

GERMAN WRATH AT THE RHINELAND OCCUPATION

FRIENDSHIP IS IMPOSSIBLE between France and Germany as long as Allied troops remain in the occupation area of the Rhineland, bitterly declare various German editors in their comment on the speech of Dr. Stresemann, Germany's Foreign Minister, in which he protested against the continuance of the presence of foreign troops within German borders. Mr. Briand's contention that the troops are a



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"However long the night may last along the Rhine, the German eagle will see to it that the land which is German always remains German despite the French scarecrow."

—*Kladderadatsch* (Berlin).

necessary guaranty for France's security is either ridiculed or flatly disbelieved by some German journals, which maintain that Germany is more in need of guaranteed security than is France. Among the French press some radical organs are inclined to sympathize with the German view, but in general the newspapers warmly indorse the attitude of Foreign Minister Briand. In Germany the press were delighted to record that Dr. Stresemann's speech was cheered enthusiastically by an overwhelming majority of the Reichstag members, and they applaud especially the Stresemann declaration that "the world must understand clearly that the continuance of the occupation of the Rhineland by French troops has compromised the Locarno pact in the eyes of all nations." Dr. Stresemann is quoted further as follows:

"We received the promise that machine-guns and cannon would disappear from there as the result of the Locarno agreement. But they are still there, directed against a nation which has become a member of the League of Nations.

"If voices are heard in France demanding that the cessation of the occupation should be conditioned by some new German guaranties of France's security, it means that Frenchmen forget the fact that the Locarno pact contains all the imaginable guaranties of that sort which one State can give to another.

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He who dares to speak of any further guaranties thereby undermines this agreement. If we have no assurance that treaties will be fulfilled, then what is the use of making them? Guaranties of security given to France by the Locarno pact are, in turn, guaranteed by Great Britain's power and word of honor. To demand further guaranties means to offend not only Germany but also England.

"The time has at last come to state clearly that there is a certain amount of hypocrisy in the demand of security against Germany which can not be tolerated any longer by the public opinion of the world. We demand the liberation of the Rhine provinces, because we regard the friendly understanding between France and Germany as the basis of European peace, and because we believe that the continuance of this occupation is the greatest obstacle in the way to such an understanding."

Dr. Stresemann's speech, it will be recalled, was followed by an official French statement that the number of occupation troops in the Rhineland would be immediately cut down from 60,000 to 50,000. And then Mr. Briand answered it in the French Senate. In his speech, as quoted by German and French papers, he said:

"According to the Versailles Treaty the Rhine provinces are to be occupied until 1936. Yet I believe that this problem ought to be linked up with the reparations. Since Dr. Stresemann desires the evacuation of Rhineland previous to that date, he will have first to fulfil the terms of the Versailles Treaty. I informed him of this personally at Thoiry, and I am repeating it now. I informed him then that he ought to inquire into all the possibilities of advancing the payment of reparations. The financial inventiveness and the industrial possibilities of Germany would doubtless permit that, and we would be glad to listen to any proposals that could be made to us by Germany in this connection. It is all the question of a business transaction."

In other words, say some German editors, Mr. Briand indicated the possibility of a bargain: "Give us what we want and you will get back the portion of your territory we are holding." As to the matter of security, the *Hamburger Nachrichten* maintains that if any State of Europe is really in need of guaranties of security, Germany and not France is the one, and this daily goes on to say sharply:

"How can one speak in earnest of security, if France obstinately distrusts Germany, a country which has done in recent years more than any other to secure lasting peace in Europe? Stresemann was undoubtedly right when he described all French wailings about security as hypocrisy. We are especially thankful to Dr. Stresemann that he made it perfectly clear that Germany would commit herself to no new obligations in order to secure the evacuation of the Rhineland."

The *Berliner Tageblatt* rejoices that Dr. Stresemann was loudly cheered by the entire Reichstag when he "pilloried the hypocrisy of French demands for guaranties of France's security," and it adds:

"He also made it clear that he realized that the difficulty of the situation lay in Germany's decision not to 'redeem,' so to speak, the occupied provinces by some new financial concessions to France. As to Mr. Briand, he, on the contrary, strest the fact that France wanted 'financial advantages' for the withdrawal of her troops on a date earlier than was stipulated by the Treaty of Versailles. The whole question, he said, 'had to be solved by a business transaction.'

"Here it must be recalled that Mr. Briand advocated this idea as long as two years ago. He and his associates insisted then that the plan, according to which the debt is being paid through the Dawes system, ought to be at least partially commercialized. The sale of the bonds of this debt would give France, as he believed, larger sums of money.

"Owing to various circumstances this idea has never been put into operation. Those, however, who have been well informed in political affairs have never doubted that we would be requested to pay for the liberation of our own home, and that our way to the Rhine provinces would inevitably pass, metaphorically speaking, through the office of France's receiving teller. What are the 'financial advantages' which Mr. Briand has in mind at the present time?

"When, in his recent report, Mr. Parker Gilbert pronounced himself in favor of establishing a definite total figure of the German debt, French statesmen realized that this was a chance

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for them to demand something. It must be said, however, that Germany will agree to the 'commercialization' of her reparations debt only in case a reasonable and acceptable sum is asked from her. In other words, we must figure out clearly how much we can pay for the cessation of the occupation. Let us not forget that in two years from to-day the Allies will retain the right of occupying only the Mainz zone, and that later still they will have to withdraw also from that last zone."

The Berlin *Taegliche Rundschau* says:

"When Mr. Briand declared that France occupies the Rhineland not of her own decision, but in keeping with the decision of all the Allies, the French Senators probably smiled, for it is very well known in Paris that all France's allies wish that this occupation should be discontinued as soon as possible."

The *Frankfurter Zeitung* calls the attention of its readers to the fact that, altho admitting that nothing threatens France on the side of Germany at the present time, Mr. Briand asserted that there still is a strong spirit of revenge in Germany, and it adds:

"He said among other things: 'Speaking in the Reichstag after Dr. Stresemann, Herr Freitag-Lornighoven drew a whole program of a future war against France, and this program was a terrible answer to Dr. Stresemann's speech. No, Germany's pugnacious spirit hasn't died yet. I willingly admit that Dr. Stresemann has always combated this spirit. I have complete confidence in his loyalty, but what if a change in Germany's public opinion takes place and if Herr Freitag-Lornighoven becomes a minister? What then?'"

"To this it may be answered that Mr. Briand is surrounded by excellent experts on Germany who know very well that no such change of public opinion is possible which would bring extreme Nationalists to power. Besides, he also ought to understand that Herr Freitag-Lornighoven developed no 'program of the future war,' but merely wanted to prove that no complete understanding between France and Germany is possible. Besides, everybody knows that Nationalists exist not only in Germany, but also in France, and that French Nationalists are by far more aggressive than their German equivalent."

What the occupation means to the people living in the Rhineland, according to the *Koelnische Zeitung*, was disclosed in debates in the Reichstag which made it clear how oppressive is their situation "owing to the medieval régime established by the occupation authorities," and this newspaper goes on to say:

"The life, the economic activities and the spirit of this population is under an abnormal and unnecessary pressure. What is deplorable is that the German State can not extend to the Rhineland provinces the assistance which they need and which it would wish to extend, for reparations payments drain Germany's finances to such an extent that nothing can be done."

Among the French press there seems to be a difference of opinion on the Stresemann-Briand discussion. Some of the radical papers apparently approve of Dr. Stresemann's demands, and the Paris *Ceuvre* says:

"Dr. Stresemann's speech does not contain anything aggressive, it reflects a policy which is in the interests of the German people, but which at the same time does not conflict with the interests of other peoples."

On the other hand, a staunch defender of the French attitude is the *Echo de Paris*, which asserts, in a tone of irony, that Dr. Stresemann would have the French concentrate on the fact that "human souls in general, and especially German souls, have undergone significant changes in recent years." This newspaper then expresses its skepticism of this contention as follows:

"After the terrible lesson which was taught to us, we consider it our right to demand, without hatred, but without weakness either, that the proofs of the significant change in German souls should be demonstrated to us in the course of another few years, that is to say, up to 1935."

Another French daily that strongly indorses the views of Mr. Briand is the Paris *Figaro*, which observes:

"Germany has become stronger than she was a few years ago. And Dr. Stresemann apparently forgets the fact that she was vanquished, and that the occupation of the Rhineland is a guaranty for the reparations which have not yet been paid to us."