

FOUR-POWER PACT OF  
UNDERSTANDING AND COLLABORATION, 1933

by

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## CHAPTER I

### THE GENESIS OF A NOVEL PLAN

During the inter-war period a series of attempts were made by European statesmen to establish peace and stability. Among these attempts, the Locarno Agreements of 1925 and the Munich Pact of 1938 have been the subject of continued historical discussion. The Four-Power Pact of 1933 has generally been ignored because it never fully came into effect and consequently did not leave an impact on the course of international relations.

But the Four-Power Pact represents a unique diplomatic development during the inter-war period. It can be regarded as forming the logical link between Locarno and Munich. More important, however, is the fact that it represents an attempt to revive the historical "Concert of Europe" in order to solve European problems.

The Four-Power Pact was proposed by Benito Mussolini. As such it was designed as a measure to promote the interests of Italy. But at the time it was proposed it was evident that conditions in Europe had worsened to a point where such a measure might help alleviate European tensions. In that

respect the pact came to be regarded as a significant Italian contribution to the process of European conciliation. At any rate such was the impression that prevailed in Britain and Italy at the time. The British ambassador in Rome, Sir Ronald Graham, wrote:

The idea of a 'political truce' has been vaguely under discussion in Europe for some years past. Nothing practical, however, had ever taken definite shape, although the idea remained below the surface of the minds of certain statesmen in Europe. Of these statesmen Signor Mussolini was one, and it is interesting to recall that in his speech at Turin on the 23rd October, 1932, he mentioned the idea of collaboration between the Four Great Western Powers . . . 'But I think that if tomorrow, on the basis of justice, on the basis of the recognition of our sacred rights . . . the ground could be prepared so as to permit of collaboration between the four Great Western Powers, Europe could be tranquil from the political point of view, and perhaps the economic crisis which grips us might move towards its end'.<sup>1</sup>

The need for a 'political truce' became acute in March of 1933. The League of Nations, created at Versailles in 1919 to serve as an instrument for international cooperation and stability, had been rendered useless. France and her allies had dominated it and used it as a tool to promote their status-quo policies. The status-quo had now become untenable. The economic crisis had generated a wave of militant nationalism in various countries which encouraged

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<sup>1</sup>E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (ed.), Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Second Series, Vol. V, (London, 1956), 358-59.

aggression. In Germany the Nazis took power at the end of January 1933. Their gospel had been preached in black and white; the international system established at Versailles was now threatened by its most serious antagonist. The Disarmament Conference, which opened in Geneva in February 1932, proved to be a prolonged farce. France consistently refused to sacrifice the advantage accruing from German prostration. Germany now threatened to rearm at all costs.<sup>2</sup>

The first step to alleviate the worsening European situation was taken by Britain. Her policy favored a successful conclusion of the Disarmament Conference as the best means of assuring security in Europe. Britain felt that the situation at Geneva in March 1933 was hopeless. Consequently, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and Foreign Secretary Sir John Simon paid a visit to Geneva. Their immediate aim was

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<sup>2</sup>Winston S. Churchill, While England Slept (New York, 1938), 28. Churchill made an apt analysis when he declared, "The expectation of a general disarmament upon a great scale has failed; the hope of one nation being able to disarm its rival has been frustrated by the very stout and stubborn resistance which every nation makes to that process. Now . . . a large part of the object of every country is to throw the blame for an impending failure (of the Disarmament Conference) upon some other country."

". . . since the War Locarno was the high-water mark of Europe. Look what a distance we have fallen since then . . . Today Fears are greater, rivalries are sharper, military plans are more closely concerted." Since Churchill made this statement on November 23, 1932, the rise of Hitler in Germany contributed to the further worsening of European relations.

to reanimate the dying Disarmament Conference. On March 16, the MacDonald Disarmament Plan was presented in Geneva. MacDonald appealed to the delegates to consider it in a spirit of mutual concession. At the same time the British ministers established personal contact with representatives of the other nations in Geneva. Approaches were made to Rome expressing the British desire to confer with the Italian government. It was felt that Mussolini could bring useful influence to bear on Hitler and thereby restrain the revolutionary zeal of the New Germany.<sup>3</sup>

Britain also encouraged the organization of "Mutual Assistance" in Europe as a means of encouraging European conciliation.<sup>4</sup> On March 17, MacDonald expressed to a group

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<sup>3</sup>Regarding British anxiety to rescue the Disarmament Conference from failure see Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 68, 72; Ibid., Vol. IV, 467; and Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, Ser. C, (1933-1937) The Third Reich: First Phase, Vol. I, January 30-October 14, 1933 (Washington, D. C., 1957), 161, 166.

<sup>4</sup>Britain encouraged the adoption by the Disarmament Conference of a Pact of Mutual Assistance, especially in the Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932, and the declaration of "no resort to force" of February 14, 1933; see Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, IV (1932-1933), (London, 1950), 377; League of Nations, Records of the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments, Ser. D, V, (Geneva, 1936), 5.

of journalists his hopes of discussing the formation of "The Peace Club" with Mussolini.<sup>5</sup> He pointed out that his purpose in visiting Rome was "to ask Mussolini whether he does not also believe that Europe is in serious danger, and whether he does not believe that we should cooperate in order to ward off this danger."<sup>6</sup>

The conduct of British policy suggests that Britain was already in favor of an arrangement of the kind that Mussolini proposed on March 18. An editorial comment in a London newspaper points this out clearly: "Mr. MacDonald is generally understood to have quite definite ideas of his own about the restoration of better feeling in Europe. It is accordingly assumed that the project suggested by Signor Mussolini proved in fact to be in general harmony with the ideas of Mr. MacDonald."<sup>7</sup>

The proposals presented to MacDonald on March 18 by the Italian Government represented, in a sense, a continuation

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<sup>5</sup>John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace (New York, 1935), 129.

<sup>6</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C. I, 198.

<sup>7</sup>The Times (London), March 18, 1933, p. 12. The idea of four-Power collaboration was emphasized in the British Disarmament Plan of March 16; see Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 267.



of the policies the British Prime Minister had been advocating. Only a statesman of Mussolini's shrewdness could have created an ingenious plan which, while giving the impression of a measure for solving international problems, was designed to promote the interests of Italy, to advance the fascist policy of 'sacred egoism.'

The Mussolini plan proposed that the four Great Powers should establish themselves as a European 'directory' and as guardians of peace. Other countries were to be compelled to follow the four-Power lead. The forum of the Great Powers was to decide the issue of treaty revision as well as that of granting "equality of rights" to Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria. These were indeed unprecedented proposals:

March 4, 1933

I

The four Western Powers, France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy, undertake to establish between themselves an effective policy of collaboration with a view to the maintenance of peace in accordance with the spirit of the Kellogg Pact and the "No Force Pact," and undertake to follow, in the European sphere, such a line of action as will induce third parties, if necessary, to adopt such a policy of peace.

12

The four Powers reaffirm in accordance with the articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the principle of the revision of the treaties of peace in circumstances capable of producing a conflict between nations; but they declare that such a

principle of revision can only be applied within the framework of the League of Nations and through mutual recognition of the common nature of the interests involved.

## 3

France, Great Britain and Italy declare that, should the Disarmament Conference only produce partial results, the equality of rights which has been granted to Germany must have a practical application; and Germany undertakes to achieve such equality of rights gradually as a result of successive agreements to be arrived at by the four Powers through the normal diplomatic channels.

The four Powers undertake to arrive at similar agreements in regard to 'equality' for Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria.

## 4

In all political and non-political questions, whether European, non-European or relating to the Colonial sphere, the four Powers undertake to adopt as far as possible a common line of action.

## 5

The present political agreement for mutual understanding and co-operation will be presented, where necessary, to the respective Parliaments for approval within three months, will be valid for ten years . . .

## 6

The present pact will be registered at the Secretariat of the League of Nations.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 67. Translations of the Italian draft are also contained in: Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 162; and Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933, I, (Washington, D. C., 1950), 401.

In a speech to the Italian Senate on June 7, 1933, Mussolini attempted to portray himself as a "good European," a man of peace who was moved to making his proposals in the interests of the Disarmament Conference and the European situation in general. He declared:

The idea of a pact of Collaboration and Understanding between four Western Powers took shape in my mind after the conclusion--a more or less negative conclusion--of the first phase of the Disarmament Conference last summer. In October I hinted at it in Turin . . . . The idea appeared to me to be of still more urgent interest at the beginning of March, when the panorama of European politics seemed more gloomy for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the lack of progress achieved in the second phase of the Disarmament Conference. Such is what I call the personal genesis of my proposal . . . .

What I will call the objective genesis of the pact is different . . . It is intended to constitute a continuation and development of, those international pacts--first and foremost that of Locarno--which are an expression of the spirit of understanding and collaboration between states, to the exclusion of any idea of rival groupings or of rigid political antagonisms.<sup>9</sup>

Mussolini exploited fully his professions of working in the interests of peace. To the British he emphasized the idea of a ten-year pacification contained in his proposals, as well as the desire to resolve the disarmament stalemate, and restore the 'Locarno Spirit.'<sup>10</sup> To the Germans he emphasized that in France war with Germany "was not only considered

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<sup>9</sup>John W. Wheeler-Bennett, (ed.), Documents on International Affairs, 1933, (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1934) 267.

<sup>10</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 71.

possible but most menacingly close at hand," and that "in view of this threatening world situation the Mussolini pact acquired very special significance. This pact really represented the last appeal to the reason of Europe."<sup>11</sup> To the French he declared that one of the "chief objects of the Four-Power Pact was that it should form the basis for subsequent Franco-Italian negotiations," with a view to solving the questions outstanding between the two countries.<sup>12</sup>

The Four-Power Pact proposals essentially represented a continuation of the Italian attempt to end the position of inferiority assigned to Italy at Versailles. At Locarno, for the first time since the war, Italy had been called upon to maintain the European balance in cooperation with Britain. Her position as a great power had been recognized and her national ego immensely boosted.<sup>13</sup> But the situation had since

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<sup>11</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 205.

<sup>12</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 404; and Wheeler-Bennett (ed.), Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 274.

<sup>13</sup>Dino Grandi, "The Foreign Policy of the Duce," Foreign Affairs (New York), XII, (July, 1934), 553-66. The writer points out that in the recognition of Italy's position as a great power in the Locarno Agreements and the Four-Power Pact, "consists the deepest and more real significance of the Duce's foreign policy."

changed and Italy's importance had diminished, while French predominance in Europe continued unchecked.<sup>14</sup> Thus, "in the destruction of the power balance in Europe, Italian policy had been robbed of its most effective lever."<sup>15</sup> Jozef Beck correctly explains, "Italy, as a state which was the last in Europe to reach for the status of so-called great Power, had the passion of an upstart for the revival of the "Balance of Power" so characteristic of the European politics of the nineteenth century."<sup>16</sup>

It was to recreate the balance of power in Europe that Mussolini wanted to revive the spirit of Locarno. In his June 7 speech Mussolini conceded as much when he said:

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<sup>14</sup>Mussolini resented French hegemony in Europe, which was represented by her satellite system and her domination of the League of Nations: "I regard the network of treaties of friendship . . . as greater guarantees of peace than alliances on the grand scale and even than the League of Nations," quoted in Emil Ludwig, Talks with Mussolini, (London, 1932), 144. Mussolini was irritated when, in February 1933, the Little Entente adopted a Pact of Organization, thereby forming a "Fifth Great Power" in Europe. The German Foreign Minister pointed out, "With his proposal Mussolini is undoubtedly pursuing the secondary aim of weakening France's hegemony and upsetting her system of alliances. In a certain sense . . . it is to be considered as a counteraction against the new alliance of the Little Entente."--Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 225.

<sup>15</sup>Albrecht-Carrie, Italy from Napoleon to Mussolini (New York, 1950), 198.

<sup>16</sup>Colonel Jozef Beck, Final Report (New York, 1957), 35.

By reason of their situation and the natural factors which characterise them, England and Italy are called to maintain a balance in Europe. It was owing to this that the Locarno Pact assigned them a special function, and this balance finds in the Four-Power Pact a new expression and a new possibility of fruitful and constructive development."<sup>17</sup>

Mussolini's intention in proposing the organization of a 'Concert' of four powers was to create for Italy the role of an honest broker between Germany and France. The rise of Germany was indeed favorable to Italy, for in that lay the possibility of support in her revisionistic aspirations by the greatest of the revisionist powers.<sup>18</sup> The establishment of a directorate of the four great powers on the basis of equality, while transferring business from the League to the four power group would enhance the importance of Italy whose support would be courted by both Germany and France-- for a price. At the same time such a directory, while reducing the hegemony of France, would also tend to restrain

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<sup>17</sup>Wheeler-Bennett (ed.), Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 273.

<sup>18</sup>The German ambassador in Rome, Ulrich von Hassell, wrote that the Mussolini plan was designed to "preserve intact" "the strong trump card that Italy was dealt by the victory of the Hitler movement,"--Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 181. Ample evidence is available regarding Mussolini's revisionistic aspirations; see Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 73; Maxwell H. H. Macartney and Paul Cremona, Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy (London, 1938), 123; Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini (New York, 1956), 78; and Barone Bernardo Quaranta di San Severino, (ed., tran.), Mussolini, As Revealed in His Political Speeches, (London, 1923), 293-94, 319.

the 'New Germany.'<sup>19</sup> Toynbee makes an appropriate analysis of the Italian strategy: "Italy had no more desire to confer the hegemony of Europe upon Germany than she had to concede it to France, since the fundamental policy of Italy, like that of the United Kingdom, was to prevent any single Power from establishing a predominance on the Continent."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>German officials expressed the view that Italian policy "will be willing to take account of wishes which may be expressed by the German side only to the extent that these accord with the Italian policy." See Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 574 n. 1.

<sup>20</sup>Arnold J. Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1934), 200.

## CHAPTER II

### EUROPE AND THE MUSSOLINI PLAN

The Mussolini plan projected into the international arena bold new proposals for solving the complex European problems. The formal recognition of revision of treaties and a positive acceptance of German equality represented grave new factors that were bound to have serious repercussions in Europe. In the midst of such international reactions the Pact negotiations required careful handling. Mussolini developed a strategy that speaks well for his political foresight .

Italian policy encouraged the development of a close bond between Germany and Italy. But in order to exercise restraint on Germany Mussolini attempted to negotiate the entire pact with Germany on a secret basis. On many occasions he adopted the expedient of telephone conversations with Hitler. German objections to the draft pact, consequently, never became public, and the unsalutary influence they were bound to have in France was thus avoided.

The Four-Power Pact proposals contained the novel political idea of reviving the Concert of Europe. Britain, France, Germany and Italy were to form a 'directory' in order to



exercise influence on general European policy. This represented a contradiction of the French system of security. It was obvious that France and her allies would be perturbed by the pact proposals. Mussolini must have been conscious of this when he adopted the strategy of first winning Britain over to his proposals. British influence in Paris would thereby ensure favorable consideration of the proposals by France. The nature of British foreign policy at this time represented a striking similarity with the Italian policy of furthering the cause of peace. And by emphasizing the peace aspect of his proposals Mussolini hoped to lure Britain into accepting a position of leadership in the pact negotiations. At the same time by maintaining Italy's crucial role in the negotiations Germany could be reassured.

A rather paradoxical strategy was adopted by Italy. On the one hand, in secret conversations Mussolini created the impression in Berlin that his proposals essentially represented an Italo-German plot designed to further the cause of fascism. On the other hand, Italian proposals were advertised as an Anglo-Italian effort toward assisting the task of establishing peace in Europe. A two-faced diplomacy of this nature required careful handling and Mussolini betook himself to the task with the ingenuity of a masterful diplomat.

On March 14, 1933 the Italian ambassador in Berlin, Vittorio Cerruti, called on the German Foreign Minister, Baron

von Neurath, and expressed Mussolini's concern at the deterioration of the European political situation. He declared that the situation in the disarmament conference at Geneva "was completely hopeless;" and that in France, Poland and the Little Entente countries the military circles were strongly contemplating a preventive war against Italy and Germany. At the same time, the ambassador explained, public opinion in these countries, as well as all over Europe, was in favor of preserving peace. Mussolini was anxious that these aspirations for peace should be realized. British Prime Minister MacDonald was similarly inclined. A meeting between the two leaders was planned in order that the draft pact be presented to Britain and her acceptance thereof secured. Such a development would help bring about a "considerable detente in Europe."<sup>1</sup>

The Italian draft was presented in Berlin on March 14 "for an immediate expression of German view." After that Italy planned to present the draft to Britain, and with her assistance to encourage a favorable reaction to the proposals in France. Mussolini emphasized that Italy was interested in obtaining German concurrence before presenting the draft to the other countries.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I. For a record of the Cerruti-Neurath Conference on March 14 see p. 160-62.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 160-62.

It was also suggested that both Italy and Germany should avoid giving the impression of a close friendship between them till after the pact had been signed. Plans for a meeting between Hitler and Mussolini should consequently be left in abeyance. Once the pact was signed an expression of Italo-German friendship would not arouse extreme excitement in France. As Cerruti put it: "Once the agreement [is] concluded, all these disturbing elements would vanish and Mussolini would be very glad to welcome the Chancellor in Rome or elsewhere."<sup>3</sup>

Continuing his strategy of presenting Italy as a friend of Germany, Mussolini told the German ambassador in Rome, Ulrich von Hassell, that if the pact was concluded it would ensure a five-year or ten-year period of tranquility, thereby giving time for the consolidation of the new regime in Germany. At the same time, Germany would be able to rearm on the basis of "equality of rights" while France would be deprived of any pretext for taking action against her.

Mussolini also pointed out that the recognition of the possibility of treaty revision would be a moral victory for Germany, Hungary, Austria and Bulgaria: "The system of the peace treaties (would) thereby (be) practically finished."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 160-62.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., for a record of Mussolini's conversations with Von Hassell see p. 166-67.

Such a phrase was bound to appeal to Hitler as he was pledged to tear down the provisions of the "diktat" of Versailles.

In an Aide-Memoire prepared by the German Foreign Office on March 15 and duly approved by Hitler Germany formally expressed her acceptance of the Italian proposals. At the same time she expressed doubts about article I of the pact whereby the four Western Powers were to constitute themselves as leaders of European policy, declaring that it was a "sharp attack against the French system of alliances, especially against Poland and the recently consolidated Little Entente. It is more than doubtful whether France will accept this."<sup>5</sup>

Germany also expressed her objection to the idea of conducting treaty revision through the League of Nations as envisaged by article II of the draft pact. She favored a stronger article II with less emphasis on the role of the League of Nations: "Since the provisions of the League of Nations Covenant with regard to the revision of the treaty are, as we know, entirely inadequate, this part of Section II would have to be amended."<sup>6</sup>

As regards article III of the Mussolini plan, Germany expressed "special satisfaction" with the idea that her equality of status must be given immediate practical application.

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<sup>5</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 168.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 168-69.

She insisted, however, that she would be prepared to assert her equality "by stages" decided among the four Powers only for the period of five years and not ten years.

Italy made no direct reply to these initial German considerations. On March 17 ambassador Cerruti called on the Foreign Office in Berlin, and gave assurances that Mussolini would keep German objections in mind. He suggested that Germany should not feel perturbed about the references to the League of Nations or to rearmament "by degrees," as the basic idea was that "the four Powers were to combine to shape European policy," and Germany could always depend on Italian support in this four-Power forum.<sup>7</sup>

German reactions to the Italian proposals varied between satisfaction and fear. The idea of four-Power collaboration, which was being raised for the first time since the war in a formal manner, as well as the formal recognition of treaty revision and the acceptance of German equality, were very encouraging factors for Germany. Indeed, there was the satisfying feeling that an unprecedented moral victory might be achieved without the use of force. At the same time, there was the fear of the pact, "already very meager in content, being watered down in the course of the negotiations. Not only the sense of the whole undertaking could be lost thereby,

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<sup>7</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, record of this conference p. 177.

but it might even result in certain circumstances, in a deterioration of German position."<sup>8</sup> Especially, if Mussolini were to make concessions to Britain and France, Germany's opposition might tend to isolate her. There was also the fear that the pact might encourage a Franco-Italian rapprochement, which would work to Germany's disadvantage.

Meanwhile, Mussolini was preparing to launch the second step in his strategy. On March 15, following an enquiry by the British ambassador, Sir Ronald Graham, Mussolini had gladly agreed to invite British Prime Minister MacDonald to visit Rome.<sup>9</sup> An official visit was accordingly arranged for March 18-20.

MacDonald arrived in Geneva on March 16 in an effort to improve the prospects of peace in Europe. Before leaving for Rome he held discussions in Geneva with the French Prime Minister, Edouard Daladier. MacDonald's idea of organizing a Peace Club in Europe received considerable French support, and Daladier expressed his approval of the British mission to Rome.<sup>10</sup> The desire to meet with Mussolini indicates British

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<sup>8</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 200-02.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 167.

<sup>10</sup>Information regarding Anglo-French conversations is found in Toynbee (ed) Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 212; Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace (New York, 1935), 129.

interest in Mussolini's ideas regarding the restoration of tranquility in Europe.

MacDonald, accompanied by his Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, arrived in Italy on March 18. Mussolini appeared in person at the air-port of Ostia to greet them. And to emphasize Italian hospitality, the British Ministers were taken to Rome in a car driven by Mussolini. This marked the beginning of impressive ceremony with which Italy greeted the British Prime Minister.<sup>11</sup>

A copy of the Italian proposals for a four-Power pact of collaboration and understanding was presented to MacDonald at Ostia.<sup>12</sup> The French ambassador in Rome, Henri de Jouvenel, was also presented with a copy of the Italian proposals on the same day. The German ambassador, Von Hassell, was asked by Mussolini on March 19 to state that he too had received a copy of the Italian draft on March 18, and that his government had accepted the fundamental points contained in it.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 81; see also Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 130; and Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 212.

<sup>12</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 81; see also Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 130; and Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 212.

<sup>13</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 184-85.

The popular impression was thus created that the Four-Power Pact was proposed on March 18 and that the British Ministers were the first to obtain personal information about it from Mussolini. This Italian tactic had the salutary effect of encouraging Anglo-Italian cooperation.

Conversations between the British and the Italian Ministers were held in Rome the following day, March 19. Mussolini approached the British with a strategy similar to the one he had already adopted towards Germany--that of emphasizing those aspects of his controversial plan which he felt would best attract them to it.

Mussolini started by pointing out to his British guests that his plan envisaged a pacification for ten years, and "If the four Great Powers could themselves carry out the policy of pacification for such a period, they could well impose it upon the smaller Powers."<sup>14</sup> He further emphasized that such pacification would help eliminate from the European scene the idea of opposing blocs of Power and thereby remove an important source of tension.

There was also the advantage of allowing Germany to obtain 'Gleichberechtigung' in accordance with article III of the proposed pact, which provided that such German equality was to be achieved by stages agreed to by the four great

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<sup>14</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Ser. 2, V, 71.



Powers. This would also reassure France and satisfy her demands for security. The Disarmament Conference at Geneva would, consequently, be able to make excellent progress. Mussolini assured the British Ministers that "he had reason to believe that Germany would accept an agreement of this kind."<sup>15</sup>

Mussolini pointed out that his plan had a striking resemblance to Locarno, and would tend to revive the 'Locarno Spirit.' It would therefore become easier to solve the difficult problem of treaty revision. Mussolini was careful in dealing with the question of revision as raised in article II of his plan. He mainly indicated areas such as the Polish Corridor, which caused bitterness among European nations and endangered peace. Such areas, Mussolini felt, did not have strong moral validity, and were not worth risking a war, as was the case with areas such as Alsace-Lorraine. A revision of the peace treaties in this respect would eliminate a source of conflict: "No one had hitherto dared propose the solution but somebody must come forward."<sup>16</sup> Mussolini expressed the belief that treaties are holy but not eternal--

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<sup>15</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Ser. 2, V, 71.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 73.

the British Ministers expressed their agreement with this view.<sup>17</sup>

The Anglo-Italian conference agreed that the Mussolini plan represented a step forward in the policy recently advocated by MacDonald, and embodied in the Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932. And to satisfy further his British guests, Mussolini agreed at their request to drop the colonial question from his draft.

The British Ministers expressed their "great interest" in the Italian plan, and offered to cooperate with Italy. MacDonald was indeed rather anxious about the whole matter: "The situation [is] a very difficult one and [calls] for early decisions; further delay would be dangerous."<sup>18</sup>

The Rome conference decided that French adherence to the pact would pose a problem, especially if the French press was allowed to enlarge upon the pact proposals. Britain assured Italy that she would use her good offices with France with a view to solving the problem. It was felt that Daladier was, comparatively, a very liberal-minded person; hence the possibility that France would support the new plan. Also, ambassador de Jouvenel "was enthusiastic over the proposed

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<sup>17</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Ser. 2, V, 74, 76-77.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 70.

agreement,"<sup>19</sup> and would be able to exercise useful influence in Paris.

As a first measure to secure their concurrence, or at any rate not arouse French suspicions, Britain proposed interim amendments to the Italian draft.<sup>20</sup> Article II was amended to contain an emphasis on the sanctity of treaties:

The four Powers confirm that, while the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations embody a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations . . . they also contemplate the possibility of the revision of the Treaties of peace . . .

Article III was also amended to remove the Italian assumption that the Disarmament Conference would fail:

The four Powers reiterate their resolve to cooperate in the Disarmament Conference with the other States there represented in seeking to work out a convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments, with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction.

British policy was strongly in favor of ensuring the success of the Disarmament Conference. Sir John Simon pointed this out clearly at the Rome conference: "it [is] important that, whatever arrangement might be reached by the four Powers, it should assist the work at Geneva."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 72.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 68.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 71.

The Rome discussions proved very successful. The British Ministers were pleased with the Italian proposals,<sup>22</sup> and offered to cooperate with Italy. Mussolini was satisfied that his proposals had received encouraging support from Britain.

The fate of the Mussolini plan now depended on the attitude France would adopt toward it. In Paris, the first reaction was one of caution and reserve. A series of hurried conferences were held between Prime Minister Daladier, Foreign Minister Paul-Boncour and the chairmen of the Senate and Chamber Committees on Foreign Affairs. Doubts were expressed regarding the establishment of a four-Power 'directory' which might work to France's disadvantage. There was also the fear of an Italo-German understanding, and of the Italian intention to arbitrate between France and Germany in cooperation with Britain.<sup>23</sup>

At the same time French opinion was exceedingly disturbed by the course of events in Germany. The parties of the Left, led by Daladier, favored an arrangement that would help canalise and control the restless zeal of the Nazis. This would also help in containing the parties of the Right, and curb the growth of militant nationalism in France. Indeed,

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<sup>22</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 103.

<sup>23</sup>The Times (London), March 20, 1933, p. 12.

responsible French politicians favored a policy of general appeasement. Lord Tyrrell, British ambassador in Paris, wrote on March 20:

The course of events in Germany is turning France increasingly towards close collaboration with Great Britain and America . . . . France has lost confidence in the satellite system as a means of containing Germany; she realises she cannot stand alone, and she is becoming more and more conscious of the necessity of her retaining British good will.<sup>24</sup>

In the midst of this atmosphere MacDonald and Simon arrived in Paris from Rome on March 21. Their immediate aim was to try to sell the Mussolini plan to the French Ministers. The whole matter was presented to the French in these words:

Firstly, they all knew that the danger was impending that Germany might announce that she would rearm without agreement. Secondly, they all knew that Germany and perhaps her former allies might claim that the revision of frontiers should be considered without reaching agreement with others. Thirdly, they must consider whether there were any means of providing against these dangers more especially by (an) agreement limiting the methods to be employed and which would have the signature of not only Germany, but also of Italy . . . we should be in a bad position if we gave way to an explicit German threat; prudence dictated that we should forestall such demands.<sup>25</sup>

The French Ministers replied to the British by pointing out their fears about the Italian proposals. They expressed concern about the relation of the proposed Four-Power Pact

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<sup>24</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, IV, 466.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 2, V, 91-92; 96.

to the League of Nations, and as to "how far the new proposals went beyond what was already contained in the Covenant of the League of Nations, especially Article 19."<sup>26</sup> Daladier enquired of the British Ministers at the Paris conference if the Mussolini proposals intended to destroy, modify, or "get round" Article 19 of the Covenant, which dealt with revision of treaties.<sup>27</sup> France also raised objections to article III of the Italian plan as it provided for German rearmament without a corresponding provision for French security.<sup>28</sup>

The French Ministers also expressed concern as to how the interests of states other than the four mentioned would be represented, considered and safeguarded. France was especially concerned about the opposition which Poland and Czechoslovakia were bound to have to revision of frontiers. In brief, she insisted that the "interests and properties" of her allies could not be disposed of without consulting them.<sup>29</sup>

Basically, the French attitude was that it was necessary to create a liaison between the pact and the League of Nations, while issues raised in articles II and III of the Italian plan should be dropped for the time being, "since

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<sup>26</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 103.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 94.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 90, 103.

the reference to disarmament would be compromising to the League of Nations, whilst to raise treaty revision at the same time as the announcement of collaboration of the four Powers would create great agitation among other nations."<sup>30</sup>

The Paris conference concluded with MacDonald making a final effort to ensure that France would not reject the plan. He warned that France and Great Britain were old fashioned, "Unless they put new energy into their countries . . . they would be overwhelmed. Lenin, dead in the Kremlin, was keeping Russia awake, and Mussolini was reanimating Italy. They saw the same movement spreading into Germany."<sup>31</sup>

While these high level conversations were going on among the four Great Powers a deafening chorus of newspaper clamor over the Four-Power Pact proposals had arisen in Europe. The Press, especially in France, Poland and the Little Entente countries, put all kinds of interpretations to the Anglo-Italian communique issued in Rome, which simply said:

After a full and exhaustive exchange of ideas on the general situation, the Ministers examined in their conversations a project for an understanding on the larger political questions put forward by the head of the Italian Government with the object of securing the collaboration of the Four Western Powers in an effort to promote, in the spirit of

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<sup>30</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 97.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 96.

the Kellogg Pact and the 'No Force' declaration, a long period of peace for Europe and the world.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, an acute and immediate storm was aroused by the Italian proposals. Poland and the Little Entente countries were hysterical. Most French newspapers denounced the plan. Mussolini felt depressed and pessimistic.<sup>33</sup> At Geneva the suspicion gained strength that the plan was designed to "dish" the League of Nations.<sup>34</sup>

It was evident that the pact negotiations would be hampered by the strong criticism directed at it by the smaller Powers. MacDonald, in an effort to improve the situation, declared on March 23: ". . . so far as the [Rome] conversations are concerned, they [the small Powers] have no foundation whatever for their fears, and I wish to make it clear that, in our view, these smaller States have a right to be consulted wherever their special interests are concerned . . ."<sup>35</sup>

On the same day, Hitler made a speech emphasizing the peaceful intentions of Germany. He further declared:

We recognize that the British Government, in their last proposals at Geneva, have made an effort to move the [Disarmament] conference to rapid

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<sup>32</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 130. Regarding Press attacks see also The Times (London), March 20, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 104.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 105.

<sup>35</sup>Wheeler-Bennett (ed.), Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 251.



decisions . . . . The plan of the chief of the Italian Government is even more extensive, and we attribute the most serious importance to it. We are prepared to co-operate in the attempt to bring the four Powers--Germany, Italy, England and France--together for peaceful political co-operation, and for a courageous and decided approach to the tasks on which the fate of Europe depends.<sup>36</sup>

These reassuring statements, however, touched the problem of opposition to the pact on the surface only. There were important factors influencing opinion in France and the Little Entente countries, where opposition to Mussolini's ideas was deep seated.

The paramount consideration in the formulation of French foreign policy was that of security. France was conscious of her permanent weakness against Germany. During the postwar years, France was preoccupied with the problem of assuring her security. Various attempts were made in this respect: the organization of a network of alliances (la méthode de la contrainte or la politique de la Ruhr), the organization of security at Geneva (la méthode de la persuasion) which regarded Locarno and the Disarmament Conference as a means of obtaining security. But the rise of Hitler in Germany tended to discredit the French system of security, and aroused fears and anxiety in France. The Mussolini plan, advocating

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<sup>36</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, IV, 480.

recognition of German equality and revision of treaties, seemed to provide a final blow to the French system of security. The pro status quo policy of France and her allies was now faced with the challenge of fascist dynamism driving for greater power, broader political influence and larger colonial possessions; and threatening to destroy French influence in the Danube, in the Balkans and the Mediterranean. A contemporary account summed up the situation in France well:

"It is evident that, between threatening events in Germany and pressure from the allies of France in Eastern Europe, French opinion, though fundamentally pacific and anxious for conciliation, is on the whole afraid of new risks . . . ."37

The nature of French reaction to the Mussolini proposals is revealed in the various newspaper accounts. Most newspapers denounced the proposed pact as an attempt to establish a directory of four Powers in order to isolate France. Italy and Britain would thereby be able to act as brokers between France and Germany. A typical example was the influential Temps, which declared:

. . . it is clear that the plan would complete the ruin of the League if adopted and would have the direct and immediate effect of destroying equality among nations at Geneva.

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<sup>37</sup>The Times (London), March 25, 1933, p. 12.

It is disconcerting, that Mr. MacDonald should not see that the revision of treaties on the terms proposed by Germany and Italy, far from giving better assurance of peace, would inevitably lead to war.<sup>38</sup>

The Italian draft leaked out in Paris and was published in Paris on March 30. The publication of the draft led to renewed attacks on the pact; especially the articles dealing with treaty revision and the colonial question came under bitter condemnation.<sup>39</sup>

The most serious opposition to the pact came from Edouard Herriot, who as chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, and as a former Prime Minister, exercised immense influence on French policy. Herriot denounced the proposed Four-Power Pact as an attempt to establish a hierarchy of states in which Italy and Germany would be united against France, while she would be left at the mercy of Britain.<sup>40</sup>

In spite of the overwhelming opposition to the pact, both in Parliament as well as in public, Daladier faced the problem with courage and a sincere desire to serve the cause of peace and conciliation.<sup>41</sup> The pro-government newspaper the Volonte expressed the official attitude well:

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<sup>38</sup>The Times (London), March 25, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>39</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 134.

<sup>40</sup>The Times (London), March 24, 1933, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933, I, 421. See also Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 123n.

Let us say frankly, that if the changes proposed by Signor Mussolini can definitely assure peace, it would be wrong to reject them a priori. We have often stated that the status quo is untenable; to maintain it at all costs means either leaving the field open for war or preserving an insuperable obstacle to the organization of mutual assistance and the international control of armaments.<sup>42</sup>

Another French leader who played an important role in furthering the cause of the pact was de Jouvenel. Through repeated personal contacts he endeavoured to influence politicians and Foreign Ministry officials in Paris in favor of the pact. One writer points out that de Jouvenel "always remained a fervent advocate of the plan to the point of informing his government that if it were not accepted, he would resign his post as Ambassador."<sup>43</sup>

An important factor in determining the attitude of the French government towards the pact was the fear of isolation. Both Daladier and Paul-Boncour were aware that if the other three Powers accepted the Mussolini plan, French rejection of it would be unwise. It would not only isolate her,

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<sup>42</sup>The Times (London), March 25, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>43</sup>Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini, 102. The author states that this statement was made to him by the then Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Fulvio Suvich. Regarding de Jouvenel's role see also, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1933, I, 422-23; The Times (London), July 17, 1933; and Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 361.

but bring upon France the odium of having torpedoed a proposal for the pacification of Europe. It would also encourage the Italo-German bloc.<sup>44</sup>

In the circumstances, France was interested in trying to work out an acceptable Four-Power Pact. De Jouvenel expressed such a view on March 30, saying that "... there had been a gradual improvement in the French attitude towards the Four-Power Pact and that the French government, the French press, and what was more important, also M. Herriot, were more favorably inclined."<sup>45</sup>

The basic French concern regarding the role of the League of Nations and the question of her security, however, remained in considering the Four-Power Pact. She was opposed to any treaty commitments within the four Powers which would give the impression of being a formation of a group of states alongside the League of Nations.<sup>46</sup> Paul-Boncour clarified the French position in this respect on March 26, saying that France regarded the Mussolini proposals as containing "possible

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<sup>44</sup> Similar opinion is expressed by Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 134; and Elizabeth R. Cameron, Prologue to Appeasement, A Study in French Foreign Policy (Washington, D. C., 1942), 33. Paul-Boncour makes no mention of any such consideration in his memoirs.

<sup>45</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 117.

<sup>46</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 218.

elements of appeasement." But he insisted they must be applied within the framework of the League of Nations. Paul-Boncour also pointed out that there should be a strict understanding among the four Powers "that the equality of status of all members of the League would be preserved. The Covenant, the whole Covenant, and nothing but the Covenant was still, and would remain, the guiding principle of French policy."<sup>47</sup> As regards the question of security France expressed the view that as questions of "revision" and of "equality" were raised in the pact, she felt "obliged to stand by the declaration of November ~~December~~ 11th, 1932, and to connect these two questions with the question of security."<sup>48</sup>

A series of conferences were held in Paris between March 30 and April 2. Daladier, Paul-Boncour, de Jouvenel and the Little Entente and Polish Ministers led by Nicolae Titulescu met to consider the Italian plan and to formulate French amendments to it.<sup>49</sup>

While the directors of policy in Paris tended generally to favor the idea of European conciliation, and were prepared

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<sup>47</sup>The Times (London), March 28, 1933, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933, I, 399-400.

<sup>49</sup>The Times (London), March 31, April 1, 2, 1933.

to consider possible ways of compromise, reactions to the Italian plan assumed almost unanimous opposition in the allied countries. Indeed the opposition in Poland and the Little Entente countries proved to be of far-reaching consequence.

In Poland news of the Mussolini plan was received with "concern almost amounting to consternation."<sup>50</sup> The Polish press of all shades of opinion was unanimous in denouncing the proposals.<sup>51</sup> The proposed Four-Power Pact affected Poland on "the two points on which beyond all others the Poles always show extreme sensitiveness--the creation in any form of a Concert of Powers from which they are excluded and any threat of revision of their frontiers. On the latter point at all events feeling . . . [was] intense, deep-seated and universal, and . . . [no] Polish Government could afford to ignore it."<sup>52</sup>

Poland's amour propre was hurt and she deeply resented the Italian attempt to create a hierarchy among European powers,<sup>53</sup> leaving Poland out of the select group of the Big Four. Poland regarded herself as a great or at least as a semi-great Power; at any rate she was the greatest of the lesser Powers.

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<sup>50</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 114.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 335.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 115

<sup>53</sup>Colonel Jozef Beck, Final Report (New York, 1957), 35.

There was also the important consideration that the Four-Power Pact represented a revival of the Locarno treaties, which had made no provisions for the security of Germany's borders with Poland. Poland had only reluctantly accepted the Locarno arrangements. The situation was now a very different one. The rise of the Nazis in Germany caused anxiety in Poland. Marshal Jozef Pilsudski repeatedly warned Daladier during March that Germany was rearming and was determined to pursue the policy of Drang nach Osten. In the circumstances, the Marshal was "determined not again to be manoeuvred" into accepting an arrangement that would tend to appease Germany. Also, Pilsudski "saw above all that the pact was a menace to the rights and interests of the smaller powers threatened by the Great Powers Cartel," especially as the apparatus of the League of Nations would be "abused" and other small powers reduced to the state of "mere puppets."<sup>54</sup>

In a conversation with the British Prime Minister in Geneva on March 17, Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck pointed out that the method by which a revision of treaties was effected was a matter of the highest importance for Poland, for the Peace Treaties "were contracts, and the

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<sup>54</sup>Beck, Final Report, 38. Also see Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy (New York, 1948), 283; and Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 335.



consent of the parties was necessary for their modification.<sup>55</sup> On the basis of this Poland later emphasized her opposition to the Italian plan, stating that:

The proposals for a Four-Power Pact would amount to an attempt to impose the views of the four Powers on other States, such as Poland, in matters in which Poland was intimately concerned, and the position of the Polish Government necessarily was that they could not contemplate being presented with a fait accompli, but were entitled, in accordance with their equal membership of the League of Nations, to be a party to deliberations and a consenting party to conclusions.<sup>56</sup>

As a first measure to obstruct the course of Four-Power Pact negotiations, the Polish government announced (falsely) that after a round of interviews with the French and Little Entente ministers in Warsaw, Foreign Minister Beck would lead the organization of a vigorous and concerted opposition to the pact proposals. This bluff, however, proved unsuccessful.<sup>57</sup> Subsequently, Poland countered by striking directly at Italy. The newly appointed ambassador to Rome, Count George Potocki, whose appointment had been popularly received in Italy, offered his resignation in protest of

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<sup>55</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 61-62.

<sup>56</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 125.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 114.

Italian policy.<sup>58</sup> At the same time, Poland made a declaration threatening to leave the League of Nations. The situation was properly summed up by the British ambassador in Warsaw, who wrote, "I must say, in conclusion, that the prospect of securing acceptance by the Polish Government of the proposals in anything like their present form seems to me extremely remote."<sup>59</sup>

In the Little Entente countries, reactions to the Mussolini proposals were similarly unfavorable. There were deep-seated apprehensions about Italian designs. On March 17 Foreign Minister Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia gave an elaborate expression to the Little Entente fears about Italian policy. He stated that he had satisfied himself, from the evidence of Italians who had had conversations with Signor Mussolini, and from other sources, that:

The real aim of Italian policy was to exploit the present situation in Yugoslavia by abetting the break-up of its unity, taking Dalmatia for themselves, and allotting Croatia to Austria and Hungary. After this had been achieved, their third measure of treaty revision would be the Corridor. M. de Jouvenel's talks in Rome showed that Italy wished a free hand from France for the above settlement, and that then Italy would be ready to settle her relations with France.

The history of these Little Entente countries for centuries past has been their use by

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<sup>58</sup> Beck, Final Report, 37. Beck writes, "I made a bargain with . . . Count George Potocki, that he would resign . . ."

<sup>59</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2 V, 115.

other great Nations; now imperialist and expansion-  
ist Italy [is] trying to repeat history.<sup>60</sup>

The Little Entente countries, indeed, feared the challenge of the Italian-Austro-Hungarian tripartite collaboration. The Four-Power Pact proposals had the effect of reinforcing their fears, and led to an immediate united front of opposition, determined to frustrate Italian designs.

On March 25, 1933, the Permanent Council of the Little Entente in Geneva issued a communique accusing the four great Powers of attempting to violate the Covenant of the League of Nations. The communique sharply criticised the Mussolini plan:

. any collaboration between States with a view to establishing friendly relations between them, and regulating those questions that concern them exclusively, is desirable and wholesome. All the same, the states of the Little Entente would find it difficult to agree that the cause of good relations between countries was being served by agreements having it as their object to dispose of the rights of third parties--and this equally whether these agreements bind the signatories to take concrete decisions, or whether the object is simply to exert pressure upon countries other than the contracting parties. Since no body can dispose of anybody else's property either directly or indirectly, the States of the Little Entente formulate, from now onwards, the most explicit reserves with regard to the eventual conclusion of any agreement of the kind, in respect of anything that touches their own rights and policy. Agreements of this nature belong to the past, and certainly to times anterior to the

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<sup>60</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V,  
63-64.

foundation of the League of Nations. The States of the Little Entente also regret that, in the negotiations of the last few days, the idea of revisionist policy should have been emphasized. . . .<sup>61</sup>

The communique further emphasized that revisionist policy would not prove conducive to creating peace and confidence or mutual cooperation in Europe, and that the Little Entente Powers would energetically oppose such a policy.

Following the communique, the various Little Entente ministers called on the British Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, in Geneva. Their conversations further reveal the nature of the Little Entente opposition to the Four-Power Pact proposals.

Dr. Benes, who was the first to call on Simon, warned that Czechoslovakia would reject any measure of revision of frontiers imposed by the great Powers. He pointed out that it was ridiculous to raise the issue of revision when economic crises were fostering a spirit of militant nationalism in Europe. To prove his point, Benes explained:

. . . the treaty of Trianon had included within the frontiers of Czechoslovakia between 600,000 and 700,000 Hungarians. On the other side of the border it had included in Hungary some 300,000 Slovaks. According to the latest census returns there were now only 120,000 Slovaks in Hungary whereas the

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<sup>61</sup>Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 214-15. For the Little Entente Communique, see also Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 252; and The Times (London), March 27, 1933, p. 12.

number of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia had risen above 700,000. This showed the policy of oppression and elimination practiced by the Hungarian Government in regard to their Slovak minority . . . .<sup>62</sup>

Benes warned Simon that revision of frontiers, dictated from outside, would be opposed by the Little Entente, and that far from removing the idea of opposing 'blocs' of power in Europe, the Four-Power Pact would lead to a hostile anti-revisionist bloc arrayed against the revisionist bloc.

On March 27 Rumanian Foreign Minister Titulescu, in conversations with Simon, emphasized that article 19 of the League Covenant had already provided for treaty revision, and that, in the circumstances, revision through a four-Power forum would necessarily imply that the rights of the smaller states would be ignored. He warned that revision of frontiers as envisaged in the Mussolini proposals would "inevitably provoke a very strong reaction," and a "sense of insecurity and mutual suspicion would develop to an alarming extent."<sup>63</sup>

On the same day the Yugoslav Permanent Representative at Geneva conferred with Simon and "emphatically repeated" the opinions already expressed by Benes and Titulescu.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V,  
106-07.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 110-11.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 113.

It was evident that the Little Entente countries were united in their resistance to any efforts at revision of the peace treaties.

Sir John Simon, in his conversations with the Little Entente ministers, tried to counteract the fears and suspicions expressed by them. He pointed out that Britain's object was merely "to secure co-operation between the four Great Powers, not as a combination against other States, but as a means of preventing them from separating into opposite camps."<sup>65</sup> He repeated MacDonald's assurance of March 23 to the Little Entente, that the smaller states "have a right to be consulted wherever their special interests are concerned."

But the fears of the Little Entente Powers had the deeper cause of resentment of Italy and the anxiety resulting from the course of events in Germany. The pro status-quo policies of France and her allies were now being directly challenged through the Italian plan. The Little Entente countries were conscious of their relative weakness. At the end of March, 1933, their respective ministers launched upon a program of exchange of views, in order to thwart the progress of the pact negotiations. Titulescu set out on a visit to Paris and London, on behalf of the Little Entente as a whole, to

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<sup>65</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 113.

conduct vigorous anti-pact campaign. He was followed by Beck who started a round of visits to Prague, Bucarest and Belgrade.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, if the aim of the Italian plan was international appeasement, the reactions to his proposals must have been very depressing to Mussolini. He could, however, rejoice in the knowledge that his diplomatic ingenuity had successfully secured active British as well as German support of the pact. It now remained to pursue the negotiations with a view to securing a compromise draft. The proposals which Mussolini created early in March had become public. The first step had been taken.

<sup>66</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 154, 362. See also Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 215.

## CHAPTER III

### ANXIOUS NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations progressed slowly after the initial reactions to Mussolini's proposal. The idea of a Four-Power Pact brought to the forefront the crucial problems disturbing the European nations. The willingness of Britain and Italy to cooperate was, however, an encouraging factor.<sup>1</sup> As Hassell remarked, "It is obvious to what a high degree the English attitude will be decisive for the content and fate of the proposal."<sup>2</sup> After the Rome discussions, the British government had taken a firm stand to aid in a successful conclusion of the pact negotiations. Britain regarded the Mussolini proposals as "a material contribution to European peace," and as contributing to the elimination of the rise of 'bloes' in Europe. She also supported the pact because it did not imply any extension of her obligations in European affairs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 203.

<sup>3</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 326.



Britain soon moved into a position of leadership in the pact discussions. During the later part of March both MacDonald and Simon gave necessary assurances to the Little Entente Powers.<sup>4</sup> Various matters raised in the Mussolini plan were effectively reviewed. Sir John Simon expressed the British attitude well:

Collaboration in this connexion is an effort to secure for a period of years that there should not be a split in European policy which might result in the four Powers finding themselves in opposing blocs. The object is to secure co-operation as between themselves, not to impose conclusions on others without consulting the other parties who are interested in them.<sup>5</sup>

As for frontier revision, it has to be remembered that the question is not disposed of by refusing to mention it, for in certain quarters it is much in people's minds. Consequently, it might well be that the signature of the four Powers to some agreed and limiting machinery might promote European peace than induce new elements of disturbance.<sup>6</sup>

. . . an essential prerequisite to any real effective co-operation between the four Great Powers must consist in agreement between the four Powers to support the British Draft Disarmament Convention and to recommend it to the Conference.<sup>7</sup>

. . . the proposed agreement should in no sense be regarded as a substitute for, or as set in opposition to, the Covenant of the League of Nations. It is not a piece of rival or competing machinery,

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<sup>4</sup>See p. 29.

<sup>5</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 126, 132.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 103.

but is framed for the purpose of operating within the ambit of the Covenant and in fulfilment of its object.<sup>8</sup>

The British government was basically very satisfied with the Italian initiative. MacDonald wrote to Mussolini on March 31:

The idea of a written agreement providing for Four-Power understanding and co-operation is so good and so promising in results that it is worth making great efforts and even sacrifices to achieve success. For this we must destroy all these preliminary doubts and suspicions, so as to be able to get to the purpose of the plan, which is the removal by co-operation of the causes which at present frighten, and thereby threaten to divide the European Powers into opposing blocs, and thus in the end to make war inevitable.<sup>9</sup>

Relations between Britain and Italy improved as a result of their enthusiastic support of the Four-Power Pact. On March 31, Sir John Simon wrote to the British ambassador in Rome, Sir Ronald Graham, that the pact negotiations should be considered "urgent from point of view of Signor Mussolini's own personal feeling which [are] at present very friendly to us and from that of his influence over Hitler, who [seems], by agreeing to principle of pact, to have reverted to Stresemann policy."<sup>10</sup> On the same day Italy made a friendly

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<sup>8</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 325.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 123-24.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 119.

gesture toward Britain by announcing her complete acceptance of the British Draft Disarmament Convention, presented in Geneva on March 16. This gesture was interpreted in London as an Italian sacrifice to assist the cause of four-Power cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

On April 1 an amended British draft was presented in Rome. The new draft embodied the British attitude to the original Italian text:

I

The four Western Powers: France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, undertake to carry out between themselves an effective policy of co-operation in order to ensure the maintenance of peace in the spirit of the Kellogg Pact and of the 'No resort to force' Pact envisaged by the declaration signed by the above Powers on December 11, 1932.

2

The four Powers confirm that, while the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations embody a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations as a means of achieving international peace and security, they also contemplate the possibility of the revision of the treaties of peace when conditions arise that might lead to a conflict between nations.

In order to facilitate the operation of Article 19 of the Covenant the four Powers recommend that if and when a Government raises any particular question involving treaty revision, the situation shall be clarified in the first place by means of negotiations to be carried on and agreements to be reached, on an equal footing, between the four Powers and the Governments directly concerned; such negotiations and

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<sup>11</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 120.

agreements to be based on the mutual recognition of the interests of all concerned and within the framework of the League of Nations.

## 3

It is agreed that the principle of equality of rights as conceded to Germany under the conditions laid down in the Five-Power Resolution of December 11 must be given a practical value. The four Powers recognise that the draft Disarmament Convention submitted by the United Kingdom delegate to the Disarmament Conference on March 16 not only gives effect to this principle but provides satisfactorily for the first stage of general disarmament, and they accordingly undertake to recommend it to the Disarmament Conference for acceptance. Germany, for her part, agrees that the principle of equality of rights shall only be put into practice by degrees under agreements to which each of the four Powers must be a party.

## 4

The application of such principle of equality of rights to Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria shall be governed by the same conditions as those expressed in the case of Germany in the preceding article and only under agreements to which each of the four Powers must be a party.

## 5

The four Powers pledge themselves to co-operate in the work of finding solutions of the economic difficulties which now face their respective nations and the world as a whole.

## 6

The present agreement of understanding and co-operation will, if necessary, be submitted for the approval of the Parliaments of the contracting Powers within three months of the date of its signature. Its duration shall be for ten years. If no notice is given before the end of the ninth year by any of the parties of an intention to treat it as terminated at the end of such ten years, it shall be regarded as renewed for another period of ten years.

The present agreement shall be registered in accordance with the Covenant of the League of Nations, at the Secretariat of the League of Nations.<sup>12</sup>

The British draft proposed two fundamental changes.

Whereas the Italian text affirmed "the principle of revision" in article II, the British draft merely contemplated "the possibility of revision." The question of German equality, raised in article III was linked to the Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932, and its practical application conditioned by the four-Power acceptance of the MacDonald Disarmament Plan.

Mussolini was not very pleased with the British amendments. Hassell reported in this connection from Rome:

Mussolini seemed to me to have no very great hope of success any longer . . . Mussolini stated that his proposal had been a boy at first, the English now wanted to make a hermaphrodite out of it and in the hands of the French it would become a girl. He would not play that game, for he wanted it to stay a boy.<sup>13</sup>

However, Italy accepted the British draft of April 1, and this version was now to become the basis of the ensuing diplomatic negotiations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 120-21.

<sup>13</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 244.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 211.

Germany was definitely perturbed by the British amendments proposed at the Rome conference and now included in the new British text. In her opinion they involved "such essential changes in the original Italian proposal that the basic ideas of the latter [were] thereby not only impaired but converted into entirely the opposite."<sup>15</sup>

Germany was dissatisfied with article II of the British draft, which put increased emphasis on the League of Nations' role in affecting any treaty revision. Foreign Minister Von Neurath explained the situation:

The English version of the idea of revision is, first of all, characterized explicitly as a mere statement and repetition of what the League of Nations Covenant provides in Article 19 in this respect.

More significant yet is the fact that the English version renders the actual condition for a revision of the peace treaties in a form that gives wrong direction to the entire principle of revision. With the words "when conditions arise" revision is made entirely contingent upon circumstances that might arise in the future. It is therefore no longer admitted that the peace treaties have created a situation that was untenable from the start or has in any case proved untenable as a result of developments since 1919, but it is only termed a possibility that the peace treaties might sometime in the future prove in need of revision . . . . If the possibility of revision is envisaged in the event that conditions arise in the future that could lead to conflict, the world would practically have to consider this as an incentive for bringing about such conditions and conflicts . . . we cannot agree to the omission of the statement characterizing the

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<sup>15</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 248.

peace treaties as materially in need of revision even on the basis of present circumstances. Otherwise the mention of the idea of revision in the pact would not be a step forward, but backward from the present condition.

We may admit that it is not possible simply to exclude the League of Nations in the matter of treaty revision. If the unpromising procedure provided for in Article 19 of the Covenant were to remain, however, the entire substance of the new pact would be meaningless and in contradiction with its fundamental idea according to which the political initiative in the large issues is to be placed in the hands of the four Great Powers.<sup>16</sup>

As regards article III of the British draft, Germany resented the fact that her comments, which had been communicated to London on March 30, had been ignored. Germany had expressed the view that rearmament 'by stages' would be acceptable to her only for the period of five years and not ten; and she had submitted an amended article III for consideration by Britain:<sup>17</sup>

The four Powers reiterate their resolve to cooperate in the Disarmament Conference with the other States there represented in seeking to work out a Convention which shall effect a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments with provision for future revision with a view to further reduction. But, should the Disarmament Conference lead to only partial results, Italy, France and Great Britain declare that the equality of rights granted to Germany must have a practical effect.

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<sup>16</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I,  
212-114

<sup>17</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 211.  
Also see Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2,  
V, 119, 129-30.

Germany, on the other hand, undertakes, for the duration of the first Disarmament Convention, to put this equality of rights into practice by degrees laid down in an agreement to be concluded without delay by the four Powers in the usual diplomatic way.

Germany was perturbed by the British article III. Her objections were adequately expressed by the Foreign Minister who pointed out:

The present text stipulates, without any qualification as to time or fact, that Germany may, under all circumstances, obtain her equality only by successive treaty arrangements with the other Powers. This would mean that even beyond the period of the first disarmament convention, we would in our rearmament measures always remain dependent on the consent of the other Powers, even if for some reason or other there should be no further disarmament conventions. The other Powers would in such a case be released from all armament restrictions based on treaties, while in the sphere of armaments, Germany would not be permitted to do anything without the consent of the other Powers . . . . We must make it clear to them [Britain and Italy] that it is an absolutely decisive point for us, that, after the first convention has expired, our legal position must in no way be worse than the position of any other Power.<sup>18</sup>

Germany also objected to the reference in British article III that the MacDonald Disarmament plan should be accepted by all the four Powers, and also to the mention of recognition of German equality strictly under the terms of the Five-Power Declaration of December 11, 1932. She complained: "In this

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<sup>18</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 215.



way the coupling of equality with the question of security . . . would be established in principle for all time."<sup>19</sup>

There was also dissatisfaction in Berlin about the exclusion from the British article I of the 'political idea' contained in Mussolini's article I, that a "concert" of the four Powers would bring pressure to bear on other states in order that a common policy of peace may be adopted.<sup>20</sup>

German opposition was bound to have serious effect on the conduct of negotiations. Germany was conscious of this. In fact, she feared that if her persistence in her objections "encountered a solid front of rejection" by other three Powers she would be isolated. Such isolation Germany was determined to "counteract with all the means at her command."<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Von Neurath instructed Hassell to assure Mussolini that it was "precisely the new Reich Government that [attached] the greatest importance to the success for Mussolini's initiative;"<sup>22</sup> and Mussolini, in turn promised Germany that her objections would be kept in mind.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 249.

<sup>20</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 129.

<sup>21</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 212.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 227.

Meanwhile, the German ambassador in London was instructed to express German "astonishment" at the British draft of April 1. In fact, Germany warned Britain that the pact negotiations would suffer if Britain sought "to conduct, more or less behind our back, negotiations which affected primarily Germany's vital interests."<sup>24</sup>

Britain, on the other hand, explained that it was necessary to modify the Italian draft and to weaken article II by which the word 'revision' was to appear for the first time since the war in an official document, in order to encourage French acceptance of the pact. Britain assured Germany that she had no 'categorical objections' to her demands but it was necessary to compromise in order to avoid a rejection of the pact idea by France. At the same time, Germany was warned that the pact negotiations would fail, if she insisted in her demands.<sup>25</sup>

In France, public opinion was uneasy. The activities of the Nazis in Germany caused rising excitement; the persecution of the Jews especially led to talk of war against Germany. The Four-Power Pact came under fire as a deep laid

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<sup>24</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 250 n. 9.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 269-70. Also Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 131.

Italo-German plot.<sup>26</sup> The British ambassador in Paris explained the situation: "The repudiation of President Wilson by the American Senate has sunk deep into the minds of the French people, who are not too sure that they may not again be let down by America, that Great Britain may not consequently withdraw into her shell, and that they will not still be left to face alone the German colossus."<sup>27</sup>

In the midst of this hostile atmosphere, Daladier worked with courage and tact to obtain French endorsement of the pact. He supported the idea of collaboration but emphasized respect for equality of rights of all nations. On April 6 he told the French Chamber of Deputies:

There is no question of giving our adherence to a sort of directory of the Great Powers which would impose their wills upon the rest of Europe-- a Holy Alliance which would decide upon territorial revisions and more or less extensive changes of frontiers and would thereby show itself even more ambitious than the original Holy Alliance, which was really a conservative institution. This enterprise would come into collision with the French-- or, rather, Franco-Italian--idea of the equality of nations . . . . If the new pact is to be useful it must constitute a genuine sequel to those great constructive contributions to the edifice of peace to which its own text refers: the Covenant

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<sup>26</sup> Documents of British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 268, 363, 148.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 268.

of the League . . . , the Briand-Kellogg agreement, the agreements of Locarno.<sup>28</sup>

Daladier met with considerable opposition in the Chamber. The Socialists, led by Leon Blum, opposed the pact. Herriot, leader of the Radical-Socialists, asserted that the theory of alliances and groupings of great Powers had been condemned by history and its practice would create new difficulties. He warned that a Four-Power directory, to reshape the political map of Europe, would precipitate war.<sup>29</sup>

The French Prime Minister defended his views with great courage and strongly advocated a policy of cautious cooperation, with full regard for the interests of France's allies. This policy was supported by the Chamber and Daladier won an impressive vote of confidence--470 for, 107 against.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, de Jouvenel was enthusiastically pleading for French support of the pact. While in Paris he was able to dispel many of the French fears and received full cooperation from Daladier and Paul-Boncour. The French draft was finally drawn up in cooperation between Boncour and de Jouvenel:

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<sup>28</sup>Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 214; Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 253; and The Times (London), April 7, 1933, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup>Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 214. Also see The Times (London), April 7, 1933, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup>The Times (London), April 7, 1933, p. 15.

After an interview with M. Boncour, M. de Jouvenel had gone home and had spent the night in drawing up a French draft project which he had taken to M. Boncour the following morning. M. Boncour had produced from his pocket a draft, prepared by himself, and to M. de Jouvenel's surprise and pleasure the two drafts coincided in almost every particular.<sup>31</sup>

The French text of the Four-Power Pact was presented in Rome on April 11, 1933:

Germany, France, Great Britain, and Italy, conscious of the special responsibilities imposed on them by their position as permanent members of the Council of the League of Nations with respect to the League itself and its members, and of those resulting from their joint signing of the Locarno Agreements;

Convinced that the state of malaise which prevails in the world cannot be dispelled except by a strengthening of their solidarity capable of affirming confidence in Europe in peace;

Faithful to the obligations which they have assumed under the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Locarno Agreements, and the Briand-Kellogg Pact and referring to the Declaration of No-Resort to Force, the principle of which was adopted on March 2 last by the Political Commission of the Disarmament Conference;

Anxious to give full efficacy to all the provisions of the Covenant while conforming to the methods and procedures which are provided for there, from which they do not intend to depart;

Respectful of the rights of each state, concerning which no disposition can be made without the consent of the interested party;

Have agreed on the following provisions:

#### Article I

The High Contracting Parties will consult on all question which appertain to them and will strive

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<sup>31</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 143-44.

within the framework of the League of Nations to pursue an effective policy of cooperation among themselves with a view to maintaining peace.

#### Article II

The High Contracting Parties, with a view to the possible application in Europe of the articles of the Covenant, particularly articles 10, 16, and 19, decide to examine among themselves, without prejudice to the decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations, any proposal tending to give full efficacy to the methods and procedures provided for by these articles.

#### Article III

Renewing in so far as they are concerned their joint declaration of December 11, 1932, The High Contracting Parties see in the recent British draft convention a practical basis of discussion which should permit the Disarmament Conference to work out as quickly as possible a convention assuring a substantial reduction and limitation of armaments with provisions for its subsequent revision with a view to new reductions. Germany for her part recognizes that equality of rights in a system affording security for all nations cannot be realized except by stages in accordance with article 8 of the Covenant and by virtue of agreements reached to this effect.

#### Article IV

The High Contracting Parties affirm in general their desire to consult on all questions of common interest in Europe, particularly on all questions concerning the restoration of its economy, the regulation of which might . . . be profitably sought within the framework of the study commission for European union.

#### Article V

Concerns a duration of ten years.

## Article VI

Ratification.<sup>32</sup>

The French draft of April 11, aside from providing a preamble, brought about a considerable weakening of the original article II. All mention of the word 'revision' was ignored. Instead, the articles of the League Covenant dealing with the Sanctity of Treaties (article 10); the possibility of fresh examination of treaties (article 19) and the application of sanctions in case of treaty violations (article 16), were emphasized. Also, no mention was made of accepting the 'principles' contained in these articles, but only the 'methods and procedures' regarding them were referred to. Article III, too, was weakened and all reference to Austria, Bulgaria, and Hungary was dropped.

The French text was favorably received in Italy. Mussolini stated that, "the French draft was considerably better than was to be expected; it was also clearer and more sensible than the English." At the same time, Italy assured Germany that further negotiations would be continued only after German comments had been received in Rome.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 281-82. Also see Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933, I, 407.

<sup>33</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 280. See also Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 143, 364.

A crucial point was now reached in the pact negotiations. France had changed but not rejected the Mussolini plan. There was a sense of anxiety in Britain and Italy; and the two countries worked together in seeking an American declaration of approval and support for the pact. It was felt that such a declaration would greatly assist the cause of the pact. The Anglo-Italian approaches were, however, fruitless.<sup>34</sup>

On April 12, Germany instructed her ambassador in Rome to immediately see Mussolini, and present German reactions to the French draft, "in order that the French ideas may not get a hold on him and that he may as far as possible adapt himself to our views even before making his official reply to France."<sup>35</sup>

Germany's objections to the French text of April 11 were similar to those she had against the British draft of April 1. As regards the French preamble Germany felt that emphasis on the role of the League of Nations limited the scope of the pact to activity of the four Powers within the League. The preamble stipulated that the four Powers may never depart from the 'methods and procedures' provided for in the League Covenant. Germany resented this emphasis on the role of the

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<sup>34</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 136, 364. See also Foreign Relations of the United States, 1933, I, 404.

<sup>35</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 284.



League, saying it would strike a "false note that [the pact] refers only to political activity within the League of Nations" and would consequently render it "superfluous."<sup>36</sup>

The French article II was formally rejected by Berlin on the basis that it evaded the real issue since all mention of "the positive recognition of the idea of revision" had been dropped. And instead, the mention of articles 10, 16, and 19 of the League Covenant seemed to strengthen the territorial status quo idea: "If one really wishes to accomplish something which is sensible not only from the German but also from the general European point of view, one must decide on a provision which recognizes the existence of the revision problem and at the same time assures a peaceful treatment of it."<sup>37</sup>

Article III of the French draft also met with similar German opposition as it omitted "the positive statement of the necessity of realizing German equality of rights."<sup>38</sup> Germany pointed out that the object of the pact was not to confine the four Powers "to the methods and procedures actually contained in the Covenant, for if so there would be no

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<sup>36</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 284-85.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 286.

reason for having any further document at all." In her opinion "the true position [was] that we would respect the provisions of the Covenant and not go contrary to them, but that [was] not the same thing as limiting our method and procedure by what is already prescribed."<sup>39</sup>

In reply, Rome assured Berlin that French article II was quite satisfactory since it "contained a clear recognition of the principle that the four Powers alone are to consult on a proposal for revision." As regards article III, Mussolini agreed with German objections and expressed the need for revising it.<sup>40</sup>

At the same time Italy attempted to restrain Germany in her resentment of the French text. Mussolini warned Germany that in view of recent reactions to the policies of the new German regime (especially anti-semitic activities), Italy alone stood by her side, and it was necessary for Germany to break her isolation. A prompt conclusion of the pact, with German participation, would greatly relieve the tension. The contents of the pact were not important. The fact that

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<sup>39</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 169-70.

<sup>40</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 292.

France had agreed to a discussion of treaty revision in the circle of the four Powers was a great advance.<sup>41</sup>

Secret negotiations continued between the German and Italian governments. During the period April 10th to the 18th, Hitler's right hand man, Hermann Goring, and German Vice-Chancellor von Papen, visited Rome. The French text of April 11 was formally rejected by Germany. At the same time Goring asserted that Germany considered Mussolini's original text as acceptable. He assured Mussolini that for him and Hitler "good relations between Germany and Italy were not only a diplomatic question but reflected a profound and sincere conviction."<sup>42</sup>

Mussolini, in turn, assured the German ministers that Italy too, felt some changes in the French text were necessary, especially article III.<sup>43</sup> But he warned them that anti-semitic policy in Germany must be stopped in order to ease the situation.<sup>44</sup>

Subsequently, Germany inquired of Italy about the possibility of bringing a colonial agreement within the

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<sup>41</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 300.

<sup>42</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 146.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 149.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 147.

framework of the pact negotiations, as was initially planned in Mussolini's draft. This new German demand was, however, dismissed by Mussolini. He pointed out that such discussions would lead to apprehensions among the Dutch and the Portuguese. Instead he suggested that the possibility of a gentlemen's agreement between the two countries on the question of colonies, should be considered.<sup>45</sup>

After attempting to pacify German opposition, Mussolini emphasized to Berlin that it was necessary to encourage an early conclusion of the pact. Especially because in France the pro-pact policy stood and fell with Daladier. Herriot, who in all probability would succeed as Premier, was opposed to the pact.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, on April 21 a German revision of the French text was submitted in Rome:

#### Preamble

Same as French text of April 11, with the exception of the phrase ". . . while conforming to the methods and procedures which are provided for there, from which they do not intend to depart;" which is deleted.

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<sup>45</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 317-18, 334.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 316-17.

### Article I

No change

### Article II

The four Powers confirm that the obligations of the Covenant demand scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations as a means of ensuring peace and security, but they also recognize the possibility of revision of the peace treaties in circumstances that might lead to a conflict among nations. In connection therewith and with a view to the possible application in Europe of the principles enunciated in articles 10 and 19 of the Covenant, they decide to examine among themselves, without prejudice to decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations, any proposal tending to give full efficacy to these principles.

### Article III

The High Contracting Powers undertake to collaborate as quickly as possible with the other Powers in a convention ensuring a substantial reduction and limitation of armaments, with provisions for its subsequent revision with a view to a new reduction. In the event that the Disarmament Conference should end with only partial results France, Germany, Great Britain, and Italy declare that the equality of rights accorded Germany should have an effective application. Germany for her part undertakes for the duration of the first disarmament convention (5 years at the most) to realize this equality of rights only by stages and by virtue of an agreement reached to this effect in relation to the disarmament of the other Powers. (Analogous arrangements concerning Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria.)

### Article IV

The High Contracting Parties affirm in general their desire to consult on every question of common interest in Europe, particularly on every question concerning the restoration of its economy.

## Article V

The present agreement is concluded for a period of 10 years reckoned from the exchange of ratifications. If at the end of the 8th year none of the High Contracting Parties has notified the others of its intention to terminate it, it shall be considered as renewed and shall remain in force indefinitely, the Contracting Parties retaining the right to terminate it by denouncing it 2 years in advance.

## Article VI

No change.<sup>47</sup>

Following the German counter-draft of April 21, a series of conversations were held in Rome, attended by the ambassadors of Britain, France, and Germany and the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The new German text was discussed.<sup>48</sup>

A Franco-German controversy arose in these conversations. It was based on the German insistence that rearmament by stages would be acceptable only for five years. After that, Germany should be free to rearm. To France, and also to Britain and Italy this idea appeared repugnant. On the other hand, France insisted that mention of Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria in the German draft would exasperate the Little Entente countries. She also objected to the exclusion of article 16 of the Covenant from the German article II, and

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<sup>47</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 314-16.

<sup>48</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 364.

to the substitution of 'principles' for 'methods and procedures' in the same article.<sup>49</sup>

In fact France was disappointed by the German counter-draft. She accused Germany of trying to sabotage the entire negotiations.<sup>50</sup> According to British reports, "the Germans appeared to have aroused French suspicions by giving the idea that the object of the agreement was, in their view, to substitute the Four-Power Pact for the League of Nations and to side-track the latter over questions of revision and disarmament."<sup>51</sup>

As a possible measure to solve the Franco-German conflict, an unsuccessful attempt was launched by the four Powers to encourage the conclusion of a Pact of Mutual Assistance between France and Germany.<sup>52</sup>

Finally, on May 1, a new draft was drawn up in Rome by the representatives of the four Powers and submitted to the various governments for approval. This draft omitted all reference to British Disarmament Convention in article III

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<sup>49</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 364-65.

<sup>50</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, O, I, 349-50.

<sup>51</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 365.

<sup>52</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, O, I, 299, 303, 350.

and in article II no mention was made of either the 'principles' or the 'methods and procedures' relating to the revision of treaties. Basically this draft was only a slight amendment of the French text.<sup>53</sup>

On May 4 Germany retorted with another counter-draft. And at the same time requested of Mussolini that article 16 of the Covenant must not be mentioned in article II of the pact, "since it has nothing at all to do with the entire complex of questions here at issue."<sup>54</sup>

The May 4 German counter-draft merely amended articles II and III, as follows:

#### Article II

The High Contracting Parties, with a view to the application in Europe of articles 10, 16, and 19 concerning territorial integrity, sanctions, and the reconsideration of treaties, decide to examine among themselves, without prejudice to the decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations, any proposal tending to give full efficacy to the above-mentioned articles.

#### Article III

The High Contracting Parties recognize that the maintenance of peace makes necessary the reduction of national armaments to the minimum compatible with national security and that the success of the Disarmament Conference will be the best means of

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<sup>53</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 366.

<sup>54</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 377.  
(Also 377 n. 3).



realizing this objective. They renew their desire to cooperate with the other Powers represented there in this effort to work out as quickly as possible a convention assuring a substantial reduction and a limitation of armaments with provision for its subsequent revision with a view to new reductions. France, Great Britain, and Italy on their part declare that the principle of equality of rights must have a practical value for Germany, and Germany, in what concerns her, undertakes to realize this principle of equality of rights only by virtue of an accord to be concluded on the general basis of the recent British draft convention, to which each of the four Powers will be a party. The four Powers recognize that these same principles apply to the other states disarmed by treaty.<sup>55</sup>

France opposed the German draft of May 4, saying that retention of article 16 of the Covenant was most important in her opinion. Also, she objected to the exclusion of "methods and procedures" from article II, and the passage relating to "stages" from article III and the substitution therein of "accord" for "accords." At the same time France professed her desire to obtain an early conclusion of the Four Power Pact. She felt more favorably inclined to the Rome text of May 1.<sup>56</sup>

Italy was disgusted with the German counter proposals of May 4. She felt "that the German demand that stages be fixed with respect to equality of rights by means of an

<sup>55</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 377-78.

<sup>56</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 265-66.

agreement prior to ratification of the pact, would irretrievably wreck the negotiations for the pact."<sup>57</sup> She requested that the German government should refrain from conveying the proposals to Paris and London, "in view of the dangerous reaction that could be expected in England and France . . ."<sup>58</sup> However, the German draft was presented in London and Britain expressed the view that she "quite appreciated our [Germany's] accomodating attitude."<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile Italy and Britain continued their policy of collaboration. Britain expressed her general approval of the Rome text of May 1 provided some minor adjustments were effected. It was felt that an early conclusion of the Four-Power Pact was imperative in view of the imminent failure of the Disarmament Conference, and the worsening European situation. On May 9 and May 16, Italy approached Britain to help speed up the negotiations and during the same period London emphasized the need for early conclusion of the pact to the authorities in Paris.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 414.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 414 n. 3

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 414 n. 3

<sup>60</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 244-45, 244 n. 2.

There was indeed enough cause for Anglo-Italian anxiety regarding a speedy and successful conclusion of the pact negotiations. The political atmosphere in Europe had grown increasingly tense since the end of March, 1933. Various factors were responsible for the aggravation of the situation:

The course of events in Germany was not bypassed by any of the leading European statesmen though among British government the opinion prevailed that Germany could be contained by concessions and agreements rather than by recourse to war. The British anxiety was well expressed by MacDonald on April 13, when he admitted that "sometimes I am almost driven" into the "uncomfortable position" that "it is no use talking about disarming by agreement, it is no use talking about pacts, it is no use talking about cooperation for peace unless you have had some experience which justifies you in accepting the word of those with whom you are to cooperate."<sup>61</sup> Basically, however, Britain remained enthusiastic about the Four-Power Pact.

The most important attack on the policy of appeasing Germany came from Sir Austen Chamberlain, former Foreign Secretary. Speaking in the House of Commons on April 13 he declared:

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<sup>61</sup> Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 169. Also see House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 5th Ser., Vol. 276, p. 2814-22.

What is passing in Germany seems to me to render this a singularly inopportune moment to talk about the revision of treaties . . .

What is this new spirit of German nationalism? The worst of the old-Prussian Imperialism, with an added savagery, a racial pride . . . Are you going to discuss revision with a Government like that? Are you going to discuss with such a Government the Polish Corridor? The Polish Corridor is inhabited by Poles; do you dare to put another Pole under the heel of such a Government?

That is not a Germany to which we can afford to make concessions. That is not a Germany to which Europe can afford to give equality . . .<sup>62</sup>

The Chamberlain speech received support and publicity in the French and the Little Entente press, as it expressed their views adequately.<sup>63</sup> But the opposite views also gained strength at this time. Mussolini wrote on April 10 that, "The Revisionist idea is on the march, and no fragile bulwark of a protocol can arrest it."<sup>64</sup> The British Foreign Secretary expressed a similar view when he said that the question of frontier revision could not be disposed of by refusing to mention it for in certain quarters revisionism was very much in people's minds.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates, 5th Ser., Vol. 276, p. 2758-59.

<sup>63</sup>The Times (London), April 15, 1933, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 145.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., 2, V, 132.

The Little Entente opposition to the Four-Power Pact continued unabated. On April 25, Dr. Benes, speaking in the Czech Parliament, strongly denounced the Mussolini proposal and accused Italy of conniving to create a new balance of power in Europe in order to destroy the influence of France and her allies. He remarked:

The big nations must realize that in the future they must not seek to satisfy their ambitions and political and economic aims over the heads of the small countries, making them instruments of policy. It should not be forgotten that most of the wars of last century resulted directly from that kind of policy, a policy that should be impossible now . . . . It must be emphasised that the Little Entente will not admit the division of Europe into 'spheres of influence.'<sup>66</sup>

Dr. Benes also defined the attitude of the Little Entente on the question of treaty revision as proposed by the Mussolini plan, "in terms that were precise and uncompromising":

While discussing this question at Geneva with Sir John Simon I was compelled to remind him that frontier adjustments cannot be imposed upon any state and that any one attempting anything of the sort with Czechoslovakia would have to march an army into her territory. We should know how to defend ourselves. It was possible to dispose of territory at the Peace Conference. Since the moment when ownership was confirmed in law to this or that state it is perfectly absurd to claim any

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<sup>66</sup> Saturday Review (London), April 29, 1933, p. 407; see also Wheeler-Bennett, The Pipe Dream of Peace, 139.

right of disposition. That is our position in principle, and we will not depart from it for any one. We cannot understand how a combination of states can be formed to divide the territory of other states when--if I am rightly informed--all questions as to their own territory are to be excluded on the ground that no agreement could be reached about them . . .

Frontier alterations are only possible by direct agreement between the states concerned within the framework of Article 19 of the League Covenant.<sup>67</sup>

The lack of any progress in the Disarmament Conference also encouraged fears and suspicions among European nations. Early in April Mussolini expressed the view that an adjournment of the conference would be helpful as it would give time for successful conclusion of the pact negotiations. And once the pact was concluded there would be greater possibility of achieving disarmament.<sup>68</sup>

Later in April (April 21-26), MacDonald visited the United States with the specific aim of trying to secure American support for the British Disarmament Convention. Britain was indeed anxious to obtain such support as it would also help the pact negotiations.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 216.

<sup>68</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 149.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 157.

But the endless conflict over German insistence on equality of rights and the increasing French demands for security (as a result of the policies of the new German regime) seemed to discourage all hopes of a conclusion of the Disarmament Conference. Towards the end of April, Italy expressed her anxiety and resentment over the German intransigence.<sup>70</sup> She endeavored to work with Britain to obtain acceptance of the British Convention. The United States and France were also inclined favorably towards the British Disarmament plan. Germany, however, consistently maintained her opposition to the crucial questions concerning overseas troops and the standardization of Continental armies. The situation at Geneva was well explained by the British delegate, Anthony Eden, in a memorandum dated May 3, 1933: "We had hoped that the presentation of a Draft Convention would result in a different atmosphere for discussion at Conference and might encourage mutual concessions. I am bound to confess that I cannot detect any fundamental change. For this the present situation in Germany is no doubt in part responsible." Eden emphasized that the various delegations were consequently nervous. In his view the Disarmament

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<sup>70</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 176.

Conference was bound to fail if Germany did not change her stubborn attitude.<sup>71</sup>

In fact, anxiety about the worsening situation in Europe increased around this time.<sup>72</sup> The fear of German rearmament was well expressed by one of the British delegates at Geneva: "There is a mad dog abroad once more and we must resolutely combine either to ensure its destruction or at least its confinement until the disease has run its course."<sup>73</sup>

Meanwhile, Germany felt concerned about her own isolation. On May 3, Hitler made conciliatory declarations towards Poland and the Four-Power Pact.<sup>74</sup> And during the period, May 5-14, Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's lieutenant in foreign affairs, paid a visit to London in an effort to calm British fears. This visit proved to be a failure.<sup>75</sup> German diplomacy attempted to create good feeling in Britain towards the new regime. The successful result of this is shown in the

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<sup>71</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 190.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 217.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 217.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., 219. Regarding conciliatory approaches to Poland see Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 366-67.

<sup>75</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 204-05, 212-13, 228-30, 433; Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 404-05, 433.



report of the British ambassador in Berlin, who stated after a conversation with Hitler that he was convinced the Fuhrer was "perfectly sincere" in his conviction that Germany must remain on good terms with Britain.<sup>76</sup>

The fears aroused by German rearmament continued unabated. On May 11, Viscount Hailsham, British Secretary for War, warned Germany that if she persisted in her attempts at rearming or withdrew from the Disarmament Conference Britain would regard this as a breach of Treaty of Versailles and sanctions would be imposed against her.<sup>77</sup> Similarly on May 12, Paul-Boncour warned Germany that if the Disarmament Conference failed the peace treaties would continue to be applied. It was evident that France would apply military sanctions against Germany in cooperation with Britain and Belgium.<sup>78</sup> In Poland and the Little Entente countries the talk of preventive war against Germany gained momentum during May, 1933.<sup>79</sup> There was increased anxiety in Britain and Italy about the fate of the Disarmament Conference and its effects on the chances of Four-Power cooperation.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 234.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 259; Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 411 n. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 259-60.

<sup>79</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 328-33, 342, 343.

<sup>80</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 263-64.

Hitler, too, felt concerned about the deterioration of the situation. An emergency cabinet meeting was convened in Berlin on May 12. However, Hitler was not prepared to concede Germany's vital interests. He told his cabinet: "The disarmament question will not be solved at the conference table. There is no historical instance where a victor accorded arms to the vanquished through negotiations." And he assured his ministers that if any sanctions were imposed against Germany by France and Britain she would declare the Treaty of Versailles as torn.<sup>81</sup>

But Germany did make an attempt to allay fears and anxieties in France and other European countries. On May 17, in a speech in the Reichstag, Hitler declared, "Germany's only wish is to be able to preserve her independence and protect her frontiers."<sup>82</sup> At the same time, he once again commended the Four-Power Pact. Hitler's speech was received with satisfaction in Italy, while in France, it had a mixed reception varying between satisfaction and scepticism.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 410.

<sup>82</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 252-58; The Times (London), May 19, 1933, p. 14.

<sup>83</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 476-77, 453, 504.

Mussolini, at this juncture, appealed to Britain to use her influence in speeding up the pact negotiations. The French government was at this time having great difficulties with the Little Entente countries and Poland as well as with the Parliament; in fact its life was in danger. The British ambassador in Rome explained the situation well:

There was every reason to hasten on the initialing of the pact, as about this time it was thought that a ministerial crisis was imminent in France, and there appeared to be something approaching an open rupture between M. Daladier and M. Herriot. Signor Mussolini was accordingly anxious to clinch the negotiations and initial the agreement within the next few days at Geneva, where the Foreign Ministers of the Powers concerned were meeting. Everyone was agreed on the good results which would accrue should it be found possible to conclude the agreement before the meeting of the Economic Conference on the 12th June, and also, it might be added, before debt payments were due to America on the 15th June.<sup>84</sup>

The British government was also anxious about the situation. Sir John Simon instructed ambassador Graham in Rome, on May 17, that "in view of the existing state of tension arising from the acts of Nazi Government in Germany, to inform the Italian Government of the importance which Britain attached to the early conclusion of a Four-Power Agreement."<sup>85</sup> At the same time, Britain and Italy continued

<sup>84</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 266, 368.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 366; information regarding British anxiety is also found on p. 245-46, 264.

to insist on their objection to the mention of article 16 of the League Covenant in article II of the draft pact.<sup>86</sup>

Some measure of success was achieved in the pact negotiations conducted by the representatives of the four Powers in Rome. On May 18, agreement was reached on all points except on the question of the mention of article 16 of the League Covenant. France stubbornly insisted on retaining this article in the pact draft, while Britain and Italy were opposed to it. Germany was still dissatisfied with article III.<sup>87</sup> Britain approached France and urged upon her the acute need for an early conclusion of the pact even at the cost of concessions on all sides, in view of the European situation.<sup>88</sup> Finally, on May 19, France submitted another draft in Rome in which she still insisted on the mention of article 16 and on the inclusion of the phrase "methods and procedures."<sup>89</sup> It was evident that Germany would reject the new French text as article III was still unsatisfactory.

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<sup>86</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 264, 245.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 244; see also Foreign Relations of the United States, 1933, I, 411.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 366.

in her opinion. Germany also insisted that the pact should be applicable only for five years and not ten.<sup>90</sup>

The pact negotiations had reached a state of deadlock. It was obvious that France and Germany were more concerned about their own respective interests than in making sacrifices in order to obtain a compromise text of the Four-Power Pact. The worsening European situation, resulting from the activities of the Nazis in Germany, made it increasingly difficult to forge ahead with a formal plan for four-Power collaboration. It was evident that unless Germany made concessions with a view to allaying fears, the situation would become untenable. The Four-Power Pact had already undergone a process of dilution, which was encouraged by the anxiety arising from the belief that an early conclusion of the pact would help ease the situation. Britain and Italy continued their efforts to bring pressure to bear on Paris and Berlin to avoid a complete failure of the pact discussions.

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<sup>90</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 478-79, 478 n.3.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CRUCIAL STAGE

The Franco-German conflict in the Four-Power Pact negotiations had far-reaching consequences. Not only did it contribute to the deadlock of May 19-20, but the fate of the entire text was decided by this conflict. For France and Germany, the pact had greater significance than it did for Britain and Italy, in as much as it affected their immediate interests. To France it implied the weakening of her satellite system without any corresponding arrangement for containing Germany. By the same token it represented a gain for Germany. But it was not politically expedient for France to reject the Mussolini plan. Consequently she was determined to render it harmless.

Germany was anxious to solve the deadlock in the negotiations. An early conclusion of the pact would contribute to easing tensions in Europe and thereby save Germany from isolation. Mussolini consistently appealed to Hitler to make concessions on article III.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, on May 19, Goring paid his second visit to Rome.

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<sup>1</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 366.

The French text of May 19 was discussed by Mussolini and Goring on the morning of May 20. The same afternoon, the British and French ambassadors held further consultations with Mussolini. The upshot of these hastily convened conferences was that a new text of article III was drawn up. This new draft of article III ended with a concluding sentence that was "studiously vague and contained no mention of actual agreements between the four Powers regarding the realization of equality of rights."<sup>2</sup>

In a dramatic move to improve the situation Goring publicly accepted the latest text of articles II and III as well as the idea of a ten-year pact. He pointed out that, "The advantage was that through the treaty we had to deal only with a small body of four, and in this Mussolini had promised us his support at all times."<sup>3</sup> Indeed Goring's visit to Rome created a salutary effect. Graham wrote to London in commendatory tones, "I learnt subsequently that Herr Goring on this visit was in a conciliatory mood and that . . . we might have been able to obtain all we wished out of Herr Goring at that time and thus have hastened materially the conclusion of the pact."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 367.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 367; also see Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 479.

<sup>4</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 367-68.

The Mussolini-Goring conversations, however, reveal that Germany's attitude had not changed much. Goring accepted the new Italian article III only under protest. He wanted article III to contain the phrase: "France, Great Britain, and Italy declare that the principle of rights recognized in the resolution of December 11, 1932, must have a practical value for Germany . . . ." Italy insisted that the phrase should read: "declare that the principle of equality such as was recognized by the resolution . . . ." <sup>5</sup> Goring also insisted that a protocol be appended to the Four-Power Pact stating that the Powers must meet four weeks after the signature of the pact and decide on the first stage of disarmament. <sup>6</sup> Mussolini rejected this German demand. <sup>7</sup> Germany also persisted in her objection to article II of the French text of May 19, which replaced "principles" by "methods and procedures" relating to treaty revision. <sup>8</sup>

On May 21 a new compromise text of the Four-Power Pact was drafted in Rome. The representatives of the four Powers agreed to the insertion of the phrase "methods and procedures"

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<sup>5</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 478 n.3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 479 n. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 504.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 504.



as against "principles" in article II. Germany and Italy also tentatively withdrew their opposition to the mention of article 16 of the League Covenant in article III. An additional reference to security was also included in this article. Article IV of the pact was dropped. The May 21 draft represented quick progress in the pact discussions. Graham reported from Rome: "These satisfactory results had only been obtained as a result of the consistently conciliatory attitude followed by the Italians and by the amount of pressure which they had brought to bear in Berlin."<sup>9</sup> The new compromise text was generally acceptable to the four Powers. However, Britain expressed dissatisfaction with the inclusion of article 16 of the League Covenant, and the matter came under review between London and Paris.<sup>10</sup> Germany, too, was not entirely satisfied. Hitler expressed the view that the Mussolini pact should be agreed to only after the Disarmament Conference had either broken up or produced a result totally inadequate for Germany.<sup>11</sup>

The pact negotiations progressed successfully after May 21. On May 26 a new draft of article IV was presented in

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<sup>9</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 368, 276.

<sup>10</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 494.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 482.

Rome by France, and was accepted by the four Powers<sup>12</sup> (same as final text of article IV). On the same day, Britain accepted the inclusion of article 16 to help the process of "European appeasement." She presented an amended draft of article II (same as final text of article II). France objected to the phrase in this article: "to give due effect to these articles." She demanded a translation of the word "due." This caused some difficulty but France eventually gave in.<sup>13</sup>

Germany, on the other hand, adopted a stubborn attitude, and declared the new text of article II to be unacceptable. Von Neurath complained that "the whole character of the pact had been changed and it was now scarcely worth anything to Germany."<sup>14</sup>

Italy tried to bring pressure to bear upon Germany in an attempt to conclude the negotiations without further delay. Cerruti approached the German Foreign Office on May 28, saying that the Italian government was "unable to comprehend . . . the attitude which the Government of the Reich had assumed in the last few days, an attitude which, at the present stage

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<sup>12</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 368, 276.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 275-276, 368-69.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 370.

of the negotiations, constitutes the sole obstacle to the initialing of the pact." He further emphasized that the Italian government "continues to consider it not only expedient but also necessary to reach a conclusion of the pact, above all in view of the probable failure of the Disarmament Conference."<sup>15</sup>

The following day Hitler retorted with fresh demands. He asked Mussolini to "give an authentic statement of his view of the significance of the words, 'such as was recognized,' [In article II] on which our decision on whether to accept this wording would depend." He also asked Mussolini to "declare himself willing after the initialing of the pact and not later than the time of the signing to define for us the exact details of the procedure for the practical implementation of the equality of rights."<sup>16</sup>

On May 30, in a secret message to Hitler, Mussolini asked him not to stand obstinately on his objections to article II. This might isolate Germany, since the pact negotiations had reached a conclusive stage. Mussolini declared: "In Paris the parliamentary situation was so unstable that even a delay of only a few days might jeopardize the entire

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<sup>15</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 496.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 497.

agreement. Conclusion of the pact would improve and strengthen Germany's position."<sup>17</sup>

Mussolini also advised Hitler that a declaration regarding implementation of equality of rights would be unwise "now." He suggested that such a protocol could be appended to the Four-Power Pact after its signature. An insistence on the four Powers declaring in a protocol their plans for the first stage of disarmament "would bring about a discussion of all the problems of disarmament and equality of rights, the treatment of which, if limited to the four Powers, could take place in an atmosphere much more favorable to Germany."<sup>18</sup>

The Duce concluded his message by warning Hitler that the failure of the pact "would benefit only those circles that were working for a preventive war or were threatening the new regime in Germany in some other way or that wanted to unite against Germany." At the same time he emphasized that the important consideration in the question of the Four-Power Pact "was to create a period of calm which would enable Germany to solve the difficult problems of domestic politics undisturbed."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 504.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 504, 505.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 505, 506.

While Italy was thus trying to secure German concurrence a fresh controversy arose in the pact negotiations. On May 28 the French newspaper Le Matin published a report concerning the guarantee that France intended to give to her allies in order to allay their fears regarding the Four-Power Pact.<sup>20</sup> Germany immediately protested at the French "guarantee protocol" as it implied a unilateral interpretation of the pact by France and restricted its scope. Von Neurath complained, "It goes without saying that such parallel agreements between France and her allies as we have already experienced in previous settlements especially Locarno, would not only nullify the political and practical significance of article II of the Rome pact but transform it into the opposite."<sup>21</sup>

In reply France made an official assurance in Rome that the Le Matin report was exaggerated and incorrect. The French "guarantee protocol" would merely assure her allies that no treaty revision would be imposed on them except through the "principle of unanimity" in the League of Nations. In that sense the French interpretation was similar to the Italian interpretation. This formal rejection of the Le Matin article by France satisfied Germany.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 497, 499, 500, 605-06; details of the guarantee protocol on p. 99.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 500-01.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 549, 605-06.

Britain too expressed her concern about the French "guarantee protocol," "as deliberately diminishing the value of the pact."<sup>23</sup> France in turn assured Britain that her treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia committed her to "consult with these powers before concluding new agreements that affected policy in Central Europe, etc."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, she emphasized that a guarantee was indispensable as "nothing less would satisfy the Little Entente and, until the Little Entente had declared that their anxiety was allayed, no French Parliament would allow France to become a party"<sup>25</sup> to the pact.

After this controversy was settled, the latest Rome version of the Four-Power Pact was submitted to the jurists of the various governments in Geneva on May 29. The jurists examined the text and recommended that the text should be translated into all four languages.<sup>26</sup>

The pact discussions were nearing conclusion on May 30. Hitler formally accepted the latest text.<sup>27</sup> At the same

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<sup>23</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 281.

<sup>24</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 555.

<sup>25</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 281.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 369; Also see Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 502 n. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 502.

time, the Little Entente Council in Geneva issued a statement accepting the pact in accordance with the French assurance that the "principle of unanimity" would be applied in the event of frontier revision. The Little Entente Council expressed satisfaction that the original version of the pact, which violated the principles of international law and the rights of other nations, had been abandoned and a milder text adopted.<sup>28</sup>

An unexpected crisis arose in the pact negotiations at this stage. On June 1, France suddenly rejected article III of the Italian draft of May 21. It was explained that a misunderstanding had occurred between the French embassy in Rome and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris. The authorities in Paris had been dealing with the French text of May 19 as the basis for their conversations with the Little Entente powers. On the other hand, Britain, Italy and Germany had based their negotiations on the Italian text of May 21. The crucial difference in the Rome and Paris texts lay in the wording in the concluding part of article III. The French text suggested that the Little Entente countries would be consulted in any rearmament measures for Austria,

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<sup>28</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 261-63. See also Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Pact d'entente et de Collaboration, (Paris, 1933), (Hereafter referred to as the French Blue Book), 19-20.

Hungary and Bulgaria, while the Rome text emphasized that rearmament would be regulated by agreement only between the four Powers.<sup>29</sup>

This last minute obstacle seemed to destroy all hopes of an early conclusion of the pact. Italy asked France to accept the pact as agreed in order that it could be initialled without delay. Mussolini suggested that in his speech, after initialling of the pact, he would give it an interpretation which would meet with the French point of view. France expressed her willingness to accept this offer on the condition that Britain too would consent to give a similar interpretation.

Britain rejected the French demand. She had made concessions to France over the question of the inclusion of article 16 of the League Covenant in the pact and insisted that France in turn should at least concede to accepting the Rome text which was acceptable to the other three Powers. Britain warned France that if the pact failed France would be held responsible for the consequences.<sup>30</sup>

A mood of failure prevailed in Rome on June 2. A series of hurried conferences were held among the representatives

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<sup>29</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 309.  
See also Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I,  
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<sup>30</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 309  
n. 1.



of the four Powers. Ambassador de Jouvenel anxiously contacted Daladier.<sup>31</sup> A strong feeling developed that the so-called misunderstanding between Paris and the French embassy in Rome was deliberate and that France was trying to sabotage the pact negotiations.<sup>32</sup> A sense of hostility and constraint developed among the four Power representatives, replacing the cordial relations that had existed in the course of the negotiations.<sup>33</sup> Germany felt that "the Paris Government [desired] the pact to fail because it otherwise [considered] it very probable that the Cabinet [would] fall on the pact issue."<sup>34</sup>

Attempts were continued to break the deadlock and a compromise was finally worked out by June 6. This new version of article III proved to be an excellent compromise because by ignoring the question of "equality of rights" it had a favorable impact on French opinion and by ignoring the question of the exercise of controls on German rearmament it tended to pacify Germany.<sup>35</sup> In essence almost all French

<sup>31</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 515.

<sup>32</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States, 1933, I, 415; Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 371; and The Times (London), June 7, 1933, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 371.

<sup>34</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 527.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 524 n. 2.

demands had been accepted, thus making it morally impossible for France to reject the pact.

Germany, however, accepted the new draft with great reluctance. She pointed out: "what was being put before us now was an entirely new pact . . . of Mussolini's original proposal only a weakened version of article I was left. The word 'revision' had been struck from article II, which was now more over burdened with articles 10 and 16." In her opinion "the positive feature of the Rome pact until the end of last week had been the recognition of Germany's equality of rights in article III. Now this was also gone . . ." Germany was, however, conscious of the advantages of adhering to the pact. As Von Neurath explained: "Regard for the London [Economic] Conference and for world opinion were factors in favor of signing the new pact . . . [though] the prospects offered by the pact were very unsatisfactory."<sup>36</sup> Mussolini made another appeal to Berlin on June 6 to accept the latest text.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, on June 6 the pact negotiations were concluded, and the four Powers accepted the latest draft. The Four-Power Pact was initialled in Rome on June 7. The final text reveals

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<sup>36</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 525.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 527.

how meaningless its contents had been rendered in the course of negotiations:

#### Preamble

The President of the German Reich, the President of the French Republic, His Majesty the King of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Emperor of India, and His Majesty the King of Italy;

Conscious of the special responsibilities incumbent on them as possessing permanent representation on the Council of the League of Nations, where the League itself and its members are concerned, and of the responsibilities resulting from their common signature of the Locarno agreements;

Convinced that the state of disquiet which obtains throughout the world can only be dissipated by reinforcing their solidarity in such a way as to strengthen confidence in peace in Europe;

Faithful to the obligations which they have assumed in virtue of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Locarno treaties and the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and taking into account the declaration of the renunciation of force, the principle of which was proclaimed in the Declaration signed at Geneva on the 11th December, 1932, by their delegates at the Disarmament Conference and adopted on the 2nd March, 1933, by the Political Commission of that Conference;

Anxious to give full effect to all the provisions of the Covenant of the League of Nations, while conforming to the methods and procedure laid down therein, from which they have no intention of departing;

Mindful of the rights of every State, which cannot be affected without the consent of the interested party;

Have resolved to conclude an agreement with these objects, and have appointed as their plenipotentiaries: . . .

#### Article I

The High Contracting Parties will consult together as regards all questions which appertain to them. They undertake to make every effort to pursue,

within the framework of the League of Nations, a policy of effective co-operation between all Powers with a view to the maintenance of peace.

#### Article II

In respect of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and particularly Articles 10, 16, and 19, the High Contracting Parties decide to examine between themselves, and without prejudice to decisions which can only be taken by the regular organs of the League of Nations, all proposals relating to methods and procedure calculated to give due effect to these articles.

#### Article III

The High Contracting Parties undertake to make every effort to ensure the success of the Disarmament Conference and, should questions which particularly concern them remain in suspense on the conclusion of that Conference, they reserve the right to re-examine these questions between themselves in pursuance of the present agreement with a view to ensuring their solution through the appropriate channels.

#### Article IV

The High Contracting Parties affirm their desire to consult together as regards all economic questions which have a common interest for Europe and particularly for its economic restoration, with a view to seeking a settlement within the framework of the League of Nations.

#### Article V

The present agreement is concluded for a period of ten years from the date of its entry into force.

If, before the end of the eighth year, none of the High Contracting Parties shall have notified to the others his intention to terminate the agreement, it shall be regarded as renewed and will remain in force indefinitely, each of the High Contracting Parties possessing in that event the right to terminate it by a declaration to that effect on giving two years' notice.

## Article VI

The present agreement, drawn up in English, French, German and Italian; of which the French text prevails in case of divergence, shall be ratified and the ratifications shall be deposited at Rome as soon as possible. The Government of the Kingdom of Italy will deliver to each of the High Contracting Parties a certified copy of the proces-verbaux of deposit.

The present agreement will enter into force as soon as all the ratifications have been deposited.

It shall be registered at the League of Nations in conformity with the Covenant of the League.

Done at Rome, the 7th June 1933, in a single copy, which will remain deposited in the archives of the Government of the Kingdom of Italy; certified copies will be delivered to each of the High Contracting Parties.

In faith whereof the above-mentioned plenipotentiaries have signed the present agreement.<sup>38</sup>

Ulrich von Hassell  
Henri de Jouvenel

Sir Ronald Graham  
Cavaliere Benito Mussolini

After the pact was initialled a new Franco-German conflict arose and the pact could not be formally signed till July 15.

On June 7, an official "Blue Book" was released in Paris, and it contained a full account of the French "guarantee protocol" made to Poland and the Little Entente countries. The contents of the protocol caused extreme surprise in Berlin. It now became evident that the Le Matin report of May 28 was essentially correct. France, on the other hand,

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<sup>38</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 327-30. Also see Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 533-36.

had formally rejected the Le Matin report, prior to June 7. The "guarantee protocol" contained a unilateral French interpretation that the pact "precludes the examination of the principle of revision and of concrete cases of application." It, however, made possible the examination of suggestions for proper methods and procedure to implement the articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, particularly with regard to article 19. On the other hand, no question of revision could be raised except in accordance with article 19.<sup>39</sup>

Germany sharply protested to France for her unilateral interpretation of the pact, and at the same time lodged her protest in Rome. She refused to sign the pact unless France formally clarified the situation.<sup>40</sup> In her opinion article III of the pact had become useless after the June 1 "hitch" and now the French "guarantee protocol" would render article II meaningless.<sup>41</sup> Germany informed Italy that she had to protest as inadmissible "the twin fact that France is committing herself contractually with respect to a third power to certain interpretations of the Four Power Pact and that she is, in addition, pledging herself in advance to this

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<sup>39</sup> French Blue Book, 23-30. See also Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 549-50.

<sup>40</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 555.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 558.

power, to take such or such a stand with respect to the Contracting parties in pursuance of the Four Power Pact."<sup>42</sup>

On June 13, Mussolini proposed that German objections to the French declaration could be solved by (a) a press communique, (b) a speech by Mussolini or (c) by Mussolini issuing an "instruction" to Von Hassell, which could be published after the signature of the pact. But Germany rejected the Italian proposals.<sup>43</sup>

The German protest was rejected by France on June 15. France asserted that she "had committed herself with respect to the Little Entente and Poland only in one point, namely, that a change in the territorial status . . . must be made only with the consent of the country to whose disadvantage the change was undertaken." This French interpretation agreed with the British interpretation of article II and it was felt that the value of article II was not lost thereby as Germany seemed to think. Paul-Boncour pointed out that article 19 of the Covenant could be treated with great elasticity but first it was necessary, considering the present political situation "to make the countries interested in the fate of Europe and public opinion used to the conversations

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<sup>42</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 550.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 561.

based on the Four-Power Pact by making the subject of discussions for the time being only economic questions and problems which hamper intercourse between neighboring countries and solving them satisfactorily.<sup>44</sup>

Italo-German negotiations were continued in an effort to find a solution to German objections. It was finally decided that a "note verbale" should be issued to the British and French ambassadors in Rome, in which the Italian government would specify German complaints. The contents of the "note verbale" were worked out between Rome and Berlin. Finally on July 7, the "note verbale" was issued in Rome.<sup>45</sup> Its contents gave full effect to German objections to the French "guarantee protocol."

#### Note Verbale

The German Government thought it discerned in the references contained in these documents ["guarantee protocol"] to the interpretation of article 19 of the Covenant and the Pact a procedure which is not calculated to serve the purpose of the Pact, and has addressed to the Italian Government a note expressing these fears and stating that the purpose of the Pact can only be achieved if the four Western Powers are firm in their intention to treat all questions to which the Pact refers in a spirit of sincere cooperation and mutual confidence. It expresses the conviction that the questions concerning the interpretation and application of the Pact

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<sup>44</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 569.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., for Italo-German negotiations regarding the "note verbale" see p. 559-60, 577, 605, 613.



can be settled only by mutual agreement and not unilaterally by one of the four signatory Governments. The Italian Government, referring to the communication made by the French Government at the time, (May 30), replied to the German Government to the effect that the only obligation which the French Government had assumed toward the Rumanian, Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian, and Polish Governments was to remain faithful to the principle of unanimity in connection with the application of article 19 of the League of Nations Covenant to territorial questions, and that therefore the Italian Government considered the fears of the German Government unfounded. On the other hand, the Italian Government is of the opinion (and also so informed the German Government) that if such differences of opinion regarding the interpretation of the Four Power Pact appear, it is in accordance with its spirit that their solution should be sought at meetings of the four Powers.<sup>46</sup>

Germany was satisfied with the procedure adopted by Rome to give full expression to her objections. Britain and France accepted the note without having to make any reply.<sup>47</sup> The Pact discussions were now complete, and the four Powers signed the pact on July 15.

After prolonged negotiations, lasting for about four months, the Four-Power Pact had become a reality. But, the fears and suspicions that were aroused in Europe by the policies of the Nazis in Germany, weighed heavily in determining the final text of the pact. There was indeed a striking difference between the original Mussolini plan and the final

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<sup>46</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 645-46, 605.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 645, 646 n. 6.

draft of the pact. In its final stage it was essentially an innocuous document. The positive proposals for a "Concert of Europe," revision of treaties and for granting "equality of rights" to Germany, were all washed away in the course of negotiations. What was more interesting, however, was the fact that a Four-Power Pact of Understanding and Collaboration had been signed at all.

The European scene was indeed unfavorable for concluding a pact of Four-Power cooperation. During June and July tensions increased in Europe. The London Economic Conference and the world Disarmament Conference were in a state of failure. And German rearmament continued unabated.<sup>48</sup> Also, Nazi activities in Austria and the threat of "Anschluss" contributed to a further deterioration of the political scene.<sup>49</sup> Britain and France proposed taking action against Germany through the organs of the Four-Power Pact. Mussolini, however, rejected this proposal. And Germany warned that any action against her through the Four-Power Pact would mean the destruction of the pact.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, secret collaboration continued between Rome and Berlin. Hitler and Mussolini agreed that the Italo-German "program"

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<sup>48</sup> Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 466.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 350, 431, 432.

<sup>50</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 690.

under the pact would be: "no German-French understanding directed against Italy" and "no Franco-Italian understanding" directed against Germany.<sup>51</sup>

It was evident that another "scrap of paper" would not contribute to understanding and collaboration among the four Powers. A British Foreign Office official had made an apt analysis of the proposed pact as early as March 23, 1933. He wrote in a memorandum that the Four-Power Pact idea was a commendable one: "Co-operation between the four Great Powers represents the realistic, and perhaps in the circumstances the only effective method of dealing with Europe's present problems. It is for this reason highly desirable and worth making sacrifices for." But he pointed out: "If, and as soon as conditions are favourable for such co-operation, it can be brought about almost automatically without written agreement being necessary. If, on the other hand, conditions are unfavourable, no agreement will be able to create co-operation."<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 559, 613-14, 636.

<sup>52</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 100.

## CHAPTER V

### THE STILL-BORN PACT

The plan proposed by Mussolini in March, 1933, embodied positive proposals to encourage the process of European rapprochement. It represented a call for positive action at a time when European statesmen were inclined to pay empty tribute to the ideals of the League of Nations and of international conciliation. By raising the crucial questions of treaty revision and of "equality of rights" for Germany, it offered a challenge to Europe to strike at the root-cause of her difficulties.

But the Mussolini plan was doomed to end as a negative and worthless document. The proposals contained in it represented a one-sided approach to the problems of Europe. The totalitarian powers expected concessions from France and her allies without corresponding changes in their policies which might allay fears and suspicions in Europe. France, suspicious of Italo-German designs, refused to relinquish her hegemony in Europe unless specific guarantees for her security were provided.

The entire plan was thus faced with the problem of solving the Franco-German struggle for power in Europe. Repeated attempts had been made since the war to create an atmosphere of conciliation that would encourage the solution of this problem. But, arrangements such as Locarno proved inadequate. The Four-Power Pact of 1933 and the Munich Pact of 1938 represent efforts of a similar nature. They were destined to meet the same fate as the famed "Locarno Spirit" had met.

European rapprochement could not be created by written agreements unless the Powers concerned were prepared to make sacrifices. Mussolini and Hitler had the common fascist policy of 'will to power.' Under the cloak of a pact for peace they hoped to break up the system created by the peace treaties and avenge the disgrace of Versailles.

Britain's support of the pact represents a move in the direction of the subsequent policy of appeasement. At the same time Mussolini's professions on behalf of European peace fell on willing British ears.

French support of the pact was mainly due to the weakness of French foreign policy, and its subordination to the British policy. The support given by the two democracies was, however, lukewarm. Their signature to the pact was secured only at the cost of voiding the pact of all real

meaning. The final platitudinous text contained no more than had been embodied in many previous treaties, in the Covenant itself for that matter. It was indeed no accident that the framework of the League was repeatedly referred to-- "The assertion may seem superfluous; what it actually meant was the denial of the attempt to set up a four power directorate of Europe . . . . The League idea had thus triumphed in this test of strength. All that remained was a warning that the League idea had been challenged."<sup>1</sup>

Through prolonged negotiations, conducted in the midst of rising tensions, the original Mussolini proposals were diluted to a point where nothing but a miraculous sense of cooperation among the four Powers could make the plan effective. Such cooperation never developed during the 1930's. The Four-Power Pact, consequently, never became effective. It was signed on July 15, but no Four-Power conversations were ever held in accordance with the pact. And finally, it was not ratified by the British or the French Parliaments. Teynbee correctly concluded:

For this untoward outcome of his original initiative, Signor Mussolini was doubtless himself partly to blame, in so far as certain specific and controversial Italian national aims were bound up in his original scheme (as his critics promptly

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht-Carré, "Four Power Pacts: 1933-45," Journal of Central European Affairs, V, April, 1945, p. 24.

pointed out), with a public-spirited attempt to salve the wounds afflicted by the territorial terms of the Peace Treaties and to prevent a fresh outbreak of unregulated competition in armaments. But if Signor Mussolini's opponents had triumphantly exposed and frustrated the self-regarding part of his policy, they had done nothing whatever, on their side to solve the two grave and urgent problems of common interest /Disarmament and Treaty revision/ which Signor Mussolini had in part been attempting to grapple with. And before the close of the calendar year these faults of European statesmanship--calculated self-seeking on one side and blind unconstructiveness on the other--inexorably produced their bitter fruits.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps, if the European situation had not steadily worsened, the Four-Power Pact would not have remained still-born. Its successful application could have created a spirit of conciliation similar to the one that emerged at Locarno in 1925. At least, such is the impression created by the reactions that followed the adoption of the final text of the pact.

In Italy popular opinion hailed the pact in phrases like: "The true peace was not signed in 1919 at the end of hostilities, but was signed yesterday in Rome;" "The pact is for ten years according to the letter, but in substance may prove perennial."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Toynbee (ed.), Survey of International Affairs, 1933, 221.

<sup>3</sup>The Times (London), July 17, 1933, p. 12.

The American ambassador in Rome reported, after the signing of the pact on July 15, that the general impression prevailed that the pact meant "the salvation of Europe at a critical period in its history." He wrote that the signing of the pact at a time "when the World Economic Conference [was] breaking up, when the Disarmament Conference [was] in the doldrums, and when the prestige of the League of Nations [was] at a low ebb," had a salutary influence in Italy. In fact "Italian public opinion [was] inclined to regard the Four Power Pact as the only worthwhile machinery in existence, for international collaboration."<sup>4</sup>

Mussolini, too, hailed the pact as a significant impetus to the spirit of collaboration. He dismissed opposition to the pact as merely sentimental reaction. Speaking before the Italian Senate, he declared that it was the spirit of the Four-Power Pact "which will write 'finis' to the chapter of European history since the war and will begin another chapter. It is the spirit which will guarantee ten years of peace to Europe during which the dangerous and complex problems of internal and international peace can be solved."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Foreign Relations of the United States, 1933, I, 425.

<sup>5</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 276-77.



France, too, was "exceedingly well satisfied" with the final version of the pact. Her wishes had been taken into account almost without exception in the negotiations. The final draft was regarded as a "French victory."<sup>6</sup> France had received useful "moral and spiritual" cooperation from Britain and her fear of German rearmament was allayed because the final text, unlike the first draft, no longer provided any juridical basis for German rearmament.<sup>7</sup> Daladier won another vote of confidence in Parliament over the Four-Power Pact on June 9.

France regarded the pact valuable as an instrument for Franco-Italian rapprochement. Mussolini had emphasized his desire for such understanding to de Jouvenel.<sup>8</sup> As an expression of this policy Professor M. Eydoux, who had been sentenced for espionage, was pardoned in Rome on June 7. This friendly gesture had salutary influence in France.<sup>9</sup>

Germany was dissatisfied with the contents of the final draft. She, however, regarded her acceptance thereof as a

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<sup>6</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 574.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 554.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 576.

<sup>9</sup>Wheeler-Bennett, Documents on International Affairs, 1933, 239 n.2.

wise move politically. Foreign Minister Von Neurath gave a full expression to the German reactions:

The four power pact in the version now decided upon certainly does not fulfill by far all the wishes that we had harbored in connection with the significant initiative of Mussolini. The counteraction of French group and England's lukewarm attitude led to a strong dilution of the ideas of the original Italian draft. Nevertheless the pact represents political progress even in its present form. Although the French have succeeded on the one hand in placing the functions of the pact within the framework of the League of Nations, nevertheless the four Western Powers were left with having assigned to them the de facto role of political leadership in Europe. In this way a new form and a new point of departure for the treatment of political problems have been established.

More important for us than the content of the treaty itself, however, is the fact that a general political treaty of this kind is now being concluded at all. It disavows all attempts at isolating Germany and gives expression to the idea that Germany can be, not an object, but only the participating subject of European policy. This observation is all the more important since we know that the hostility to the pact in France and her satellite states is mainly to be attributed to the feeling that such a pact must necessarily increase the prestige of the Reich Government.

By our agreement we gave another striking proof of our policy of peace and therewith deprived France of any pretext for further postponement of effective disarmament. Naturally, Germany's relation to other European and extra-European Powers is not affected by the pact. Germany's freedom of action toward all third powers and with regard to the problems to be settled with these powers has been fully retained.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 532-  
33.

Britain regarded the initialling of the pact before the London Economic Conference was convened as "an important achievement, even if it was not . . . an event of first-class significance."<sup>11</sup> In her opinion the main substance of the agreement lay only in its first article, otherwise the pact "would be a useful piece of machinery to operate 'within the ambit of the Covenant and in fulfilment of its object'. "<sup>12</sup> British attitude was well expressed in a 'dispatch' by Sir John Simon: "His Majesty's Government's adherence to the new agreement does not imply any extension of the obligations of the United Kingdom in European affairs." The British Foreign Secretary clarified this point as follows:

We have already assumed the obligations of the Covenant, and we have assumed the obligations of the Pact of Locarno. The obligations which Britain has entered into we shall strive to perform, but our friends on the continent will understand . . . that it is no part of the policy of Great Britain to assume further and additional obligations of this character. We take our existing responsibilities too seriously to be willing in a light-hearted and speculative fashion to enlarge them.<sup>13</sup>

In the Little Entente countries the final text of the Four-Power Pact did not arouse reactions such as were aroused

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<sup>11</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 373.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 373.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 326.

by Mussolini's original draft. However, the Little Entente countries continued to maintain their solid opposition to any frontier revision imposed by the four Powers. In Yugoslavia, especially, such opposition was strong. The German ambassador in Belgrade reported on June 30: "It is being stated [in Yugoslav circles] that in case the Great Powers should attempt to force Yugoslavia to cede part of her territory to Hungary or Bulgaria, the Government would reply to such pressure by militarization."<sup>14</sup>

The Czech government, on the other hand, adopted a more conciliatory attitude. It reconciled itself to the possibility of meeting certain territorial claims against her by Hungary.<sup>15</sup> Dr. Benes suggests such an attitude in his memoirs: "Whatever our position about the course of this struggle for the revision of the peace treaties, in a certain sense it was a normal development."<sup>16</sup>

Poland continued to maintain a stubborn anti-pact attitude. French assurances failed to pacify her bitter resentment at being excluded from a "Big-Power" pact of collaboration. Foreign Minister Beck insisted that "the pact would

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<sup>14</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, C, I, 617.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 549.

<sup>16</sup>Dr. Eduard Benes, Memoirs, (Godfrey Lias Tr.), (London, 1954), p. 2.

mean the hegemony of four Powers or rather of three, as France would always find herself in a minority, and the destruction of the League of Nations."<sup>17</sup>

Since the Four-Power Pact never came into effect, whatever beneficial results it might have brought about cannot be correctly ascertained. For, despite Mussolini's clever manipulation of the strong desires making for peace and conciliation in western Europe, the course of events in Nazi Germany overrode these considerations by intensifying the French sense of insecurity. The Franco-German struggle for power in Europe, consequently, assumed new proportions. The status-quo symbolized by the League of Nations received renewed support of France and her allies. The Mussolini plan came to be regarded as an instrument for promoting the revisionistic aspirations of the totalitarian Powers.

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<sup>17</sup>Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, 2, V, 334.

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This study is based primarily upon the Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-45, Series C, Vol. I (Washington, D. C., 1957) and Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39, Series 2, Vol. V (London, 1956). These two publications have supplied vital information which calls for the correction of the previous secondary works on this subject. The French Blue Book (Paris, 1933), the Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1933, Vol. I, (Washington, D. C., 1950), and the Documents on International Affairs, 1933 (London, 1934), edited by John W. Wheeler-Bennett have been quite useful in corroborating information supplied by the British and the German Documents. Similarly a few memoirs have been useful, especially those of the Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck and the Czech Foreign Minister Eduard Benes. Among the newspapers the London Times has been particularly helpful. Though lacking in details contained only in the British and the German Documents, Toynbee's Survey of International Affairs, 1933 (London, 1934), contains useful information.

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