circumventing the spirit of the law, heedless of the warnings of outsiders.³⁶ Perhaps, as Bennett suggests, Curtius perceived the entire European economic and political system as weighted against Germany and thus felt he had the inherent right to take advantage of any minute flaw in the system of treaties which restricted German interests.³⁷ Therefore, Foreign Minister Curtius was convinced of Germany's "right," based on his conception of international justice, to seek such goals as territorial reacquisition, reparations revision, or Anschluss, all without regard to the political realities or probable consequences.

The primary motive, however, behind the attempted Austro-German union remains Curtius's conviction that the Brüning government, following the National Socialist electoral gains in September 1930, should pursue a more active foreign policy in line with the radicals' demands for immediate redress of Germany's grievances. In proceeding . . .

³⁵Bennett, Germany and the Financial Crisis, p. 72.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 72-73.

with the customs union, Curtius's ambition was to attach Austria irrevocably to Germany, thereby ensuring German domination of Southeastern and Central Europe and, in the long term, create a situation in which Poland, through the application of economic pressure, could be forced to make territorial concessions. Due to the National Socialist clamor for tangible foreign policy victories, Curtius abandoned the rational advice of his diplomatic experts and pushed ahead without laying the vital groundwork crucial to the plan's success. In 1930, Germany was in severe economic trouble, the depression and resulting unemployment exacerbated by Brüning's deflationary practices of reduced government spending and higher taxes. Thus, Curtius remarked to British Ambassador Rumbold in October 1930, the government "had a difficult task to maintain its position. It must be able to justify its existence to the German people by the results of its actions."³⁸ Certainly, therefore, Curtius in late 1930 was of the opinion that a dramatic move in foreign affairs was essential. Thus, he pressed forward with a customs union with Austria, intending the scheme to result in the long-desired Anschluss, thereby diverting attention from the economic crisis and strengthening the Brüning government. As Curtius explained to his fellow cabinet ministers,

³⁸DBFP, 2nd ser., vol. 1, no. 332.

the customs union could be counted on to relieve the internal political pressure on the government, perhaps resulting in a broadened coalition, including such divergent parties as the Social Democrats and National Socialists, all supportive of the Brüning government.³⁹

Curtius cannot be excused for the judgmental errors which he committed in the forging and presentation of the Austro-German customs union. His career as Foreign Minister began auspiciously; his success at the Second Hague Conference was evidence of skillful negotiation. After September 1930, however, his direction of foreign policy was flawed by an increasing dependence on domestic politics. Thus, Curtius was a post-Bismarckian statesman who allowed himself to be swayed by what he thought was political necessity.

Perhaps the most astute contemporaneous delineation of Curtius is found in Der Simplicissimus, a Munich-based satirical-political periodical which appealed to intellectuals and the liberal middle-class elements of German society. The journal reflected the political concerns of these Germans and would have excoriated and ridiculed any Curtius-led foreign policy program deemed inimical to democracy.⁴⁰ Yet, between the years 1929 to

³⁹Akten der Reichskanzlei, Brüning, vol. 2, no. 267.

⁴⁰Otto M. Nelson, "Simplicissimus and the Rise of National Socialism," The Historian 40 (1978): 441-462.

1932, Simplicissimus published only one political cartoon featuring Curtius. In this full-page depiction, a sober-looking, serious Foreign Minister Curtius strides purposefully out of a Foreign Office door into the Wilhelmstrasse, hurrying to catch a train to The Hague in late December 1929. The caption, referring to the turmoil surrounding the Young Plan and the radical-nationalist Alfred Hugenberg's Freedom Law proposal to abrogate unilaterally Germany's reparations obligation, reads: "When one cannot control the stupidity in his own house, it's time to get out of town." This cartoon, and the paucity of any subsequent editorial comment on Curtius's career, surely reflects the Simplicissimus view of Curtius in 1929 as a potential Stresemann-like diplomat, disciplined, skillful, and pragmatic, able to bargain successfully for long-term, peaceful, solutions to Germany's manifold problems.⁴¹ And, at the Second Hague Conference, Curtius fulfilled this perception. The tragedy for Curtius and the Weimar Republic was that he could not keep this promise in 1931.

⁴¹ Simplicissimus, vol. 34, no. 40 (December 30, 1929), p. 496.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Unpublished Documents

- Akten der Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP. Microcopy compiled by the Institut für Zeitgeschichte, Munich.
- Arthur Henderson Papers, FO 800. Public Record Office, London.
- Nachlass Julius Curtius, NL 65. Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- Nachlass Erich Koch-Weser, NL 105. Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- Nachlass Herman Pünder, NL 155. Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.
- Nachlass Gustav Stresemann, Microcopy T-120. National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.
- Papers of Richard Riedel, Microcopy T-84. National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.
- Records of the Reichsführer SS und Chef der Deutschen Polizei, Microcopy T-175. National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C.

Published Documents

- Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik, 1918-1945.
Series B, 1925-1933. 21 vols. Göttingen:
Vandenhoeck and Rupprecht, 1966-1983.
- Akten der Reichskanzlei, Weimarer Republik. 15 vols.
Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1968--.
- Documents on British Foreign Policy. 2nd series.
21 vols. London: Her Majesty's Stationary
Office, 1947-1984.
- Great Britain. Parliament. Parliamentary Debates
(Commons), 5th series, vol. 229.

Hague Permanent Court of International Justice. Judgments, Orders, and Advisory Opinions. Series A/B. 4 vols. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1970 [1932].

League of Nations. Official Journal, 1920-1940. 20 vols. Geneva: various publishers, 1921-1941.

Stenographische Berichte der Verhandlungen des deutschen Reichstages. Berlin: Norddeutschen Buchdruckerei, 1871--.

Stresemann, Gustav. Vermächtnis der Nachlass. Edited by Henry Bernhard. 3 vols. Berlin: Ullstein Verlag, 1932.

United States, Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1861--.

United States, Department of State. Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949. Compiled by Charles I. Bevans. 3 vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Berliner Tageblatt

Chicago Tribune

Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung

Deutsche Tageszeitung

Frankfurter Zeitung

Kölnische Zeitung

The Literary Digest

Neue Freie Presse (Vienna)

New York Times

San Francisco Chronicle

Simplicissimus

The Times (London)

Völkischer Beobachter

Vorwärts

Vossische Zeitung

Books, Articles, Dissertations

Albertin, Lothar. Liberalismus und Demokratie am Anfang der Weimarer Republik: eine vergleichende Analyse der Deutschen Demokratischen Partei und der Deutschen Volkspartei. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972.

Bennett, Edward W. Germany and the Diplomacy of the Financial Crisis, 1931. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

Bergmann, Karl. The History of Reparations. London: Ernest Benn, 1927.

Böhme, Helmut. An Introduction to the Social and Economic History of Germany. Translated by W. R. Lee. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978.

Bracher, Karl Dietrich. Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie. Villingen: Ring Verlag, 1960 [1955].

_____. "Brünings unpolitische Politik und die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 19 (1971): 113-123.

Bretton, Henry L. Stresemann and the Revision of Versailles. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953.

Bruegel, Johann W. Czechoslovakia Before Munich: The German Minority Problem and British Appeasement Policy. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973.

Brüning, Heinrich, and Curtius, Julius. Um Deutschlands Zukunft: Zwei Reden. Berlin: Zentral Verlag, 1931.

Brüning, Heinrich. Memoiren, 1918-1934. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1970.

Campbell, F. Gregory. Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Carsten, Francis L. The Reichswehr and Politics, 1918 to 1933. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966.

Chapman-Huston, D., ed. The Private Diaries of Daisy, Princess of Pless, 1873-1914. London: John Murray, 1950.

Chickering, Roger. We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.

Clark, Robert T. The Fall of the German Republic: A Political Study. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964 [1935].

Costigliola, Frank. "The United States and the Reconstruction of Germany in the 1920s." Business History Review 59 (1976): 477-502.

Craig, Gordon A., and Gilbert, Felix, eds. The Diplomats, 1919-1939. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953.

Curtius, Julius. Bismarcks Plan eines Deutschen Volkswirtschaftsrats: Historisch-Politische Studie von Dr. Julius Curtius, Heidelberg. Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei, 1919.

_____. "Memorial to Gustav Stresemann." International Conciliation 263 (1930): 563-572.

_____. Bemühung um Österreich: Das Scheitern des Zollunionsplan von 1931. Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1947.

_____. Sechs Jahre Minister der Deutschen Republik. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1948.

_____. Der Youngplan: Entstellung und Wahrheit. Stuttgart: Mittelbach Verlag, 1950.

Curtius, Julius et al. Polish Pomerania: Two Addresses and a Reply. Warsaw: League for the Defense of Peace by Respect for Treaties, 1933.

- Dahrendorf, Ralf. Society and Democracy in Germany. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967 [1965].
- Debicki, Roman. Foreign Policy of Poland, 1919-1939. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962.
- Diamond, Sander A. "Ein Amerikaner in Berlin: Aus den Papieren des Botschafters Alanson B. Houghton, 1922-1925." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 27 (1979): 431-470.
- Dobkowski, Michael N., and Wallimann, Isidor, eds. Towards the Holocaust: The Social and Economic Collapse of the Weimar Republic. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Dorpalen, Andreas. Hindenburg and the Weimar Republic. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Dow, James E. "The German National People's Party: In the Cause of Monarchy." Continuity 3 (1981): 37-50.
- Droste Geschichtskalendarium, Chronik deutscher Zeitgeschichte: Politik, Wirtschaft, Kultur. 3 vols. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1983.
- Dyck, Harvey Leonard. Weimar Germany and Soviet Russia, 1926-1933: A Study in Diplomatic Instability. London: Chatto and Windus, 1966.
- Edmondson, Clifton Earl. The Heimwehr and Austrian Politics, 1918-1936. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1978.
- Eley, Geoff. "Recent Work in Modern German History." Historical Journal 23 (1980): 463-479.
- Engelsing, Rolf. Kleine Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte Deutschlands. Hannover: Verlag für Literatur und Zeitgeschehen, 1968.
- Erdmann, Karl Dietrich. "Die Deutsch-Sowjetischen Beziehungen in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik als Problem der Deutschen Innenpolitik." Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 26 (1975): 403-426.
- _____. "Gustav Stresemann: Sein Bild in der Geschichte." Historische Zeitschrift 227 (1978): 599-616.

- Erger, Johannes. Der Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch: Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Innenpolitik, 1919-1920. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1967.
- Evans, Ellen Lovell. The German Center Party, 1870-1933: A Study in Political Catholicism. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.
- Evans, Richard J. "From Hitler to Bismarck: Third Reich and Kaiserreich in Recent Historiography." Historical Journal 26 (1983): 485-497, 999-1020.
- Everett, Susanne. Lost Berlin. New York: Gallery Books, 1979.
- Eyck, Erich. A History of the Weimar Republic. Translated by Harlan P. Hanson and Robert G. L. Waite. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.
- Fink, Carole. "Defender of Minorities: Germany in the League of Nations, 1926-1933." Central European History 5 (1972): 330-357.
- _____. "Germany and the Polish Elections of November 1930: A Study in League Diplomacy." East European Quarterly 15 (1981): 181-207.
- Fink, Carole et al., eds. German Nationalism and the European Response, 1890-1945. Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1985.
- Fishman, Sterling. The Struggle for German Youth: The Search for Educational Reform in Imperial Germany. New York: Revisionist Press, 1976.
- Fletcher, Roger. "Recent Developments in West German Historiography: The Bielefeld School and Its Critics." German Studies Review 7 (1984): 451-480.
- Fox, John P. Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938: A Study in Diplomacy and Ideology. London: Clarendon Press, 1982.
- Fritz, Stephen G. "The Search for Volksgemeinschaft: Gustav Stresemann and the Baden DVP, 1926-1930." German Studies Review 7 (1984): 249-280.
- Frye, Bruce B. Liberal Democrats in the Weimar Republic: The History of the German Democratic Party and the German State Party. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985.

- Gessner, Dieter. "Dokumentation: 'Grüne Front' oder 'Harzburger Front': der Reichslandbund in der letzten Phase der Weimarer Republik; zwischen wirtschaftlicher Interessenpolitik und nationalistischem Revisionsanspruch." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 29 (1981): 110-123.
- Geyer, Michael. "Das Zweite Rüstungsprogramm, 1930-1934." Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen (1975): 125-172.
- Goldinger, Walter. "Das Projekt einer deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion von 1931." Österreich und Europa. Vienna: Styria Verlag, 1965.
- Graml, Hermann. "Präsidialsystem und Aussenpolitik." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 21 (1973): 134-145.
- Grathwol, Robert. "Stresemann Revisited." European Studies Review 7 (1977): 341-352.
- _____. Stresemann and the DNVP: Reconciliation or Revenge in German Foreign Policy, 1924-1928. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980.
- Gulick, Charles Adams. Austria From Habsburg to Hitler. 2 vols. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948.
- Halperin, S. William. Germany Tried Democracy: A Political History of the Reich from 1918 to 1933. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1963 [1946].
- Hardach, Karl. The Political Economy of Germany in the Twentieth Century. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Hartenstein, Wolfgang. Die Anfänge der Deutschen Volkspartei, 1918-1920. Düsseldorf: Droste, 1962.
- Hauser, Oswald. "Der Plan einer deutsch-österreichischen Zollunion von 1931 und die europäische Föderation." Historische Zeitschrift 179 (1955): 45-92.
- Heiber, Helmut, ed. Goebbels Reden. 2 vols. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1964.

- Hertz, Frederick O. The German Public Mind in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History of the German Political Sentiments, Aspirations, and Ideas. Translated by Eric Northcott. Totowa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1975.
- Hildebrand, Klaus. The Foreign Policy of the Third Reich. Translated by Anthony Fothergill. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1973.
- Hillgruber, Andreas. Germany and the Two World Wars. Translated by William C. Kirby. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.
- Holtfrerich, Carl-Ludwig. "Alternativen zur Brünnings Wirtschaftspolitik in der Weltwirtschaftskrise." Historische Zeitschrift 235 (1982): 605-631.
- Hoor, Ernst. Österreich, 1918-1938. Vienna: Österreichischen Bundesverlag, 1966.
- Jacobson, Jon. Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-1929. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.
- James, Harold. "State, Industry, and Depression in Weimar Germany." Historical Journal 24 (1981): 231-241.
- _____. The German Slump: Politics and Economics, 1924-1936. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986.
- Jaraus, Konrad. "From Second to Third Reich: The Problem of Continuity in German Foreign Policy." Central European History 12 (1979): 68-82.
- Johnson, Norman M. "The Austro-German Customs Union Project in German Diplomacy." Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1974.
- Jonas, Manfred. The United States and Germany: A Diplomatic History. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.
- Kaeckenbeeck, Georges. The International Experiment of Upper Silesia: A Study of the Working of the Upper Silesian Settlement, 1922-1937. London: Oxford University Press, 1942.
- Kann, Robert, and Prinz, Friedrich D., eds. Deutschland und Österreich. Munich: Jugend und Volk, 1980.

- Katzenstein, Peter J. Disjointed Partners: Austria and Germany Since 1815. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Kellerman, Barbara. "Mentoring in Political Life: The Case of Willy Brandt." American Political Science Review 72 (1978): 422-433.
- Kimmich, Christoph. The Free City: Danzig and German Foreign Policy, 1919-1934. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.
- _____. Germany and the League of Nations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.
- Kollbach, Paul. Deutsche Handelsflotte und Versailler Vertrag. Introduction by Julius Curtius. Berlin: Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1929.
- Korbel, Josef. Poland Between East and West: Soviet and German Diplomacy Toward Poland, 1919-1933. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Kosok, Paul. Modern Germany: A Study of Conflicting Loyalties. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933.
- Kreissler, Felix. Von der Revolution zur Annexion: Österreich 1918 bis 1938. Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1970.
- Krüger, Peter. "Das Reparationsproblem der Weimarer Republik in Fragwürdiger Sicht: Kritische Überlegung zur Neuesten Forschung." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 29 (1981): 21-47.
- _____. Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985.
- Kulski, Wladyslaw W. Germany and Poland: From War to Peaceful Relations. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1976.
- Leichter, Otto. Otto Bauer. Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1970.
- Leopold, John A. Alfred Hugenberg: The Radical Nationalist Campaign Against the Weimar Republic. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

- Lilge, Frederic. The Abuse of Learning: The Failure of the German University. New York: Octagon Books, 1975.
- Link, Werner. Die Amerikanische Stabilisierungspolitik in Deutschland, 1921-1932. Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1970.
- Lippelt, Helmut. "Politische Sanierung: Zur deutschen Politik gegenüber Polen, 1925-1926." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 19 (1971): 323-373.
- Luckau, Alma. The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference. New York: Howard Fertig, 1971 [1941].
- Luther, Hans. Politiker ohne Partei: Erinnerungen. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1960.
- Luza, Radomir. The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans: A Study of German-Czech Relations, 1933-1962. New York: New York University Press, 1964.
- Machray, Robert. Poland, 1914-1931. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1932.
- McKale, Donald. The Swastika Outside Germany. Kent: Kent State University Press, 1977.
- Mantoux, Etienne. The Carthaginian Peace, or the Economic Consequences of Mr. Keynes. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1952.
- Masur, Gerhard. Imperial Berlin. New York: Basic Books, 1970.
- Mayer, Arno. Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967.
- McNeil, William C. American Money and the Weimar Republic: Economics and Politics on the Eve of the Great Depression. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Merwe, Werner van der. "Gustav Stresemann in the Debate on Continuity and Discontinuity in German Foreign Policy." Kleio [South Africa] 14 (1982): 5-27.
- Mommsen, Wilhelm, ed. Deutsche Parteiprogramme. Munich: Olzog Verlag, 1960.

- Moses, John A. "From Kaiser to Führer: New Works in Modern German History." Australian Journal of Politics and History 25 (1979): 112-116.
- Mosse, George L. The Crisis of German Ideology. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.
- Nelson, Otto M. "Simplicissimus and the Rise of National Socialism." The Historian 40 (1978): 441-462.
- The New International Yearbook, 1926. New York: Dodd Mead and Company, 1927.
- Newman, M. D. "Britain and the German-Austrian Customs Union Proposal of 1931." European Studies Review 6 (1976): 449-472.
- Nicosia, Francis R. J. "Weimar Germany and the Palestine Question." Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 24 (1979): 321-345.
- Orde, Anne. "The Origins of the German-Austrian Customs Union Affair of 1931." Central European History 13 (1980): 34-59.
- Paucker, Arnold. "Searchlight on the Decline of the Weimar Republic: The Diaries of Ernst Feder, 1919-1931." Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook 13 (1968): 161-234.
- Paulsen, Friedrich. German Education, Past and Present. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908.
- Post, Gaines Jr. The Civil-Military Fabric of Weimar Foreign Policy. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- Richter, Rolf. "Der Abrüstungsgedanke in Theorie und Praxis und die deutsche Politik, 1920-1929." Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau 18 (1968): 442-466.
- Riekhoff, Harald von. German-Polish Relations, 1918-1933. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971.
- Salewski, Michael. "Zur deutschen Sicherheitspolitik in der Spätzeit der Weimarer Republik." Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte 22 (1974): 121-147.

- Schulthess' Europäischer Geschichtskalender. 81 vols.
Munich: Becksche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1860-1940.
- Shepard, Carl E. "Germany and the Hague Conferences, 1929-1930." Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1964.
- Smith, Woodruff D. The German Colonial Empire. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978.
- Snyder, Louis L. Roots of German Nationalism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.
- Stambrook, F. G. "The German-Austrian Customs Union Project of 1931: A Study of German Methods and Motives." Journal of Central European Affairs 21 (1961): 15-44.
- Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich. Vol. 46.
Berlin: Verlag von Reimar Hobbing, 1927.
- Suval, Stanley. The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era: A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918-1932. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1974.
- Toynbee, Arnold. Survey of International Affairs. 47 vols. London: Oxford University Press, 1927-1977.
- Treviranus, Goddfried Reinhold. Das Ende von Weimar: Heinrich Brüning und seine Zeit. Düsseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1968.
- Turner, Henry Ashby, Jr. Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- _____. German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.
- Vagts, Alfred. "Heinrich Brüning: A Review and a Memoir." Political Science Quarterly 87 (1972): 80-89.
- Volkman, Hans-Erich. "Das Aussenwirtschaftliche Programm der NSDAP, 1930-1933." Archiv für Sozialgeschichte 17 (1977): 251-274.
- Walters, Francis P. A History of the League of Nations. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

- Wehler, Hans-Ulrich. Bismarck und der Imperialismus. Cologne: Verlag Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1969.
- Weinberg, Gerhard L. The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany: Diplomatic Revolution in Europe, 1933-1936. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Weisbrod, Bernd. Schwerindustrie in der Weimarer Republik: Interessenpolitik zwischen Stabilisierung und Krise. Wuppertal: Peter Hammer Verlag, 1978.
- Whaley, Barton. "Covert Rearmament in Germany, 1919-1939: Deception and Misperception." Journal of Strategic Studies 5 (1982): 3-39.
- Wheeler-Bennett, John W., ed. Documents on International Affairs, 1929. London: Oxford University Press, 1930.
- Wheeler-Bennett, John W. Disarmament and Security Since Locarno, 1925-1931. London: Allen and Unwin, 1932.
- _____. The Nemesis of Power: The German Army in Politics, 1918-1945. London: Macmillan, 1964 [1953].
- Winkler, Heinrich August. Der Schein der Normalität: Arbeiter und Arbeiter Bewegung in der Weimarer Republik, 1924 bis 1930. Berlin and Bonn: Verlag J. H. W. Dietz, 1985.
- Wittgens, Herman J. "War Guilt Propaganda Conducted by the German Foreign Office Ministry During the 1920s." Historical Papers (1980): 228-247.
- Zimmermann, Ludwig. Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Ära der Weimarer Republik. Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1958.

APPENDIX A

EXTRACT OF THE SPEECH BY FOREIGN MINISTER

CURTIUS TO THE REICHSTAG,

NOVEMBER 29, 1929*

. . . I have to undertake the presentation of the standpoint of the Government of the Reich . . . because the text of the claim for a referendum attacks the foreign policy conducted by the Government up to now, and demands a radical change of the methods of our foreign policy. I have taken over the policy of my predecessor in the office without the beneficium inventarii. I must defend it, continue it and develop it further. In so far as the law claimed by the nation [in Hugenberg's referendum] demands action against the war guilt paragraph it breaks through open doors, leads to the disillusionment of the people and endangers the means which alone lead to the goal. The whole referendum claim is built upon an openly recognized dishonesty. It is based, as the proclamation of the Government of the Reich states, on the nonsensical

*John W. Wheeler-Bennett, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1929 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 83-90.

assertion that Germany's foreign policy up to now has been based on the acknowledgment of Germany's war guilt and that the German government only needs to revoke the war guilt Article of the Treaty of Versailles in writing in order to liberate Germany from all burdens and shackles of the Treaty.

Germany has never acknowledged the unilateral sentence of guilt in the Treaty of Versailles. . . . As Chancellor of the Reich and as Foreign Minister, Dr. Stresemann has repeatedly protested, in the most solemn way, against the war-guilt sentence. He has expressly adopted as his own the declaration of the President of the Reich, von Hindenburg, at the Tannenberg National Monument, to the effect that all classes of the German nation unanimously refute the accusation that Germany is guilty of this the greatest of all wars. I take the same stand as he did in regard to all these proclamations.

. . . It can be said without exaggeration that those who have inserted the referendum and plebiscite provisions into the Weimar Constitution have never conceived that a nation could be called upon to take a decision like the one in question. In the democracies whose forms of direct legislation by the people have been adopted by the Weimar Constitution--Switzerland and some of the states of the United States of America--foolish ideas have also sprung up and so-called referendum storms

have taken place. But none of these states, no political party in them, has ever had the idea of wanting to conduct foreign policy by means of plebiscites.

. . . Summarizing, I can say: The proposed law in no way fulfills the purpose it claims to pursue. If the plebiscite claim were at all intended by the groups behind it as a serious attempt to change foreign policy, it furnishes the best imaginable proof that any other policy than the hitherto conducted policy of understanding is not possible for Germany. If the bill in question became law, not only would further pursuance of our political aims be made impossible, but what we have acquired by painful struggle would be completely ruined. It is therefore the task of the present hour, by unanimous rejection of the bill, to show that the preponderant majority of Parliament and of the nation is determined to follow the Government of the Reich on the path hitherto taken in foreign policy. We can, and must also in the future, base the development of our international relations upon the fact that an economically sound and a politically free Germany, on an equal footing with other nations, is an indispensable factor for European peace. But also our own future interest lies in simultaneously professing that we adhere to the policy of rapprochement and of peace.

For Germany has no higher interest and no other possibility than, protected by peace, to complete her

reconstruction at home and abroad. It is not patriotism, but a fatal delusion to close one's eyes to the fact that we are not able to impose our will one-sidedly on other people. The time has passed when the fate of nations could be determined through the political hegemony of single states or through a system of war alliances. At least it is Germany's interest, consciously, and in constantly growing measure, to substitute such methods by others.

Last year, too, it was a completely unjustified reproach that the leaders of our foreign policy were exclusively, or to a too great extent, concentrating on relations with one single foreign power. All our efforts up to now have in reality served in general to regain our position in the world. In the future that must, of course, continue to remain our guiding principle. In addition, I would like to refer to the new developments which, although vaguely and gropingly to begin with, seem to be making their way in the general relations between states. The government will have to see to it that in all such cases the German view and justified German interests are put into the balance with their full weight. But that is only possible through cooperation with other countries. The plan pursued by the authors of the referendum claim cuts off this possibility. Its realization would throw

Germany back into an isolation which would entail incalculable damage for all of us.

Our attitude has not been, is not, and never will be that of a humiliated and defeated country.

We have not lost our pride through the honorable defeat. Upright, we will endeavor to fight our way through, with faith in our future, convinced of the European mission which precisely we, the center of the Continent, have to fulfill.

. . . The life and work of Stresemann were heroic, he who struggled with death for the reward of freedom, and once he had convinced himself of his proper course, spared no effort to hold steadfastly along it. On the whole, heroism lies in action only, not in criticism--in the affirmation of life and not in pessimism, which is an act of despair.

APPENDIX B
THE TREATY OF SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE,
SEPTEMBER 10, 1919 (EXTRACTS) *

Article 69

Austria agrees that the stipulations in the foregoing Articles of this Section, so far as they affect persons belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations. They shall not be modified without the assent of a majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The Allied and Associated Powers represented on the Council severally agree not to withhold their assent from any modification in these Articles which is in due form assented to by a majority of the Council of the League of Nations.

Austria agrees that any Member of the Council of the League of Nations shall have the right to bring to the attention of the Council any infraction, or any danger of infraction, of any of these obligations, and that the

*Documents and Readings in the History of Europe Since 1918 (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1939), pp. 34-35.

Council may thereupon take such action and give such direction as it may deem proper and effective in the circumstances. . . .

Article 88

The independence of Austria is inalienable otherwise than with the consent of the Council of the League of Nations. Consequently Austria undertakes in the absence of the consent of the said Council to abstain from any act which might directly or indirectly or by any means whatever compromise her independence, particularly, and until her admission to membership in the League of Nations, by participation in the affairs of another Power.

APPENDIX C
EXTRACT OF ADDRESS BY CURTIUS TO THE
LEAGUE OF NATIONS COUNCIL,
JANUARY 31, 1931*

The German Government was fully aware of the implications of its action when for the first time it appealed to the Council for the protection of a minority. My Government did not wait for the minority's complaint, because of the overwhelming importance and special character of the incidents which took place in November last in Upper Silesia and also in Poznania and Pomerelia. Often as the German minority has suffered from violence and persecution in the past, all records have been broken by the victimization to which the German population in Poland has had to submit in the course of Polish elections. A general survey of the events which occurred shows clearly that the elements behind the electoral terrorism believed they were in a position to the moment decisively to weaken the political standing of the German element.

*League of Nations, Official Journal, 1931, pp. 165-170.

. . . Almost all these cases [of electoral terrorism], however, have one common feature--namely, their systematic character and the fact that it was supported by the Polish authorities. In almost every case the police either allowed the incidents to occur or even themselves intervened against the minority. Violence was not directed only against the leaders of the German section of the population, who were arrested and deprived of their voting papers and election literature, while their houses were sacked and they themselves in some cases threatened with armed violence. Even old men, who had no part in the proceedings, and women, were not respected. A glance at the minority's petition shows that, throughout the Polish elections in the whole of eastern Upper Silesia and for a short period before, the defenseless German population was overwhelmed by a wave of Polish terrorism.

Even if certain details of the events--in particular, the participation of isolated sections of the police--is now contested in the Polish Government's observations, that in no way affects the general impression made by the incidents on the public opinion of the world. This is admitted in the last resort of the Polish Government itself, in that it has taken criminal proceedings in no less than ninety-nine cases and disciplinary proceedings in no less than seventeen cases. Above all, I would refer to the inquiry instituted by the President of the Mixed

Commission at the request of the minority, in accordance with the procedure laid down in Article 585 of the Geneva Convention.

The fact that the events in Upper Silesia were the result of a single determined movement directed against the German element as such stamps them as part of a uniform plan and sets them apart from similar incidents. It is startling to find that the terrorism was able to continue for weeks on end in the full light of day without any intervention by the highest responsible authority of the district . . . although both he and the Minister for the Interior were again and again requested by the minority to intervene. The same charge of negligence in affording the protection to which every citizen is entitled applies to other officials, high and low, who made no use of the powers at their disposal to protect the minority against terrorism. Such a dereliction in the performance of duties imposed by law is legally equivalent to positive action and amounts to administrative arbitrariness. In addition, officials were in a number of cases actively concerned and morally implicated.

. . . In its reply, the Polish Government has thought fit to state that the responsibility for the regrettable incidents in Upper Silesia, the great extent of which it does not contest, is to be attributed to a greater or lesser degree to the Germans. In doing so,

it is quite plainly referring to the political movements in Germany which are alleged to be directed against the integrity of the Polish State.

This objection on the part of the Polish Government naturally calls for a reply from me. The invariable attitude of all German Governments hitherto and of the entire German nation in regard to the political questions to which the Polish Government refers is known throughout the whole world. I will not attempt to minimize that attitude in any way. Nor do I here deny it, but one fact is clear--Germany has no thought of attempting to realize these aims by any but treaty methods. The entire German people, united though they are in their political aspirations, are equally so in their determination to adhere unconditionally to peaceful methods. For this reason alone the discussion of these aims could never be used as a pretext or excuse for the oppression of the minority.

Furthermore, it is untrue to say that the reaction of the Polish people to certain political movements in Germany has spontaneously and independently taken the form of these outrageous acts committed against loyal Polish nationals of German race. The truth is rather that national passions have been exploited and inflamed. I have no doubt that the various incidents which Germany has brought to the notice of the Council represent a policy under which the excitement engendered by the

elections was to be used in the circumstances described in order to strike a blow at the German minority.

. . . Unless the guilty officials are ruthlessly punished . . . unless the system is changed, unless in the administration some personal guarantee is given for the impartial observance of the regulations for the protection of minorities . . . there will always be a danger that the minorities will be deprived of the rights and protection to which they are entitled.

The Council will have to take action in accordance with these principles. It is in the interest of all states--it is in the interest of general peace--that the fears of the minority should be allayed, and this can only be done if it is definitely established that there has been infringement of the treaties, if there is adequate atonement and if whatever measures are taken for the future are prompted by the sincere determination of all the Members of the League to keep the sacred rights of the minority inviolate.

APPENDIX D
EXTRACT OF RADIO ADDRESS BY FOREIGN
MINISTER CURTIUS TO THE PEOPLE
OF THE UNITED STATES,
JUNE 21, 1930*

Ladies and gentlemen:

I have spoken to many a large assembly in my life, but I have never had the honor before of addressing so vast an audience as the one to which my esteemed friend, His Excellency the American Ambassador to Germany, kindly introduced me tonight. It is awe-inspiring to think that my voice is being carried across the wide ocean to anyone in the United States who may care to "listen in." The earnest endeavors of German and American statesmen to strengthen and deepen the friendly relations between the two countries are furthered in a marvelous manner, indeed, by the progress of science which, through the medium of atmospheric waves, puts our two peoples in ever closer contact with each other.

*Julius Curtius, "Memorial to Gustav Stresemann," International Conciliation 263 (1930): 563-572.

Personally I have observed and cultivated those relations with particular care and interest for many years. In Heidelberg, my second home town, as well as in Berlin, I have been watching the ever increasing stream of American travelers. With a large number of them I freely exchanged views; with many of them I formed bonds of sincere friendship. Fortunately, the outgrowths of war psychosis lost their evil effects between our two countries in a gratifyingly brief time, and, in judging German affairs, truth and justice are rapidly gaining ground in American public opinion.

. . . In view of such close relations, a German Minister of Foreign Affairs speaking to the radio listeners in the United States may count on open ears and open hearts. If Dr. Stresemann had lived, I would today be amongst you and thus be able to establish direct personal contact with you. Only a few hours before his tragic death I had suggested to him that, this summer, I would resign the portfolio of Economics in order to take an extensive tour through the United States for the sake of broadening my knowledge of national and world economics. The fate with which Stresemann met shortly afterwards made me his successor in office, and therefore, instead of being able to speak face to face to you, I have to make use now of the Hertzian waves.

The close financial and economic links between Germany and the United States, briefly referred to, are, indeed, the firm basis of our relations. It must not be forgotten, however, that real mutual understanding between two nations can never rest on anything merely material but can only be created by a common purpose, pointing, beyond the national aims of either, to a higher goal. Fortunately, that community of purpose exists between Germany and the United States. When several weeks ago, your Ambassador, Mr. Frederic Moseley Sackett, presented his credentials to President von Hindenburg, he laid stress on the striking similarity of aims of the two nations in the field of international conciliation; and, indeed, it is this similarity, nay identity, of purpose which, in my opinion, is the strongest of the many links existing between the two countries. The noble endeavor to build the peace of the world on a solid and lasting foundation which the United States has been pursuing for many years and which is voiced again and again in the public utterances of her highest spokesmen, can find nowhere a truer echo and a heartier response than in this country. Germany needs and desires peace--a peace honorable for everybody, a peace secured not by military armaments but by justice and goodwill and reciprocal sincere understanding. We desire it as men who know how to fight . . . but who have come to understand that there are other ways for settling

international controversies than by letting inferno loose over Humanity. And we have given ample proof of that spirit. The world knows how the German people, although hit incredibly hard by the most unjust of peace treaties, renounced from the beginning every idea of revenge; it knows the great work of conciliation of my much lamented friend Gustav Stresemann, embodied in the Treaties of Locarno; it knows of our active collaboration in all the labors of the League of Nations. Like the United States, Germany is striving to make the world safe from a recurrence of a cataclysm which would, without fail, put an end to our civilization. And just as there is identity of purpose, so there is identity with regard to the methods to be applied. Mindful of the old proverb that an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure, we are less concerned with the question of how a possible violator of the peace ought to be dealt with than with the all-important problem of preventing the outbreak of any armed conflict, the consequences of which nobody is able to foresee. Therefore, we strongly advocate going to the very root of the matter by removing in good time all causes of war. We stand unreservedly for the peaceful settlement of every kind of conflict between states. And having ourselves, in spite of all rumors to the contrary, following the Treaty of Versailles, completely disarmed, we strongly insist upon an all-round reduction

to the minimum of all military establishments and preparations for war, which are always a potential danger to the peace of the world; for the more guns there are, the more readily one will go off accidentally at a critical hour. . . .