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IN SEARCH OF AN ALLY:
FRENCH ATTITUDES TOWARD AMERICA, 1919-1929

By

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ABSTRACT

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The deterioration of French-American relations in the past twenty years has prompted a search for the source of current expressions of anti-Americanism. Most point to the 1920s as the period which had the greatest influence in shaping the contemporary French image of the United States. In view of the scarcity of materials regarding French-American relations, there is a need for a study which ascertains more precisely how the French felt about the United States during the decade after World War I.

This study goes beyond the tradition of the Marquis de la Fayette to determine how the French felt about Americans in the post-war period. In spite of successful cooperation during the Great War, the period of 1919-1929 proved to be exceedingly trying and turbulent for both nations. The theme of this study is that the celebrated friendship between the United States and France has been at once an historical myth and a reality.

This study focuses on both public opinion and the attitudes of French diplomats and politicians. The official documents covering this period, housed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Quai d'Orsay, were only recently opened

for research purposes. These documents were thoroughly examined to discover the attitudes expressed by the French government. A wide range of French newspapers has been consulted to uncover the viewpoints of the journalists and politicians. A balance has been achieved between official diplomatic relations and the role of public opinion in determining the actual attitudes of the French toward the Americans.

French expectations of peace and security, based upon promises inherent in Wilsonianism, made it difficult for France to accept the new structure of world power and her dependence on the United States. Having been weakened by the war, France was forced to recognize the new status of the United States as a world power. When the United States refused to guarantee French security, the French felt they were the victims of compromise and trickery. However, despite their disappointment, the French never abandoned the hope that the United States would prove to be a friend. France continued her effort to extract from the United States a commitment to guarantee French security.

France saw her security and position among world powers being threatened. Furthermore, as the French became financially dependent upon the United States, the consequent resentment and frustration led to increased expressions of disappointment and bitterness toward Americans. That much of the bitterness was so easily overcome by the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact,

Lindbergh's flight, and the visit of the American Legionnaires to France suggests that the basis for friendship continued to exist between the two nations; the numerous conflicts of national interest notwithstanding.

Despite the paucity of French efforts to influence American opinion, France always desired American friendship and hoped to be the beneficiary of American financial and military power. In the midst of all the expressions of anti-Americanism, it was always understood that the United States would remain a friend to France. The mystique of the Marquis de la Fayette was still alive at the end of the decade. Recent French anti-Americanism was not predetermined by the frustration of the 1920s, for most in both nations anticipated a bright future for French-American relations.

To My Wife
Darlene

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INTRODUCTION

Sensitivity to anti-Americanism has often caused Americans to over-react to criticism and to accept articulated hostile views of the United States as the attitudes of the nation as a whole. This is especially true in French-American relations. In view of traditional French-American friendship, French criticisms have been baffling to Americans. Not understanding that Frenchmen are openly critical of everyone and of each other, Americans too often have mistakenly accepted these criticisms as a general dislike for Americans. The deterioration of French-American relations in the past twenty years has prompted a search for the sources of current expressions of anti-Americanism. Most point to the 1920s as the period which had the greatest influence in shaping the contemporary French image of the United States. This decade is especially significant because during the 1920s France experienced unprecedented cultural influences from America in the form of films, jazz bands, assembly lines and American tourists. Additional influences were felt due to the émigré: predominantly writers, artists and musicians. This study will attempt to ascertain more precisely how the French felt about the United States during this period.

Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, President of France, during

his visit to the United States in May 1976, made an appeal to both nations for a greater degree of mutual understanding as a prerequisite to improved French-American relations. The French president sounded a theme that has been expressed by both the French and the Americans since their first diplomatic encounter: that of the need for improved relations and understanding. Every fourth of July Americans are reminded that the American colonies could not have won their independence without French aid; however, diplomacy between the United States and France has often been marked by miscomprehension, suspicion and insecurity. This friendship, accentuated by extremes, can perhaps best be described as a love-hate relationship.

This study is an attempt to look beyond the tradition of the Marquis de la Fayette in order to determine how the French felt about the Americans after World War I. I will also attempt to show the evolution of French attitudes and expectations in the decade following the war. It is understood that French attitudes were in part a response, or reaction, to American actions and moods, particularly in regard to major diplomatic events. Change and disillusionment are tangibly felt by one in tune with the French spirit.

Official documents, newspapers and periodicals have been consulted in an attempt to understand the attitudes of the French people as well as official government policies. The theme of this study is that the celebrated friendship between the United States and France has been at once an

historical myth and a reality. The period of 1919-1929, in spite of successful cooperation during World War I, proved to be one of the most trying and turbulent for both nations. Yet, in spite of many frictions and controversies, the United States and France have generally managed to restore a semblance of harmony and understanding, permitting sufficient cooperation to meet major crises challenging both nations.

Personal contact, especially between educated Americans and Frenchmen, helped to keep the traditional friendship alive. During the years after World War I, relatively few Frenchmen visited the United States, but thousands of Americans toured France and learned to appreciate its natural beauty and the artistic and intellectual creations of its people. Many American artists and musicians, as well as intellectuals, made France their second home. American creative talent found the hospitality of the French and their intellectual stimulation most gratifying. Some Americans were, however, shocked by the apparent superficiality of French religion and the immorality of French literature, as seen from their own cultural bias. Still, on balance, the close cultural connections between Americans and French tended to take the sting out of the frequent diplomatic differences between the two governments. Thus, while there was at times diplomatic withdrawal, there was never cultural isolation.¹

Public opinion is a vague term which refers to the composite opinions of the general public; however, usually

the only tangible evidence of these attitudes is found in the opinions of the public leaders as expressed in press and public utterances. While American foreign policy was narrowly circumscribed by public opinion, in France public opinion played a different role. French foreign policy was in the hands of the professional diplomats who were, to a great extent, out of the reach of public opinion. Due to government interference and political affiliation, the French press, like French politics, was less representative of public opinion than was the press in the United States.²

This study focuses on both public opinion and the attitudes of the diplomats and politicians. The official documents of the French Foreign Office reveal the attitudes expressed by the press as well as the attitudes and positions taken by the French government on specific issues. The unpublished documents used had only recently been declassified and opened for research purposes at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Quai d'Orsay). Public opinion in this period can best be ascertained through newspapers and periodicals. In the conventional study of diplomatic relations the emphasis has been focused upon an understanding of the official foreign policy and diplomacy of each country. However, the attempt in this study will be to discover French attitudes toward the United States as expressed by French public opinion as well as revealed in diplomatic records. There are, however, many problems in attempting to evaluate the influence of public opinion in forming foreign policy and the implementation of that policy.

First, the Foreign Office policy was determined in relative isolation, independent from other government affairs. There was an absence of machinery, in either the popular or parliamentary sectors, which might have provided a control on official policy. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of the correspondence contained in the documents of the *Ministre des Affaires Etrangères* dealt with public opinion, both in the United States and in France.

Secondly, public opinion is intangible and it is difficult to establish a satisfactory conclusion relative to the influence of public opinion on the formation and expression of foreign policy. It is the opinion of this writer that there is a spirit and an attitude which can be detected and which did influence foreign policy, and which can only be appreciated through an understanding of the culture, mentality and "national character" of the people.

Thirdly, the capturing of the state of mind of a people at any given time is a difficult problem as is any attempt to reconstruct the past. This was especially true before there were public polls to record opinion. This task is even more difficult when it is undertaken by one who is not a native of the country. Such an undertaking requires a recognition that an impartial evaluation is quite impossible. The many currents of opinion which contribute to the mainstream of public opinion rarely fuse into one. Of necessity one must select those considered to be the most influential by the French politicians and writers themselves. For example, the French Department of Foreign Affairs gave a daily

press analysis wherein reference was consistently made to what the department considered to be important in American and French dailies. Yet when the pressure of a crisis created a relative unanimity, it is never certain that this was the predominant point of view among the French. The problem is compounded when one must rely upon public addresses, arguments in Parliament or Congress, explanations by diplomats or writings of editors and news correspondents, for each is attempting to represent public opinion as being in agreement with his respective point of view. It is possible, however, through a comparison of the various expressions of opinion in a wide range of material, to reach some sound conclusions. An evaluation of traditions and of political and economic influences will make possible a valid representation of the state of mind of the people of a country in a given period.

The French reader did not regard the daily paper as merely an entertaining pastime but expected, rather, to be informed of current political thoughts and directions. He chose from the incredible number of papers available those that best expressed his own opinions or those he considered to be the most reliable in reporting the news or reflecting the opposition's view. Circulation figures alone are a revealing indication of public opinion, for not only did French papers reveal public opinion but they also shaped it. Thus, since newspapers are important to this study, an introductory analysis of French papers of this period is

essential.

In 1919 the French press, representing all sectors of French opinion, reached great dimensions of distribution. There were no less than fifty-five daily papers printed in Paris alone. The three largest, le Petit parisien, le Matin and le Journal, each had a circulation of over one million. The French press was never uniquely a "presse d'information" but rather had a definite political commitment. Little effort was made to conceal the political affiliation of most of the large dailies such as le Matin, le Petit parisien and le Figaro. Each of these papers had its own diplomatic and military reporters and an editor who interpreted the news along the lines of his political affiliation. The smaller dailies openly espoused a precise political opinion. Approximately forty of the fifty-five Paris dailies reported the news as propaganda. Generally, the press of this period can be classified as Left, Center or Right on the political spectrum. However, some newspapers are as difficult to classify as are French politicians.

The Petit journal and the Petit parisien were the only Paris dailies that exercised a profound influence in the provinces. These had a large circulation all over France. Others such as le Matin and le Journal were not distributed outside the large cities, although their articles were reproduced by the provincial press, increasing their influence. In short, the French press at once disseminated and attempted to form opinion.³

The French press exercised an increasingly important role in French politics. The Paris government in 1919 had managed to control the political opposition in Parliament and was struggling to control all opposition through press censorship. On several occasions, even before the Peace Treaty Commission, Clemenceau expressed his dislike of the large newspapers. The Clemenceau cabinet likewise attempted to suppress opposing voices in the news media in numerous ways. Censorship and suspension of publication for reasons of national security were the most effective. The government also maintained a strict censorship of the foreign press. These censorships, however, were not as effective as the government wished due to clumsy, arbitrary and blind application.

This political involvement of the French press is illustrated by the fact that numerous directors of newspapers, such as Jean Dupuy of le Petit parisien, were personally involved in politics. French politicians and journalists alike had discovered since the Dreyfus affair that the press was an effective means of formulating public opinion.

Indeed, political leaders were often writers for the large newspapers. Senators and deputies wrote frequently for the Paris dailies. For example, Paul Doumer, Louis Marin, Gaston Doumergue, Edouard Herriot and Raoul Péret were well known through the press. The journalistic influence of the politicians came either from articles contributed to the newspapers or through their influence on the

editorials. Thus many politicians who never wrote for the press were influential as they acted as advisors to certain newspapers. This was the case with Briand through le Matin.

Even the large newspapers had a definite political position on all important issues. Each freely expressed opinions on political issues and, in short, most treated the news as propaganda. However, a definite political classification of the newspapers is difficult because one classified on the Left would often take the same position as a Right-oriented newspaper on certain issues. Some dailies such as le Rappel and l'Aurore, traditionally classified as Left, supported the government in 1919. Thus one can only conclude that the newspapers represent the individualism of the politicians themselves.

Still, an approximate classification is both useful and necessary. The important Left, Socialist and Syndicalist papers were l'Humanité, le Populaire and le Journal du peuple. The Pacifist papers were la Bataille, la Vérité, l'Heure, l'Oeuvre and Bonsoir. The Nationalist Socialist papers, le Radical, la France libre, le Rappel and even l'Homme libre of Clemenceau are generally included among the Left.

The most influential Right papers included l'Action française, la Libre parole, le Gaulois, la Liberté, l'Echo de Paris, la Croix, l'Avenir, l'Eclair, la Victoire, le Figaro and le Journal des débats. This classification is also difficult because, for example, l'Eclair changed

position in 1919, as evidenced by the addition of J. Paul-Boncour as a regular contributor. At the same time Jacques Bainville and Edouard Herriot wrote for the Avenir and the Matin which supported Foch, denounced Clemenceau and were friendly toward Briand; therefore, they must be classified among the Center. Some other important Center newspapers included Démocratie nouvelle, l'Intransigeant, le Temps, le Journal, le Petit journal, Paris-Midi, l'Information and le Petit bleu.

The three large Paris newspapers which almost had a monopoly on sales and distribution were the Petit parisien (2,000,000 circulation), le Matin (1,500,000) and le Journal (1,000,000). In addition to these three with over one million circulation, there were fifty-two daily newspapers including l'Echo de Paris, l'Intransigeant, la Croix, l'Excelsior, l'Oeuvre and l'Humanité, each exceeding one hundred thousand in circulation. L'Action française sold from sixty to eighty thousand copies, la Libre parole from ten to twenty thousand l'Avenir and le Journal des débats approximately twenty-five thousand. Among the most influential dailies, le Temps had a circulation of only seventy-five thousand. The newspapers of the Left had a more modest circulation: le Rappel and le Radical (10,000), la France libre (6,000), le Populaire and Clemenceau's l'Homme libre (10,000). Twenty of the more important dailies had a circulation of less than five thousand. The press in the provinces was a reflection of the Paris press and will not figure greatly in this study.

Generally, the position a newspaper took depended upon an overall attitude toward the government and its initiatives toward the war, peace negotiations, security and the economy. For example, the Socialists and Pacifists were opposed to Foch and the "Paix de sécurité," were supporters of Wilson and were fundamentally against Clemenceau. However, some Right dailies like les Débats and l'Eclair supported Wilson without being against Clemenceau. The most violent critics of Clemenceau were the largest papers, le Matin and le Journal which had a clientele among the middle class. Clemenceau, however, could count on the faithful support of other large newspapers such as le Petit parisien and le Petit journal (the most apolitical of all French papers) which was read largely by the lower social class. The Petit parisien, with a circulation of two million, had tremendous influence because it belonged to Senator Jean Dupuy and was the voice of Parliament and the Clemenceau government. The cabinet of Clemenceau depended on the support of the press of the Right; yet when its existence was threatened by problems over the peace negotiations the "press of the Left" would come to its aid. The Left dailies would usually support the government position against the extreme Right.

The French press had the benefit of an outstanding group of journalists who were analysts of exceptional talent. The analysts were professional journalists, writers, professors and politicians who used the press as a vehicle of confrontation of opposition opinion. Many members of

Parliament used the press as a means of extending their influence upon the people also. For example, it was a common occurrence for the president of the Budget Commission for the Chamber to have numerous articles in the press criticizing his political enemies. Access to the press was extremely important to politicians such as Clemenceau, as it was the privileged vehicle for political opinion.

The following is a list of the influential Paris newspapers:

L'Action française: Royalist, Right publication of Charles Maurras, Léon Daudet and Jacques Bainville.

L'Avenir de Paris: Moderate Right, Briandist, publication of Charles Chaumet, deputy from la Gironde. Contributors: Bainville, Deputy Lémery, Edouard Herriot, Colonel Fabry.

La Bataille: Syndicalist, publication of the CGT. Began publication in 1914 under the direction of Léon Jouhaux.

Bonsoir: Left, Pacifist and anti-government. Began publication January 13, 1919 under the direction of Gustave Téry. Contributors: Robert de Jouvenal and Henri Béraud.

La Croix: Catholic. Contributors: J. Mollet, G. Goyeau, J. Girand and General Petetin.

La Démocratie nouvelle: Centrist but critical of Clemenceau. Began publication in 1918 under the direction of Lysis. André Cheradame was the editor of foreign affairs.

L'Echo de Paris: Right. Contributors: Pertinaux, Maurice Barrès, Marcel Hutin, Gabriel Bonvalot and numerous parliamentarians.

L'Echo du commerce: Publication of French commercial and economic interests. Contributors: H. Franck and Monserrat.

L'Eclair: Changed from Right to Left. Director: René Wertheimer. Contributors: Rojon, G. Montorgueil, Admiral Degouy, Maxime Leroy and from February 1919, Jean Paul-Bancour.

L'Europe nouvelle: Left or Liberal. Began publication in 1917. Supported Wilson. Contributors: Léon Jouhaux, Louise Weiss.

L'Evènement: Center. Supported the government. Editor: Alexandre Israel. Contributors: Henri Paté, Alexandre Varenne, Alexandre Bérard. Political editor: George Reynald.

Excelsior: Center. Parliamentarians: Raoul Péret and Lémery were contributors.

La France: Left. Founded by Emile de Girardin. Contributors: Parliamentarians A. Lebey and G. Bonnamour, J. L. Bonnet. Editors: Emile Buré and H. Laurier.

La France libre: Socialist. Began publication in 1918 by forty Socialist deputies. Director: Compère-Morel, Deputy Rozier and Deputy Veber.

La France militaire: Military contributors: Generals Fonville, Malleterre and Prudhomme. Parliamentarians: L. Cornet, Senator Henri Cheron.

Le Figaro: Right. Director: Gaston Calmette. Editors in Chief: Alfred Capus, Robert de Flers. Contributor: Parliamentarian Denys Cochin.

Le Gaulois: Extreme Right. Director: Arthur Meyer. Contributors: René d'Aral, Colonel Rousset. Occasionally: François Mauriac.

L'Heure: Republican. Socialist. Political director: Marcel Sembat. Contributors: Paul Aubriot, Léon Jouhaux, Alexandre Varenne, Léon Blum, Alphonse Aulard.

L'Homme libre: Formerly l'Homme enchaîné. Founded by Georges Clemenceau. Contributors: Bittard, Nicholas Pietri, Léo Gerville-Réache. Clemenceau with the assistance of Pietri edited l'Homme libre in 1919. Left National.

L'Humanité: Director: Marcel Cachin since October 1918. Contributors: Longuet, Mayeras, Sembat, D. Renoult, Anatole France, C. Huysmans, Sixte Quenin. Socialist Centrist faction.

L'Information: Center. Economic and financial supplement. Along with l'Echo du commerce the only daily commercial paper. Contributors: Paul Adam, Léo Chavenon, Charles Omessa, Admiral Degouy, Jules Moch.

L'Information parlementaire: Center. Daily correspondence with departmental papers. Director: Armand Massip.

L'Intransigeant: Center. Director: Léon Bailby. On February 11 Colonel Fabry was editor in chief. Contributors: Philippe Crozier, Georges Lecomte, Pierre MacOrlan.

Le Journal: Center. Director: Georges Humbert. Contributors: H. Bidou, Saint Brice, Georges London, Binet-Valmer. Important parliamentary contributors: Paisant, Damour, Pradier, Abbé Lemire, Raoul Péret, Boussenot, Brousse.

Le Journal des débats: Conservative Right. Director: Etienne de Nalèche. Published for one hundred years. Contributors: Gauvin, P. de Quirielle, H. Bidou. Important diplomatic column.

Le Journal du peuple: Socialist. Director: Henri Fabré.
Contributors: Severine, A. Charpentier, Mayeras,
Lucien Le Foyer, Charles Rappoport, Bernard Lecache,
Henri Torrès, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, General Percin.

La Justice: National. Director: Gratien Candace. Contri-
butors: Charles Bronne, then Gaston Doumergue (Candace
was a Socialist Republican who resigned January 8.).
The paper changed political affiliation and became
Nationalist in February.

La Lanterne: Radical. Director: Félix Hautfort. Contri-
butors: Latapie, Laskine.

La Libre parole: Right. Founder: Edouard Drumond. Contri-
butors: Paul Vergnet, Reverdy, Isoulet, Galli,
General Petetin, Louis Marin, General de Saint Yves,
Joseph Denais.

Le Matin: Conservative. Director: Bunau-Varilla. Editor
in Chief: Henri de Jouvenel. Contributors: Stéphane
Lauzanne, J. Sauerwein (diplomatic), Commander de
Civrieux.

L'Oeuvre: Pacifist, Radical. Began publication in 1915.
Director: Gustave Téry. Contributors: Jean Hennessy,
Charles Saglio, Barthe, Admiral, Degouy, General
Verraux.

Paris-Midi: Center. Director: A. Milhaud. Contributors:
M. de Waleffe, Leblond. Merged with l'Evènement in
June.

La Patrie: Right. Director: Emile Massard.

Le Pays: Pacifist. Editor in Chief: Gaston Vidal. Contribu-
tors: Yvon Delbos, Victor Mauguierite, Théodore
Ruyssen, A. Aulard, G. Séailles, Charles Debierre,
Senator Rodriguez.

Le Petit bleu: Center. Founder: Rochefort. Director:
Alfred Oulman.

Le Petit journal: Center. Contributors: Londres, Blumenthal,
Fournol, Raoul Péret, Colonel Thomasson, Viviani.

Le Petit parisien: Center. Director: Jean Dupuy. ("Largest
newspaper circulation in the world" - 2,500,000).
Contributors: G. Lechartier, Landry, Cheron, Aulard,
Colonel Rousset, Engerand.

La Petite république: Radical. Political director: Louis
Puech. Director: Maurice Dejean. Important parle-
mentary contributors: Augagneur, Fernand Merlin.

La Politique: Republican and Socialist. Began publication in 1919. Political director: Alexandre Varenne.

Le Populaire de Paris: Socialist, Syndicalist. Minority tendency. Director: Jean Longuet. Contributors: Mayeras, Renoult, Paul Faure, Henri Barbusse, Frossard, Boris Souvarine, Paul Mistral.

La Presse: Center Governmental. Founded by Emile de Girardin. Parliamentary contributors: Escudier, André Lebey.

Le Radical: Socialist Left. Contributors: P. Delmondy, Louis Ripault, J. Perchot, Verzenet, G. Rivet, Lanson, Colonel Pris.

Le Rappel: Radical Left, Governmental. Founder: Auguste Vacquerie. Director: Edmond du Mesnil. Contributors: Louis Ripault, Camille Devilar, Georges Leygues.

La République française: Republican Left. Founder: Gambetta. Political director: Jules Roche. Contributors: Louis Marcellin, G. Bonnamour, Louis Latapie, Georges Bonnefous, Commander de Civrieux.

Le Soir: Economic newspaper. Center. Governmental. Contributors: Gaston Doumergue, Rabaud, Dejean, Lémery, Laurent Eynac, Colonel Fabry, Brousse, Serre, Constant, Verlot, René Cassin. Important parliamentary contributions. Supplement: Le Journal du commerce.

Le Temps: Center. Represented the grande bourgeoisie. Political director: Adrien Hébrard. Contributors: F. Mommeja, Théodore Linenbaub, General de Lacroix, Lieutenant d'Entraygues, Charles Rivet, A. Guillerville.

La Vérité: Pacifist. Left. Director: Paul Meunier. Contributors: Merrheim, Barbusse, Séverine, A. Charpentier, Fabrice, Pierre Massé, Charles Debierre, Le Foyer.

La Victoire: Radical Right. Political director: Gustave Hervé. Contributors: G. Bienaimé.

La Vieille France: Right. Anti-American.

La Voix du peuple: Socialist and Syndicalist.

FOOTNOTES

¹Crane Brinton, The Americans and the French (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 53.

²Pierre Miquel, La Paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique française (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), pp. 9-36.

³E. Malcolm Carroll, French Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs: 1870-1914 (New York: Century, 1931), pp. 3-14.

CHAPTER 1

FRENCH-AMERICAN RELATIONS BEFORE 1919

Although the subject of this study is French attitudes in regard to the United States after the Great War, it is important to establish mutual attitudes before the 1920s. The emotional bond which drew the French and the Americans together too often led to expectations that clashed with the realities of divergent interests. The French contribution to American independence created a myth of traditional close association between the two countries. However, in actual fact, the attitude in each nation with respect to the other ranged from admiration to contempt. Their respective interests dictated friction-producing policies which diplomacy was unable to resolve.

The French-American Alliance of 1778 was the result of a long-time power struggle between France and Britain. The humiliating results of the "Great War for the Empire" which ended in 1763 predisposed France to encourage the independence movement in the colonies. Without the material and political aid of prestigious and powerful France, the colonies could not have successfully defied the more powerful England. Despite the skepticism of many of the American colonies in regard to the "intriguing nation," the colonists

sought and finally received essential aid from France even though it was offered on competitive grounds. The essence of France's motive was explained by the Count de Vergennes when he said, "We shall humiliate our natural enemy, . . . we shall re-establish our reputation and shall resume amongst the powers of Europe the place which belongs to us."¹

The American Revolution became merely a phase in a war of international scope when France and Spain concluded an alliance and when Spain declared war on England on June 21, 1779. From a military point of view this turn of events obviously benefited the United States, although it presented the possibility of unwanted political entanglements in European intrigues.

The American peace commissioners, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay, quickly realized that neither France nor Spain was committed to American interests. The failure of France and Spain to wrest Gibraltar from England led to attempts to compensate Spain with territories east of the Mississippi. France, while supporting the desire for independence of the United States, wanted it to be small and politically dependent on France and economically strong enough to be beneficial to her. Once the peace commissioners became aware of France's designs, they felt no longer obligated to the provisions of the Alliance of 1778 and set out to conclude a peace with England apart from France. Britain had an interest in driving a wedge between the French and the Americans and succeeded by granting peace terms more

favorable to the United States than Vergennes thought possible. Neither the French nor the Americans lived up to the spirit of the alliance, for both independently approached England hoping to gain the most advantageous terms for themselves.

Early French-American relations reveal that self-interest guided both countries from their first encounter. Americans were determined that they would not be weak and dependent on French manipulators. Despite common roots in the Enlightenment, the French and Americans had not merged into a common national interest. The French and American Revolutions disturbed the political and social order of the Western world and, for a time, evoked sentiments of fraternity, but trade interests soon forced France and the United States into quarrelsome controversies and ultimately into an undeclared naval war in the 1790s.

The initial American response to the French Revolution of 1789 had been on the whole favorable. However, when France became involved in an external war, the United States was confronted with a serious dilemma. On the one hand, the Alliance of 1778 and a real sympathy on the part of the majority of Americans for the ideals of the French Revolution dictated that the United States should become involved on the side of France in her conflict with England. On the other hand, politically and economically weak America could not afford to become involved in a war which would probably destroy the young republic. Domestic and foreign affairs were tied together. Economic interests dictated that issues

relative to foreign trade would become the focal point in American foreign policy.² Thus debate over ideological and economic considerations in foreign policy culminated in a crisis over the ratification of the Jay Treaty, divided the American people, and created the first party system.³

The revolutionary government of France expected aid from the United States as an ally and a sister republic. The neutrality policy of the Federalists in America thus ran counter to French expectations. The leaders of the young American nation did not yield to sympathies for the French cause but pursued a policy dictated by the necessity of trade and the preservation of peace and made concessions to Britain, irrespective of French reactions. Divergent policies, moreover drove France and America increasingly apart.

The Napoleonic era did not witness much improvement in French-American relations. Napoleon had visions of restoring France's influence in North America by the acquisition of Louisiana from Spain. Due to military and diplomatic reverses, Napoleon decided to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States. The arrogance displayed by Napoleon in his dealings with the United States showed a lack of understanding of both the government and the people. Napoleon failed to exploit the American dislike for England to France's advantage but instead provoked American wrath against the French by his arbitrary treatment of American shippers. Napoleon was unscrupulous and insensitive in the handling of American affairs and was increasingly unresponsive even as his powers increased in Europe.

As a consequence, the July Revolution of 1830 was viewed by Americans as an improvement in the French political system. After all, the citizen-king, Louis-Philippe, was on a constitutional throne and was not king of France but of the French people. The thirties, however, were to see one of the most bitter of America's quarrels with France. The cause of the outpouring of much bitter rhetoric was the continuous dispute over indemnities claimed by Americans for damages incurred during the war which ended in 1815. When France finally agreed to pay five million dollars for spoliation claims, the Chamber of Deputies simply refused to appropriate money to carry out the treaty. However, neither side wanted war for "so silly a cause" and both accepted British mediation. The memory of the angry dispute remained even though France paid the claims.

Nothing more of significance happened on the diplomatic level in French-American relations until the American Civil War. Taking advantage of the unfortunate situation, Napoleon III used the customary claim of unpaid foreign debts to dispatch troops to Mexico. The mission, conducted jointly by France, England and Spain, was supposed to be strictly to insure the collection of debts. However, the French used the occasion to set up a satellite state in Mexico with the Austrian prince as emperor. After Appomattox the American government used every diplomatic means to enforce the Monroe Doctrine.

Tolerating the existence of a monarchy on their border

was unthinkable to Americans in 1860. Americans were extremely unsympathetic toward French efforts to establish such an un-American institution in Mexico. In the final two years of negotiations, the Americans displayed an unusual firmness and patience which concluded in a settlement being reached without an ultimatum. Nevertheless, it was a serious and traumatic experience in the deteriorating relations with France.

Even though the Third Republic was not America's kind of republic, at least it was not a monarchy. From 1867 until after World War I there was no major crisis causing bitterness such as that resulting from the XYZ affair, the Napoleonic wars, the spoliation claim or Napoleon III's adventure in Mexico. French expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was chiefly in Southeast Asia and Africa and did not greatly concern Americans. There continued to arise, however, some minor points of irritation.

For instance, although the United States had no colonial aspirations in Africa, it possessed a "peculiar" foothold on the west coast of Africa. Liberia, established by the American Colonization Society as a colony of freed slaves, became a de facto colony of the United States.⁴ Even after Liberia became independent in 1847 generous American financial aid maintained its independence. When France offered its protection to the Liberian government, the United States let it be known that Americans were opposed to any attempt

to subvert the independence of Liberia for the aggrandizement of any colonial power. President Cleveland, for example, warned France to keep hands off Liberia by announcing "the moral right and duty of the United States to assist in all proper ways in the maintenance of its (Liberia's) integrity."⁵

American interest in Liberia involved the United States in colonial rivalries with France. In 1884 when the French sought boundary adjustments in Liberia, both the United States and England objected. The French were warned by the State Department that America's intimate relations with Liberia entitled her to be involved in any boundary settlement. But two years later the French signed treaties with some tribal chiefs inside the Liberian territory. The State Department again informed France that the United States would protect Liberia's territorial sovereignty. Despite American protests, Liberia signed a treaty December 8, 1892, ceding to France the seacoast east of the Cavally River in exchange for certain territorial and financial compensations. France had, however, to the satisfaction of the United States, recognized the independence of the state of Liberia, one of the chief aims of the United States. The United States, under Taft and Roosevelt, established Liberia as an American sphere of influence. Americans assumed Liberian debts, re-organized its army, and made sure that it would be absorbed by neither France nor England.

In other areas of Africa the United States was not directly involved. However, occasional differences between

the two nations were settled in the businesslike atmosphere which generally prevailed in French-American relations during this period.

French determination to expand her empire, by diplomacy if possible, by force if necessary, led to American resentment. When France established a protectorate over Tunis in 1881, public opinion in the United States severely condemned the unprovoked attack on Tunis to force compliance to this treaty. The anti-colonial attitude of Americans was expressed in disparaging articles about French colonialism, leading Théodore-Justin Roustan, the French ambassador to Washington, to conclude that in crisis the French might discover that the presumed French-American friendship was only an illusion.

The French rationalized that their empire building was a civilizing enterprise. They had the right to represent Tunis in its relations with other countries. Consequently, the French refused to recognize the most-favored nation concessions the United States had previously gained from Tunis.

The French also established a protectorate over Madagascar in 1885 and subjugated it. A decade later France refused to recognize the treaty rights of both the United States and Britain and informed them that the new arrangements on the island were incompatible with their anterior treaties with Madagascar.

And in the Far East, despite their rivalry, the

European powers wanted to maintain a unified front vis-à-vis the Orientals. The desire to keep pace with the other European powers led the French to seek and to take advantage of America's participation in Far Eastern affairs. In the resolution of complex rights disputes in Tonkin, Yunnan and Annam, the United States rendered services to the French government. The American friendly intervention demonstrated its international concern and usefulness to the French.

Some American opposition was provoked by the drawn-out discussions that culminated in de Lesseps' attempt to build the Panama Canal. This opposition was not very determined because de Lesseps' enterprise was private and he worked diligently to win over business interests. Neither the French failure in the Panama Canal project nor the final American success caused anything like a crisis in French-American diplomatic relations.

The Panama Scandal, said the Nation, was not the only reason for the disorder in French politics. It "simply brought to the boiling point the public indignation over the long series of weaknesses and failures on the part of the ministry."⁶ The Panama Scandal was scornfully described in the Review of Reviews:

It is impossible to conceal from the world that a large portion of French society, financial, legislative and diplomatic has for years past been wallowing in a cesspool of corruption . . . the result is an object lesson in the consequences of repudiating the moral law.

In the period from the Franco-Prussian War to World War I Americans once more began to refer to France as "our

ancient ally." However, this did not prevent condemnation of anything that seemed to be materialistic, intolerant, irreligious or unstable. French politics were described as fierce, undisciplined, mixed with passion and permeated with the spirit of "revanche" and characterized by "an extravagant and unreasoning chauvinism."

The French, however, were praised for the way they recovered from the impoverishment they suffered at the hands of the Prussians to become "stronger and growing stronger, prosperous and happy beyond any nation in Europe." Between 1890 and 1900 American opinion toward France was brought into sharper focus by the Franco-Russian Entente (1894), by the Panama Scandal which was made public in 1893, by the assassination of President Carnot in 1894 and by the Dreyfus case which held center stage in 1898 and 1899.

The Dreyfus case, more than any other event, brought French political and social affairs to the attention of Americans. The question of the guilt of the Alsatian Jew, accused and convicted of selling military secrets to Germany, produced both political and moral reactions from Americans. Sympathy for Dreyfus was strong in America. When Zola's letter, "J'accuse," caused the revelation of the sinister power of the army and corruption in the French government, Americans were convinced that a great injustice had been done. The anti-Semitic agitation in France, the mob spirit, the suppression of freedom of speech and evidence of a vengeful spirit against Germany caused most Americans to

hold France in disfavor. Elizabeth Brett White, in American Opinion of France, states that the "press throughout the United States was practically unanimous in condemnation."⁸ The Independent called the case the "most disgraceful episode of modern political and military life."⁹

The Political Science Quarterly declared that

When the state is merged in the army, there can be no guaranty of civil liberty. . . . The government of France . . . is indeed called a republic; but after we have read the Dreyfus case and the Zola trial, it can kindle no spark of fraternal sympathy in the heart of any genuine American.¹⁰

When the new trial brought a verdict of "guilty, with mitigating circumstances," even more criticism was heaped upon France. The Nation called the verdict an example of "French military justice, which the world now understands to be the grossest injustice under the forms of law. . . . France stands disgraced before the world by this terrible denial of justice."¹¹ After Dreyfus had been pardoned and released, he asked for a new trial on the basis of new evidence. A verdict of innocence was rendered at this time. The Review of Reviews said, "It is not Dreyfus alone who has been vindicated, it is France herself . . . out of the agitation over Dreyfus and the bitterness of the religious prejudice that was aroused has come the church separation law and a new, tolerant regenerated France."¹² Although there was no active ill-will against France over the Dreyfus case, it did make a bad impression and led to a great deal of disparagement.

With respect to the Spanish-American War, French

public opinion demonstrated a wide range of viewpoints, depending on financial, religious and ideological interests. French investors in Spain had an interest in avoiding war between the United States and Spain. The Franco-Spanish trade volume was considerable although the the Franco-American trade volume was twice as large. All things considered, financial interests dictated that France remain neutral. Because of religious ties, the French clericals strongly supported the Spanish, a devout Roman Catholic society. The church, along with the army, welcomed a diversion from the ill effects of the Dreyfus affair. The French royalists, ideological opponents of republican governments, could not countenance the prospect of another republic in Cuba, or perhaps in Spain. Many French even feared that the United States would end up conquering the French possessions in the Caribbean, and French public opinion, for the most part, sympathized with Spain. The French press, initially, did not participate in anti-American propaganda. Whatever the views of the French public, the government maintained a "correct" attitude throughout the conflict.

Most importantly, France realized that the war had transformed Washington into one of the most important capitals in the world. Previously European diplomats had considered an assignment to Washington as one of the less desirable posts. However, Jules Cambon, the French ambassador, perceived that the outcome of the war had projected the United States into the mainstream of international politics.

The uncertainty of a more active American role in world affairs led Cambon to the conclusion that this would revolutionize American policies. The potential of the United States developing a strong military and naval force would have a tremendous impact in Europe.

The establishment of an American empire caused a great deal of concern in Europe. The Paris government took for granted that economic motives were the driving force of American imperialism which was associated with the evils of British imperialism. While many Frenchmen were criticizing America's strict business approach to foreign affairs, some Americans such as Brooks Adams bluntly told the French that they must accept their gradual decline as a world power. The United States, for good or evil, was forced to compete in the struggle among world powers.

In the period just prior to the outbreak of the First World War tariff and trade questions continued to pose the greatest difficulties. The static French population, in comparison with the tremendous increase in American population, placed the balance of trade in favor of the United States. Unlike the United States, France had not modernized its economy. However, France was able to maintain a reasonable level of prosperity from export of perfumes, silks, china, works of art and other specialties. Rather than modernize its production techniques, France relied on high tariffs to protect the home industries.¹³

Furthermore, the French were not disposed to promote exports to the United States, assuming that their goods were already desired in the United States.¹⁴

The Payne-Aldrich tariff which terminated all French-American reciprocity agreements brought talk of reprisals in an open tariff war. Negotiations failed to remove the irritations. The dissatisfaction with the framework of the French-American trade relations was mutual. The United States was the only major commercial nation to which the minimum tariff rates did not apply without modification. France was likewise dissatisfied with the United States tariff rates and tried constantly to have them reduced.

Despite these irritations, on the whole French-American trade remained stable during the period from 1900-1914. When in the spring of 1914 the French Foreign Office made overtures for a new trade agreement, President Wilson expressed a willingness to accommodate France. Indicatively, however, Robert Lansing, Wilson's advisor, asked a State Department foreign trade advisor, "What can we offer, or what can we threaten?"¹⁵ Obviously, Americans would continue to drive a hard bargain.

The Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution growing out of it demonstrated to France the financial, political and military liability of the Franco-Russian alliance. When the Moroccan crisis cast a disturbing shadow on the European horizon, President Roosevelt's part in the settlement of the two crises proved invaluable to France,

thus creating a more favorable climate in French-American relations.

In the period immediately preceding World War I a counterpoise to American criticism against France was found in a growing distrust of Germany. Americans disapproved of Germany's actions in China, they distrusted her in the Caribbean and South America, and they showed little sympathy with her general foreign policy. American disapproval of German militarism and imperialism was accompanied by a toleration of French foreign policy.

As a result of the Russo-Japanese War, France's alliance with Russia had lost much of its value and had weakened the French position on the continent. American sympathies were with France when Germany challenged French domination in Morocco. Americans felt that it would be unwise to permit Germany to crush France. Roosevelt, too, favored France but wished to stay on good terms with Germany. He particularly wanted to prevent a rupture between Germany and France. Roosevelt's contribution in effecting a workable compromise at the Algeiras conference of January 1906 helped to maintain peace and permitted Germany to extricate itself from an unwise diplomatic maneuver. Roosevelt helped arrange a solution that defended French interests and enhanced the prestige of France.

Roosevelt's involvement in European diplomacy was an extraordinary departure from the traditional American non-involvement in questions that did not concern its national

interests. Still, in the period between the Spanish-American War and World War I, with the exception of this conference, the United States remained relatively aloof from European affairs except when Asian issues were involved.

Despite minor differences, the high point in French-American relations came during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Proof of improved relations was evidenced in ceremonies: American school children presented to France a statue of Lafayette and France presented to the American people a statue of Rochambeau. It was also evident in the cultural exchanges such as France's sending a sculptured figure of "La France" by Rodin and in the Alliance Française which attracted a great deal of interest; all suggested a deep and abiding attraction between the French and the Americans. The French press, which had viciously attacked the United States during the Spanish-American War, perceived that it was in France's interest to solidify ties in the Atlantic community. This new spirit was symbolized by Roosevelt at Algeciras. Jules Jusserand, the new ambassador in Washington, was also an important force in these improved relations. Jusserand, a diplomat and a distinguished scholar, came to understand the American people. He was one of the few who were invited by Roosevelt to go on "walks" with him, an indication of their close relationship.

From the moment of the outbreak of World War I a great flow of sympathy and concern for France was demonstrated by Americans. As the war proceeded, France had the

advantage of not having outraged the Americans as had both the Germans and the British. France, the invaded country, was not responsible for the war. In the background was the ubiquitous Lafayette, the effective Francophiles and the improved French-American diplomatic relations. The stage was then set for this sympathy to develop into enthusiasm. "This admiration, which even the French found excessive, did not last long, but it is a good illustration of the war in which French-American relations are always extreme and insecure," according to André Siegfried.¹⁶

When war came in August 1914 the public judgment absolved France of responsibility for such a breakdown of civilization. Germany's militarism for some time had antagonized Americans. It was quite clear to most Americans that this was not France's war but that she had been forced into it by the principles of self-preservation. Frank H. Simonds said:

We doubted whether France, so long deemed decadent by those who knew best and spoke most about her . . . could endure the strain of another terrible struggle. We now know . . . that the nation which could endure adversity with calmness, as the French did in August, may be defeated, but that the France that the whole world loves . . . will not die.¹⁷

The Atlantic Monthly voiced the popular consensus by stating that

. . . the truth remains that England did not violate Belgium's neutrality, and Germany did; that France did not march her armies across Belgium's frontier, and Germany did; that France promised to respect the treaty she had signed, and Germany refused to give such a promise. How can we argue on the basis of what might have happened, instead of what has happened?¹⁸

There were many expressions of sympathy for France commending the majesty of France and her sublime effort for the highest ideals of civilization. Relative to the service of American volunteers fighting for France, the Outlook said that many aspects of the great struggle between absolutism and democracy were humiliating to Americans "but there is nothing to regret in the devotion to France in her hour of need of many young Americans, nor in the finely conceived and finely organized service of American women to the sufferings and sorrow of France."¹⁹

Americans fought for an invaded and desecrated France to save the land of Lafayette and to preserve the arts in a land that was the first to follow America's lead into republican liberty. Thus Americans reached the apex of enthusiasm for France. History does not record such glowing enthusiasm for any other nation - - an enthusiasm which was perhaps unjustified but which existed nonetheless. This sincere expression of sympathy owed very little to French propaganda. The tragedy was that it blinded Americans and French to the reality of actual conditions, that it engendered expectations impossible to realize, and that it created disappointment, disillusionment and bitterness. The next decade proved to be the most difficult period ever between the two nations.

FOOTNOTES

¹Henry Blumenthal, France and the United States: Their Diplomatic Relations, 1789-1914 (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), p. 4.

²Paul A. Varg, Foreign Policies of the Founding Fathers (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1963), p. 70.

³Joseph Charles, The Origins of the American Party System (Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1956), Passim.

⁴Blumenthal, p. 142.

⁵Elizabeth Brett White, American Opinion of France: From Lafayette to Poincaré (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), p. 215.

⁶Nation, LV:426-7.

⁷Review of Reviews, VII:142-5.

⁸White, p. 252.

⁹Independent. Quoted in White, p. 253.

¹⁰Political Science Quarterly, XIII:259-272.

¹¹Robert Ogden, Nation, LXIX:200.

¹²Review of Reviews: XXXIV:134,147.

¹³Gordon Wright, France in Modern Times: 1760 to Present (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1960), p. 346-350.

¹⁴André Tardieu, France and the Alliances - The Struggle for the Balance of Power (New York: 1908), p. 278.

¹⁵Blumenthal, p. 238.

¹⁶André Siegfried, America Comes of Age (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), p. 318-319.

¹⁷Frank H. Simonds, cited in Review of Reviews, L:734.

¹⁸Agnes Repplier, Atlantic Monthly, CXV:426-8, March, 1915.

¹⁹Outlook, September 20, 1916.

CHAPTER II

FRENCH HOPES AND DREAMS: THE WILSONIAN PEACE

It is impossible to penetrate very deeply into the expressed attitude of serious minds among the French during the 1920s without being struck by a paradox. On the one hand, there was the ever present desire to support, use, and glorify President Wilson and his ideas. On the other hand, there was reluctance, distrust and even fear of his ideas and his influence. Fundamental to an understanding of the response of France to Wilsonianism is an awareness of this paradox apparent in the response of each political group regardless of persuasion. In general this was manifested in an initial acceptance, even glorification, of Wilsonianism followed by a gradual decline of interest in and an eventual rejection of Wilson.

This analysis of the French response to Wilsonianism will follow chronologically the reaction of the press and political groups. The analysis will be divided into three major periods: (1) the initial contact with Wilsonianism to the beginning of the conference, (2) the period of the negotiations at the Paris conference, and (3) the period after the end of the conference to the final rejection of the Treaty of Versailles by the United States Senate.

The French, determined that the fruits of victory

would not slip from their grasp, proceeded to develop a foreign policy which would guarantee the allied victory and maintain the security of the nation. France was fully aware that both her European and her international position depended upon a viable foreign policy.¹ Furthermore, the French were conscious of the fact that their victory over Germany had been made possible by allied aid and that their vulnerability to invasion, limited population and reduced industrial capacity dictated a foreign policy of dependence upon England and the United States. The necessity of American intervention in the war had proven to France the need for American presence to assure a European peace in the future. France was not afforded the luxury of detachment in its approach to international relations. Not being sure of the permanence of victory, France was obliged to develop a foreign policy which would guarantee the fruits of victory.

One way the Paris government attempted to assure the permanence of victory was by the preservation of a stable foreign office and by continuity in foreign policy.² The French Foreign Office survived the war with few changes. The only major change was the creation in 1920 of the post of permanent Secretary General, made mandatory by frequent changes in the French cabinet. The function of the Secretary General was to coordinate the activities of the foreign office and to direct all phases of French diplomacy. The move to build a more stable foreign office was further en-

hanced by the strengthening of the professional diplomatic corps. Continuity in diplomatic policies was assured by the uninterrupted service of the majority of pre-war diplomatic personnel. The importance the French attached to foreign policy was evidenced by the fact that from the end of Clemenceau's ministry in 1920 until 1925 the Premier assumed for himself the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs. The stature of the foreign office was enhanced as well by a noticeable increase in interest of both the legislature and the public in foreign affairs.³

During the initial period of French contact with Wilsonianism the foreign policy was characterized as the vieux système (Old Diplomacy), which was based upon the assumption of national antagonism and had national security as its principal objective. To insure national security, the vieux système advocated protected markets, strategic frontiers, military power and alliances based upon the balance of power. This foreign policy was simply a continuation of the principles of French diplomacy before World War I. This school of diplomacy, also referred to as the Conservative-Nationalist tradition, resisted the forces of internationalism and the liberalism of Wilsonianism and Socialism.⁴

The one enduring demand throughout the 1920s was for security from the menace of another German attack. French public opinion obliged the French leaders to do all possible to guarantee this security. The extremists demanded the disintegration of the German Empire while the more moderate de-

manded the annexation of the left bank of the Rhine, the annexation of the Saar Valley, the total reduction of German armaments and above all, a permanent guarantee alliance with the British and the United States, including a guarantee that both nations would come to the aid of France in case of a German attack. The intention was to keep Germany to a state of impotence and subjection.⁵

However, these efforts were greatly restricted by outside and uncontrollable influences such as the attitude of both England and the United States toward French demands.

French foreign policy found its greatest limits in the French political scene which was largely a response to Wilsonianism. The French political and diplomatic responses were especially agitated by the physical presence of Wilson at the peace conference. Without Wilson's personal participation, it is likely that the Socialists, Laborites and Syndicalists would have defied the conference from the beginning but his presence inspired their trust, at least temporarily.

While Wilson and the French Socialists generally agreed on international policies, they were far apart on domestic issues such as reconstruction and reform of the capitalist economy and society. Although they were drawn to each other, each remained on guard, neither wanting to become a prisoner of the other. The Socialists, however, had no choice but to rally behind Wilson even though he was cautious and compromising.⁷

During 1918 the French Socialists had become increasingly pro-Wilson. While the Maximalist faction of the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (French Socialist Party - SFIO) led by Fernand Lariot and Paul Fauré urged the workers to rely on their own strength rather than on Wilson, Barthelemy Mayeras insisted that the party had no alternative but to work with Wilson even though he was not a Socialist.⁸ The SFIO, as well as the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), favored cooperation with Wilson while forbidding participation in a coalition with the bourgeoisie at home. It was widely felt that peace would bring the far-reaching economic, political and social transformation sought by the Socialists for many decades.⁹

The SFIO and CGT decided to use Wilson's arrival in France to demonstrate and increase the strength and unity of the French Left. Using Wilson as a symbol, the Socialists intended to halt the wavering in their ranks. Marcel Sembat of the Centrist faction urged the SFIO and CGT organize a large reception for President Wilson's arrival at Brest and an even larger one in Paris.¹⁰

However, the Paris government was concerned that the Socialists were gaining too much from Wilson's presence in France.¹¹ On December 13, 1918, Clemenceau informed the CGT and SFIO leaders that they could proceed with their plans to send a delegation to Brest and to hold a demonstration in Paris, provided they receive prior approval from President Wilson.¹² The United States Ambassador to France, William G. Sharp, concluded that despite the French govern-

ment's discouragement of the enterprise, Wilson could not refuse to accept the delegation. In the end, however, the labor delegation was barred from the pier at Brest, and the demonstration scheduled at Paris was cancelled.

Despite government interference, Wilson received an orderly, but roaring, welcome to the capital.¹³ Few world leaders ever received a greater reception than President Wilson upon his arrival in Paris in December, 1918. Perhaps the Etoile, the site of the beautiful arch looming proudly at the end of the Champs-Élysées, never witnessed an ovation greater than that heaped upon the American President, for he represented the new international order destined to prevent further miseries like those suffered during the preceding apocalyptic years.¹⁴

The Paris government was at once impressed and frightened by the welcome accorded Wilson. Clemenceau was well aware of the fact that the Leftist Wilsonian cult was calculated to put pressure on the government to adopt a Wilsonian program before the opening of the conference. In response to the government's interference with their welcome of Wilson and its refusal to outline a foreign policy, the Socialists served notice that they would force debate at the government's next budgetary request.¹⁵

Not only did the French public show tremendous and spontaneous enthusiasm for President Wilson upon his arrival in Paris but almost every political element in France generously showered him with praise. L'Humanité, the Socialist paper, issued a special edition in Wilson's honor. Anatole

France and Romain Rolland, spokesmen for the Left, found in Wilson the embodiment of their ideals. Newspapers of the Right, as well, united in their common adulation. Each found in Wilson an interpreter of his own political philosophies. To l'Action Française, the monarchist newspaper, Wilson was the leader who could bring glory to the victory.¹⁶ La Croix, a clerical newspaper, referred to him as "l'ami de la justice," one who would recognize the necessity of a French-American alliance.¹⁷ August Gauvain assured the readers of le Journal des débats that French interests would be realized with the aid of President Wilson.¹⁸ Le Temps was certain that the president would sympathize with France's need for guarantees of future peace.¹⁹ Sembat expressed labor sentiment in l'Heure when he said that Wilson had saved France from a German peace.²⁰

However, underlying this cordiality and adulation toward Wilson there appeared a certain distrust - even fear. The imperialists saw in Wilson a definite obstacle, checking their ambitions. The conservatives feared that the security of France would be sacrificed for a vague ideal, incapable of execution. Almost all Frenchmen, regardless of political persuasion regarded "security against a German revanche" the principle which must dominate French foreign policy.²¹ Except for the Socialist press, no newspaper in Paris wholeheartedly supported the application of Wilsonianism.

In early 1919 France had not forgotten President Wilson's "Peace Without Victory" speech of January 22, 1917. For many in France it was synonymous with Wilsonianism.

Some were quick to realize that Wilson's formula was at once idealistic and based upon political practicality. The feeling was expressed that Wilson was well aware of the impossibility of establishing a "peace without victory" and that his idealistic pronouncements were calculated to create an ideological basis for American entrance into the war. However, Wilson's message, addressed to the universal conscience of those who had suffered from the war, did appeal to the "silent masses of humanity" as a new formula for peace and formed the basis of a more firm and precise ideology. Wilson, from the beginning, gained the sympathy of the Socialists and small groups of pacifists because they were naturally seduced by certain aspects of his ideas, such as his distinction between governments and people.²² On the other hand, many French were struck by Wilson's realism when he attempted to put pressure on the allies to make concessions with the view of arriving at "peace without victory" by suggesting that France and England would come to his way of thinking since, at the end of the war, they would be financially dependent on America.

The reaction to Wilson's speech before the Joint Session of Congress on January 9, 1918 when he revealed his Fourteen Points peace formula was predictable. The ambiguity of the Fourteen Points permitted almost everyone to find something on which to base his hope of achieving his particular brand of peace.

It was felt in Paris that Wilson's announcement that

he would break diplomatic tradition and attend the Paris peace conference was calculated as a diplomatic maneuver to intimidate the European diplomats. Wilson's appeal directly to the people over the heads of their leaders was especially offensive and not at all effective in view of the recent elections in the United States which had resulted in a Republican majority in Congress. Many concluded that Wilson did not have effective control in his own nation since his party had lost the majority in Congress. French leaders were not impressed with Wilson's promises since Henry Cabot Lodge, the head of the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, was a fierce opponent of Wilson.²³ Nor were European diplomats influenced by Wilson's sense of mission as the spokesman and champion of the liberal masses, putting them in conflict with their own governments. Perhaps most of all, Wilson did not move Lloyd George who had just won elections in England and Clemenceau who continued to have the support of the French people.

Wilson had, however, successfully appealed to the masses of Europe. Marcel Cachin wrote in l'Humanité that Wilson had touched profoundly the sentimentality and idealism of the proletariat.²⁴ Wilson had conquered the hearts of the workers of the world because he was the only one in government circles who had voiced the proletariat's concern for a just peace. Wilson's popular appeal was demonstrated by the numerous manifestations throughout December by the Socialists and syndicalists, by the parades, by the inauguration of streets

and Places Wilson in the cities and suburbs, and by the workers who came to salute the champion of the "peace of the people." The French masses were encouraged in their illusion that Wilson would champion their cause and that in him they would realize their hopes and dreams.²⁵

Two speeches at the end of 1918 precisely established the confrontation between the Old Diplomacy and Wilsonianism: Clemenceau's speech before the Chamber on December 29 and Wilson's at Manchester, England on December 30. Clemenceau confidently affirmed that he intended to keep a free hand in negotiations and to spare France future disillusionments. The vieux système of the balance of power was still the only safe diplomatic course for France. France had to maintain her own defenses while "gladly accepting whatever supplementary guarantees might be furnished."²⁶ Finally Clemenceau addressed himself to Wilson and the Socialists. He stated that he had conferred with President Wilson and had discovered much common ground. President Wilson had a large, open and exalted mind; "he was a man who inspired respect with the simplicity of his words and with the noble candeur (noble simplicity) of his spirit."²⁷ Clemenceau urged the Socialists not to "ascribe designs to Wilson which may not be his." Furthermore, if the Socialists were interested in "infusing a new spirit into international relations" they should "commence by displaying a new spirit in domestic affairs." ²⁸

The next day Wilson, speaking at Manchester, served

notice that the United States was not interested in supporting the old balance of power structure in Europe. Both the British and the French took Wilson's statement as a rejoinder to Clemenceau, as it most likely was.²⁹ "We accept the mandate of humanity, not the dictates of political parties," affirmed Wilson.³⁰ This moral appeal and the stand against European politics, in direct opposition to Clemenceau's balance of power, did not discourage the Paris government because a large segment of French opinion considered Wilson a mere idealist, ignorant of European problems and one who could be managed by French politicians.

An analysis of the French press and its response to the Manchester speech is very significant. The dailies rarely spoke of it, as if to ignore it by design. Even the Leftist press did not give it special notice. L'Humanité cited some excerpts relating to Wilson's references to the rights of humanity and the creation of the League of Nations.³¹ The Left did not mention the Wilson-Clemenceau antagonism. The same attitude was expressed by la République française in which references were made to parts of the Manchester speech but not to a Wilson-Clemenceau conflict.³² The Paris press that was favorable to Clemenceau made no mention of Wilson's speech. There were a few papers in the provinces that underlined the contradictions between the French and the American conception of the peace. Le Journal de Rouen concluded that, despite the differences between the two men, an agreement could be reached because both

sought the same ideals.³³ The only Leftist daily to comment on Wilson's Manchester speech was le Progrès de Lyon whose Victor Basch, of the League of the Rights of Man, took the position that Wilson's speech was in contradiction to the European balance of power. He was confident that the democratic masses of the world would support Wilson, who could triumph if he would listen to their voices.³⁴

L'Europe nouvelle was the only newspaper which directly compared the two speeches and whose editorialist proclaimed his admiration for Wilson while lamenting the silence of the French press. In an apology for Wilsonianism, the writer insisted on the irrationality of the Clemenceau position, which risked jeopardizing all hope of American aid. He concluded that the Manchester speech was more than a restatement of Wilson's ideas; it was an ultimatum to France to abandon the old system of alliances. It would be in France's interest to accept Wilson's plan for Europe. The interpretation of le Temps was exactly the opposite: the English had not been able to convert Wilson to their "realist" thesis. Consequently, France would have to contend with Wilson's point of view: a peace of the people.³⁵

Le Temps and l'Europe nouvelle represented the two extreme positions relative to Wilsonianism and the peace with which the French press did not want to grapple. On the one hand, there was the illusion that Wilson would, once he saw the unhappy state of France, join the French position. This was Clemenceau's point of view. He found it convenient

to ignore Wilson's declaration at Manchester. On the other hand, there was the illusion that Clemenceau was powerless, isolated from his allies and the tide of new ideas and was unaware of the determination of the people not to experience war again. The interpretation of l'Europe nouvelle advocated that French national interests must be sacrificed to the League of Nations and universal peace. Le Temps, however, suggested that the principles of Wilsonianism would melt away in the light of the realities of European problems.

In view of the coming negotiations, the Paris government used all its influence to eliminate any reference to discord among the allies. The President of the Republic, Raymond Poincaré, reaffirmed the solidarity of the allies during an interview he gave to a representative of the United Press of America.³⁷ The President declared that France, the United States and the allies, in general, were coming to the peace conference completely in agreement on the basis of peace. He concluded by saying that France was counting on Wilson's help, at least in laying the foundation of a lasting peace, before his departure. In short, Poincaré chose his words carefully in an effort to minimize Wilson's role at the conference. The French President had played his role. The incident Manchester-Palais Bourbon was closed. Relations between France and the United States were good; at least the public was supposed to believe that they were. The official position of the Paris government was that Wilson was in agreement with the European allies and

would support the French position if France held to the allied position. The responsibility of the press was to adopt the government's thesis.³⁸

The French press, both in Paris and in the provinces, largely bowed to the wishes of the government. Clemenceau and Wilson are in agreement, said la France.³⁹ The English papers were cited by Clemenceau's l'Homme libre as substantiation that there was no incompatibility or divergence between the two men.⁴⁰ La Justice proclaimed that Clemenceau and Wilson would be in agreement in peace as they had been in war.⁴¹ La République française was more explicit in stating that the rivalry between Clemenceau and Wilson would end in compromise. It was not unreasonable that Clemenceau would make some concessions to Wilson's position. La Victoire argued that France's demand for security was not incompatible with the idealism of Wilson.⁴² Gustave Lanson, also of the Radical, refused to believe that there was a major disagreement between Wilson and Clemenceau.⁴³ Lanson considered the League of Nations as the ideal solution to French security problems, stating that Germany should be admitted to the League if the peace was to be guaranteed because the United States could not save France from an attack. Germany could destroy France before the United States could get troops to Europe.

Lanson represented the ideal middle-of-the-road French position, which viewed France as insisting only on guarantees of security rather than demanding a peace of victory. Wilson's universal peace still left room for a privileged

treatment of France in view of her unusual need for security, justified by her special role in the war. The middle position considered the two points of view, one idealistic and philosophical and the other rational and reasonable, to be compatible. The first did not exclude the second, which only fixed a means of application of the first. The thesis taken by the Paris governmental press, le Radical, proposed an explanation: the two leaders could not be in disagreement because both sought peace and their points of view were reconcilable. Rumors of a disagreement between Wilson and Clemenceau must have originated in Germany.

The Socialist press, however, insisted on this disagreement. Le Journal du peuple argued that the League of Nations was, in effect, an ideal impossible to realize given the political structure of the western nations. Even if the bourgeois governments agreed to establish the League of Nations, it could not be put into practice. The disagreement between Wilson and Clemenceau was not superficial but fundamental; there could be no League of Nations without a revolution. The Journal du peuple concluded that Wilson was an accident of history, so radical that he could not be followed by his own nation.⁴⁴ While accepting the possibility of the establishment of a League of Nations, Cachin in l'Humanité concluded that while Wilson wanted the peace of the people, Clemenceau wanted the peace of Bismarck.⁴⁵

Furthermore, what would any system of alliance be worth without the United States? Léon Jouhaux, the

Secretary General of the CGT, appealed to French workers to affirm more energetically their belief in a just peace. There must be no return to the old system. Wilson was viewed as the only exponent of a just peace against the adversary, the imperialists; therefore, Clemenceau must compromise. Wilson, the champion of American idealism, was fighting against the warmongering European diplomats.⁴⁶ Cachin and Sembat expressed the same viewpoint in l'Humanité concluding that an agreement between Wilsonian idealism and European diplomacy was impossible.⁴⁷ Cachin, in another article on January 6, argued that the French government was tied to an anti-democratic conception of peace which was diametrically opposed to Wilsonianism and that it would be Clemenceau, the imperialist, who would surrender to Wilson.

This point of view was also expressed by many non-Socialist groups. Jean Hennessy, a Radical who carried on a determined campaign throughout 1919 for the League of Nations, wrote in the pacifist l'Oeuvre that French interests demanded a new policy: that of Wilson.⁴⁸ Le Pays carried an article by Henri Barbusse wherein he concluded that France was at the decisive hour and that it would soon be determined if Wilson could triumph over the imperialist opposition.⁴⁹ Gabriel Séailles wrote in the same paper that France could find the security guarantees she demanded in the League of Nations.

Opinion on the Wilson-Clemenceau disagreement ran the whole gamut. The Right and the Center emphasized the necessary rapprochement of Wilson with the European con-

ception of the peace while the Left and the extreme Left took the opposite view saying it was Clemenceau who must move to the Wilsonian position and establish the League of Nations. The same diversity of opinion was expressed in the provincial press.

It is astonishing to observe that both adoration and contempt for Wilson were expressed in the same terminology. The American President was called a smiling prophet and a dangerous prophet. Arthur Meyer described Wilson in the Gaulois as an idealist whose eyes were blinded to the future and one who had little concern for the problems of France.⁵⁰ Le Populaire, a Socialist paper, said Wilson had inspired enthusiasm because he spoke the language of humanity and expressed the will of the people, as had Jean Jaurès.

Between these two poles there developed the Wilson mythology: Wilson-Jaurès as the apostles of universal democracy. René Renoult, before the Chamber, referred to Wilson as the prophet who spoke the language of humanity and who would usher in a new era of history.⁵¹ Victor Hugo had announced the creation of a United States of Europe; Wilson had created the United States of the world.⁵² Wilson, the prophet, represented the ideal of democratic justice and expressed the immortal principles of the French Revolution, declared Renoult.⁵³ Louise Weiss in her review of the press for l'Europe nouvelle cited l'Heure, l'Oeuvre, l'Avenir, le Pays, les Débats and l'Homme libre and concluded that Wilson appeared in the press as a prophet and an apostle

bringing a new gospel and announcing a new law from Mt. Sinai.

For l'Oeuvre, Wilson was the one who preached the gospel of peace; for la Petite république⁵⁴ and le Pays⁵⁵ Wilson proclaimed a new gospel: faith in the communal interest of all the nations of the world. For the popular masses, Wilson was the incarnation of a universal conscience. Here is one of the keys to the Wilsonian myth. It emanated from a moral vision and a metaphysical movement of history. The cruelty of the war created a need for the "universal conscience." Wilson embodied the moral crusade and the hopes of all those who longed for a definitive justice that could not be established except on a higher plane than national egotism and governmental intrigue. "Let us turn toward the great American who comes to proclaim the failure of force," urged Victor Margueritte.⁵⁶ Le Courrier du centre said the presence of Wilson before the Chamber awakened the memory of Biblical times when men were examples of the virtues they preached.⁵⁷ Alexandre Varenne wrote in l'Heure that the French idea of peace had provoked a response from Wilson in the form of immortal messages which should be considered the new gospel of the nations.⁵⁸ According to Guy de Maizière in le Petit parisien, Wilson was an apostle and prophet of world peace.⁵⁹ In la République française, Louis Marcellin went so far as to compare Wilson to Christ.⁶⁰

Despite some voices of criticism during the first part of January, 1919 Wilson continued to have tremendous popularity.

His every movement was covered with enthusiasm by the press, both Left and Right. Local municipalities multiplied the fanfare at each visit, as if to outdo the Socialists, who proclaimed Wilson and Wilsonianism as the panacea for a sick world. Importantly, the enthusiastic receptions accorded Wilson everywhere were largely spontaneous and warm. Everywhere Wilson went, to official receptions or to government sponsored ceremonies, he was greeted by enthusiastic crowds.⁶¹

Likewise the Socialists and "anti-clemencist" Leftist press covered all pro-Wilson manifestations with enthusiasm and in great detail competing with the pro-government press. La Vérité of Paul Meunier renewed its support of Wilson's proposed plans to guarantee a universal peace.⁶² Meunier, in the same edition, began a letter-writing campaign among his readers for expressions of their support of Wilson in the upcoming peace negotiations. Daily lists of the letter writers throughout France were published as the campaign progressed.

The "campaign Wilsonian" continued to grow, with new organizations being created to help in the demonstrations. On January 17, 1919, la Vérité and le Populaire announced a joint publication of a "Manifeste des intellectuels combattants français" declaring their support for Wilson. La Vérité published a three column list of cities and factories pledging their support for Wilson in his struggle against the bourgeois government and his efforts to establish an

eternal peace.⁶³ The same kind of expressions appeared in most of the Socialist and pacifist press.

In the same vein, Socialist organizations issued pronouncements affirming their intention to sustain Wilson in his mission to humanity. The CGT invited French workers to manifest their support for Wilson and his Fourteen Points,⁶⁴ la Fédération Socialist de la Seine expressed its profound recognition of Wilson's concern for human lives⁶⁵ and la Ligue des droits de l'homme and la Ligue française pour la Société des nations, among others, reaffirmed their loyalty to Wilson.⁶⁶

Government concern about the adulation of Wilson was evidenced by two reports issued by the Commission civiles de contrôle postale titled "L'état de l'opinion en France d'après la contrôle de la correspondance," covering the period of December 15, 1918 to January 15, 1919.⁶⁷ The reports were surveys of French opinion obtained from secretly opened letters which passed through the postal system. A synthesis of their findings led the commission to conclude that Wilson was less popular in January than in December. According to the report, many in France felt that Wilson's presence in Paris was undesirable because his utopian idealism would jeopardize the French position. It was evident that these reports represented the opinions of the bourgeoisie who were more literate and were more apt to express their opinions than was the working class. These findings accorded well with the wishes of the government.

Pro-Wilsonian demonstrations declined toward the end of January for three reasons: (1) a decline in propaganda efforts on the part of the Socialists and pacifists, (2) the position the Paris government, (3) the increase in press opposition to Wilsonianism. On January 12 the Paris government ordered a surveillance of Socialist communications and on January 13 issued an order forbidding publication of the Wilson itinerary.⁶⁸ The government wanted to prevent the press from creating a revolutionary climate during the peace negotiations. This objective could be achieved by avoiding further Socialist manifestations and by insisting on a low key approach from the press in regard to labor strikes in France and abroad. The archives of both the Parisian and departmental police reveal that parades and demonstrations were discouraged and at times forbidden in various parts of France.⁶⁹

As the only unpredictable person at the conference, Wilson was the central figure in the French press. Everyone, Left and Right, knew what Clemenceau stood for and where he was going. The same was true of Lloyd George. Wilson, however, was ambiguous and disturbing. No one knew what Wilson thought in regard to the problems of Eastern Europe or the League of Nations, about which everyone was talking but knew little.

Consequently the pro-Wilson agitation began to decline and criticism began to mount as Wilson's true position was revealed. A daily survey of the press reveals an

increase in criticism of Wilson as well as a decline in the Wilsonian theme. Although the campaign of the press, a battle of opinions, was first developed around the theme of the global implications of Wilsonianism, the first major debate focused on the defense of the League of Nations.

During the first few weeks of the conference there were several events which tended to reinforce the spirit of Wilsonianism. During his January visit to Italy, Wilson reiterated the substance of his Manchester speech. Numerous other discourses given by Wilson were designed to strengthen the force of his principles. However, the moment it appeared that the Wilsonian spirit was gaining force during the peace negotiations, Wilsonianism ran into four powerful obstacles: 1) the failure of the dialogue with the Bolsheviks and the resulting division among the militant workers, (2) the failure of the Bern conference, (3) the debate over the future status of the German colonies, ending in a scandalous compromise, and (4) the ultimate publication of the pact of the League of Nations and the consequent supreme betrayal of those who had placed their faith in Wilson.

Concurrently with the development of the illusion among the pro-Wilsonians an illusion grew among the anti-Wilsonians. After Clemenceau's speech of December 29, the official thesis, ardently defended by Poincaré, viewed Wilson as one who had to be managed by the Paris government. The governmental press campaign employed all possible arguments in the attempt to expose President Wilson to European

realities. The eventual agreement between Wilson and Clemenceau was the constant theme of the patriotic press. Should Wilson refuse to submit, those who did not believe in the possibility of an agreement between Wilson and Clemenceau reserved the right to denounce Wilson's "irréalisme."⁷⁰

For the government and its supporters the events produced sufficient reasons to confirm their belief in "ralliement" (belief that Wilson would eventually come to the government's point of view). The President's trip to Reims, where he witnessed the devastations of the war, served to encourage the patriots to believe that Wilson would in the end fully support the government's treaty demands. In addition Wilson's appearance before the Chamber and the Senate served to confirm further the thesis of the Right.⁷¹

But the government's hope of ralliement soon ran into some insurmountable obstacles. The long debate over the German colony question served notice that Wilson intended to put his principles into practice. The publication of the "Pacts" underlined the intransigence of Wilson. The illusion that Wilson could be managed was dead: it was clear that Wilsonianism had become an obstacle. The only course left for the French government was confrontation with Wilson in order to force as many concessions as possible. Disillusioned, the political Center and Right largely renounced the idea that Wilsonianism could be assimilated.

The response of the two opposing positions, Left and

Right, to Wilsonianism came into sharper focus in the debate over the League of Nations and the question of the disposition of the German colonies than perhaps at any other time. At least it was the first chance for both groups to apply Wilsonianism to their respective hopes and dreams, or rather, to compare Wilsonianism with their illusions. Therefore, a more detailed analysis of these peace conference battles will prove helpful in understanding the French response to Wilsonianism.

The Socialist press seized the occasion of the debate over the disposition of the German colonies to reaffirm support of the principles of Wilsonianism. When Wilson, at the end of January, proposed that the administration of the former German colonies be entrusted to the future League of Nations the Socialist and Pacifist press generally supported the idea. The debate over the disposition of the former German colonies was the first chance for the ralliement thesis to test Wilson's intentions. The Center and Right press were categorically opposed to the mandate system. Naturally, the Annales coloniales⁷² and the Journal des colonies⁷³ were hostile to Wilson's point of view. La Bataille strongly criticized the British and French colonial view while Wilson was viewed as insisting that more humane rules be applied in disposing of the former German colonies.⁷⁴ La Vérité adopted this viewpoint and insisted that the League of Nations be created rapidly, for it offered the only solution to the problem.⁷⁵

The question of the former German colonies received an important response in the Leftist press, especially in l'Humanité, since it afforded an opportunity to accentuate the rivalry of the imperialist bourgeois governments which were demonstrating that their contact with Wilson had not changed their views. For l'Humanité the problem was related simply to the desire to annex the former German colonies.⁷⁶ However, the hypocritical mandate solution finally given to the problem, and swallowed by Wilson, did not permit the Socialists to shout victory at the final solution. For this reason, the Leftist press put its emphasis on the most important element of the Wilsonian illusion: the construction of the League of Nations. The League of Nations question would permit the Socialists to measure the strength of Wilsonianism in dealing with the basic and important questions: the equal admission of all nations, including the defeated nations, to the League, the possibility of total disarmament, and the real power of sanctions. For the Left it was in attempting to answer these and similar questions that the myth of Wilsonianism was revealed and its ardent supporters suffered their final disillusionment.⁷⁷

The central issue was the application of the Wilsonian ideal of equality.⁷⁸ For the Socialists, it was important to know whether Germany would be accepted into the League on an equal basis with the other nations. In addition, the admittance of Germany was to be made possible by universal disarmament. The pacifist press, naturally, was most in-

terested in the creation of the League of Nations to the end that war would become impossible.⁷⁹ In the final analysis, for the Socialists and pacifists, the problem was clear: the League of Nations could not have a future and be effective unless all nations were admitted.⁸⁰

In February, largely due to the League of Nations controversy, belief in Wilsonianism took on a different character. Le Populaire, l'Humanité and la Bataille no longer presented Wilson as the only chance for peace. La Vérité stopped its campaign for signatures in favor of Wilson. To le Journal du peuple Wilson was no longer infallible. Both the Socialists and pacifists suggested that one should not expect miracles.

In general, the Wilsonian illusion was on the decline. More encouraging words of "conciliation" were heard from the Right, and more expressions of distrust were heard from the Left. Enthusiasm had already begun to diminish before the final disillusionment which came with the publication of the text of the League of Nations Pact on February 15, 1919. L'Humanité led in voicing the disappointment: "We are a long way from the first propositions of the President," declared Marcel Cachin.⁸¹ He expressed sadness and disillusionment in concluding that the League was nothing but an extension of the entente. While l'Humanité abandoned the compromised version of Wilsonianism, it continued to support Wilson, who was portrayed as a martyr to his cause.⁸² A survey of the Socialist and pacifist press at that time reveals a change

in their opinions and objectives. The major opinions expressed were the following: (1) Wilson had his hands tied at the conference; (2) Wilson's failure was due largely to the lack of support from the Socialists; (3) the Pact was no more than an alliance between the victor nations; (4) Wilson was manipulated by the imperialists; and (5) the principles of Wilson had been betrayed. None of the Socialist press held Wilson responsible for the failure of the League negotiations. Some blamed Clemenceau; most blamed the lack of real support for Wilsonianism in France. Wilson, for the Left, ended the first phase of the conference with his reputation intact as one who had been defeated but who would continue the battle.

A "conciliation" of Wilson with the Clemenceau position had been the hope of the partisans of the paix française since the President's arrival in France. This illusion of the ralliement was perpetuated by the non-Socialist press, which was more divided in opinion than the Socialist and pacifist press. The Center and Right press represented two major political opinions relative to the peace negotiations: one group, in general, included the press who were favorable to the Société des nations but viewed the organization as only an alliance of the victor nations, excluding Germany. The other group included the Right, which was hostile to the idea of the SDN, considered to be a utopian idea born of the Wilsonian illusion. The Rightist press launched a violent campaign against Wilson with l'Echo de Paris and

l'Action française, among others, constantly criticizing Clemenceau for his weak stand against Wilson. Governmental press censorship battled against the anti-Wilson campaign, as well as against the Left, for it was not in the government's interest to let such a campaign destroy Wilson's influence at the peace conference. Anti-American and anti-Wilson attacks were never the work of the government nor of the governmental press.

Nothing was neglected in the attempt to lead Wilson to a rapprochement with la paix française. The government, Parliament, and the Centrist press employed every available means to make Wilson conscious of the réalités françaises. In commenting on Poincaré's opening address at the conference, *le Temps* outlined the doctrine of the ralliement: (1) it was just and necessary that only the victorious nations participate in the peace conference and fix the conditions of peace, (2) the League, as well as the Peace, could only be founded by the victorious nations, and (3) these powers would be the arbitrators of the world. Clearly, only the victorious nations had the right to define the new order.⁸³

The theme of allied solidarity was perpetuated by the press, such as l'Homme libre⁸⁴, which insisted that Wilson must be made to understand that the "paix de la victoire" was simply "la paix de la sécurité."⁸⁵ The SDN must be viewed as an instrument to guarantee French security. The Paris government, supported by the majority of the press of

the Center and Right, developed the theme of the Ligue des nations alliées, which would be a hegemony of the allied powers.⁸⁶

In France the confrontation over the structure of the SDN was between those who believed that the organization could be effective provided it had an army to enforce the peace and those who insisted that it have no real power; that it should be merely an association of nations, with military power left to the individual nations. Paul Gauvain criticized the American plan as being so weak that it would be no more than a conference of ambassadors.⁸⁷ In response to Wilson's plan for a League of Nations an Association française pour la société des nations was created to make known the French point of view: an alliance of democratic peoples. The government wholeheartedly supported the Association française plan of Léon Bourgeois. Le Temps reported in its entirety Bourgeois' speech before the conference at which time he insisted on the necessity of sanctions.⁸⁸ The government press supported the Bourgeois position on the importance of military security.

The response of the Right to the terms of the pact, published in the press February 15th and 16th, was exemplified by the Libre parole when it said, "The Société des nations is condemned to impotence."⁸⁹ The general feeling was expressed by l'Eclair which proclaimed that France could not hand over its security to the protection of an organization without real power."⁹⁰

The pro-SDN group accepted the absence of military sanctions since they had hope that the SDN weakness could be compensated by a solid guarantee from the Anglo-Saxons. The Matin, for example, saluted the creation of the SDN but profited from its weakness to continue a campaign for necessary guarantees.⁹¹

Most importantly, the illusion about Wilsonianism was dead. The Right, by the end of February, renounced the fiction of the ralliement. It was clear that Wilson had not modified his position and that negotiations would be difficult for France. The Center press had presented the ralliement as a serious hope. The death of this hope worked to Clemenceau's advantage. Public opinion in France was in general agreement: Wilsonianism had failed. The only solution remaining was a return to the old system of alliances.

In short, during the first six weeks of the conference a major confrontation took place between the two illusions of Wilsonianism. On the one hand, the Socialist and pacifists portrayed Wilson idealistically in their own image and on the other hand the optimists of the Center and part of the Right thought that the ralliement of Wilson to a French peace was inescapable. Only the realists of the extreme Right protested against the two illusions. They did not dare to go too far in their attack on Wilsonianism, however, for fear of giving too much advantage to the Bolsheviks and Socialists and because of the uncertainty of

the political situation in the United States. Consequently, Clemenceau was considered as the only guarantee of a French peace and security.

The need for French security, the most pressing problem at the peace conference, was embodied in French demands on the Rhineland, "the center and core" of France's program.⁹² Wilson opposed French demands on the Rhineland on the grounds that they would violate the principle of self-determination; that they would provide a constant source of irritation between France and Germany; that it was impracticable to take the main economic unit of one nation and give it to another; and that it violated the principle of justice.⁹³ Finally, however, Lloyd George and Wilson responded to Clemenceau's demand for security with the promise of a Guarantee Treaty; a pledge to support France in the event of a German invasion.⁹⁴

The great jubilation in France at the announcement of the assistance pledge given by Britain and the United States was followed by a restrained feeling of anxiety. In some quarters there was hostile criticism and a feeling that Clemenceau had made too many concessions. However, the general tendency of the French was to accept in good faith the unprecedented guarantee given by the United States and Britain. Most realized nonetheless that there was a possibility that Britain, and especially the United States, would not ratify the treaties.⁹⁵

French attitudes toward Wilsonianism were bound to the financial arrangements made at the Paris conference. The German debt question was the focal point of all financial

and economic questions since it was tied to the regulation of allied debts and international exchange. A decision relative to reparations could not avoid having grave consequences for French internal politics.

French opinion was unanimous: Germany must pay. The only difference on the question of reparations rested on the capacity of Germany to pay and on the manner in which these payments would be made. The principle was constantly reaffirmed, by the politicians, from the Left as well as the Right, that the basis of the peace must be "Restitution, Reparation, and Guarantees." A review of government pronouncements and of the press in the first two months of 1919 reveals that the French believed that Germany could and must pay.⁹⁶

However, after March 15, 1919, the question of reparations entered a new phase. France had generally renounced her demand for the reimbursement of the total cost of the war, largely due to Wilson's opposition, but she stood firm on the demand for reparations of the damages and on the question of pensions. In part, a more moderate approach to reparations was taken by the Paris government because of the Socialist opinion. The Socialists had from the beginning supported Wilson in his position toward reparations.⁹⁷ According to Tardieu, the attitude of the French negotiators at the Paris conference and of the members of the Parliament had begun to moderate. Nevertheless, it became increasingly apparent that France alone would not be able to enforce any

kind of reparations settlement.

A solution to the problem relative to the reparations questions began to appear in the French press: *la Société financière des nations*. A group under the leadership of Jacques Stern, deputy and former minister, had since January supported the SDN. By the end of January the Commission du Budget unanimously concluded that Germany could not pay the total cost of the war. The president of the commission, Raoul Péret, wrote Clemenceau recommending that the peace conference consider such a plan. The Leftist press was the first to advocate the creation of a *Société financière des nations*. L'Heure, pacifist, wrote that an international solution to the reparations question should be considered.⁹⁸ The same demand appeared in la Vérité and le Progrès. In l'Europe nouvelle a group of parliamentarians stated that the French financial situation was desperate and that there was no alternative to the creation of such a society.⁹⁹

Despite the fact that the United States was rarely named in the campaign, it was understood that such a plan would depend upon the support of the United States. Perhaps this understanding was the reason the Socialist press followed with reservations the campaign for the SDN. Such an understanding between capitalist nations was difficult to justify from the viewpoint of a militant Socialist. If Wilson accepted such an arrangement, their idol would become a businessman, Santa Claus to the European banks, and if Wilson refused he risked being considered more generous

in principles than in actions. Thus, the Socialist dichotomous response to Wilsonianism became increasingly apparent.

The majority of the French press became enthusiastic about the SDN idea. The Centrist press took up the campaign for an international solution to the financial problems of Europe. Even the governmental Petit parisien began to praise the SDN.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, most of the Rightist press came to support the proposed SDN. La Croix suggested that the internationalization of the reparations question should interest the United States the most since it would assure payment of the war debts.¹⁰¹ The same position was taken by the Leftist press. The Socialist J. Paul-Bancour wrote in l'Eclair that France, who had saved the world, had the right to ask the world to share the cost of the war.¹⁰²

Once again French hopes of an international solution for the financial consequences of the war were raised only to find that this, too, was an illusion. When the conditions of the peace were known, hope and confidence turned to disillusionment and bitterness. Among criticisms of the treaty, those concerning reparations were the most bitter, with most of that bitterness directed toward America. All political parties, from Right to Left, were disappointed in the treaty, especially when in the first days of May it was realized that the United States had refused to make arrangements on the debt and reparations situation.

Members of the Parliament made statements to the journalists expressing their disillusionment over the

reparation settlement. Many still lamented that France would not receive payments equalling the total cost of the war. Others reproached the settlement because the sum that Germany was to pay was not specified. Henri Paté and Deputy Damour expressed their disappointment that the French must wait until 1921 to learn the exact amount of reparations they were to receive.¹⁰³ Others were convinced that in the end it would be the French who would pay. Expressions of disappointment, disillusionment and bitterness were reproduced in all the French press. Most realized that there was no guarantee except in American aid. Without the support of the United States and internationalization of the debt, France had no means of securing payment.¹⁰⁴

The French premier lost no time in placing the Versailles Treaty and the aid agreements before the Chamber of Deputies for deliberations. As the entire question of French security came under review, Tardieu led the debate in seeking the Chamber's approval by furnishing some effective arguments. He stated that the guarantee of security was absolutely essential to France. Tardieu continued by explaining that the offer made to France by Britain and the United States was so important that it was ". . . unprecedented in the history of their two countries."¹⁰⁵ Tardieu insisted that France would not be without adequate assistance should there be a future aggressive move by Germany. The Chamber was assured that ". . . the treaty gives us the essential guarantees which we requested." The

entire peace structure had been made more secure " . . . with the pledge of immediate military aid from Great Britain and the United States." The assurance of military aid for France would be a deterrent to any hostile act that might provoke another war. Tardieu demanded the ratification of the Guarantee Treaties because " . . . the Treaty produced more security for France than she had ever gained before."¹⁰⁶

There were, however, many apprehensions on the part of the deputies as they voted to ratify the guarantee treaties. Since it probably would be several years before Germany could again be a threat to France, there was concern because the length of time the treaties would be in force was not specified. Further apprehension was expressed in the Senate relative to the substance of the aid to be given and the poor prospects of obtaining further commitments in military aid. Most importantly, concern was expressed that it had been a mistake to relinquish tangible evidences of security, which would have permanently weakened Germany's potential as an aggressor, for such intangible security as the guarantee pacts, when it was not known if the United States and Britain would ratify them, much less honor them if a real need arose. Some deputies made mention of Wilson and Lansing who were undergoing critical attacks from newspapers and individuals at home for their handiwork in Paris.

The response of the French press to the treaty debates was surprisingly moderate. There was some opposition voiced in la Petite république, l'Avenir, le Télégramme du nord, la

Lanterne, and l'Heure. L'Humanité was content to report the official accounts without comment. Only the newspapers of the parliamentary opposition made much noise over the treaty, to which the French public paid little attention.¹⁰⁷

The majority of the press, especially the larger papers, supported Clemenceau. Paris Midi said that Clemenceau had little trouble demonstrating the advantages of the treaty.¹⁰⁸ The Figaro and le Petit bleu judged the declarations of Clemenceau to the commission "very clear."¹⁰⁹ Le Radical, faithful to the government, ridiculed the extravagant language of Franklin-Bouillon when he argued that the treaty gave no security to France.¹¹⁰

Anxiety over the American ratification of the treaty was the only thing that caused much passion in the debates before the French Chamber. In the French press, the reports on the interminable debates in the French parliament rarely made the front page. However, when Louis Barthou demanded to know what would be the situation for France in the event that the United States Senate did not ratify the treaty, suddenly the possibility that the American Senate would not ratify the treaty found front page coverage in the French press. It became imperative that the French parliament reach an agreement to assure the ratification of the indispensable guarantee treaty by the Americans.

The French press, like the parliament, found no alternative to Clemenceau and his treaty. L'Echo de Paris and l'Action française, for example, argued that there was

only one man qualified to meet the present crisis:

Clemenceau.¹¹¹ The nation did not wish to offend or reject the "Minister of the Victory" despite the fact that France was profoundly dissatisfied with the treaty. Even l'Heure and l'Oeuvre, which had been previously critical of the treaty, supported a French ratification.¹¹² For the France libre a refusal to ratify the treaty would please Germany too much.¹¹³ La Vérité argued that even if the treaty was a deception, it must be ratified since it was the work of Clemenceau.¹¹⁴

A profound fear of Germany produced in most Frenchmen a deep appreciation for their need of security. It was natural that France would grasp any serious proposal of an aid agreement. The offer of aid to provide this security reassured the anxious French, at least for the moment. Despite the apprehensions, the French reactions to the United States and British assurances were overwhelmingly favorable until 1921, when they were repudiated by the American Senate.

Both the pacifist Left and the Right were powerless to prevent ratification of the treaty. The ones who had a real fear relative to the security provision of the treaty were those who supported Clemenceau because of the uncertainty of the treaty before the United States Senate. For le Petit journal, l'Intransigeant, le Journal des débats, le Petit parisien and le Temps this uncertainty about the American vote on the treaty was yet another reason for

ratification by the French parliament. In general, the Parisian press approved the ratification of the treaty even though it had expressed only a limited interest through its columns.

The campaign against the treaty of Versailles, both the Left and the Right, was a fiasco because the French were preoccupied with the need to resume a normal life, to escape the high cost of living, to settle the strikes and to overcome the economic crisis. Furthermore, most Frenchmen were certain that the treaty had been imposed upon them by the Anglo-Saxons without regard for French preferences.¹¹⁵ The traditional Anglo-French rivalry made the French sensitive to a possible Anglo-American bloc. This sensitivity was enhanced by England's insulated position which guaranteed her naval supremacy. While England condemned French "imperialism" and "odious militarism" France denounced Anglo-American "commercialism." Consequently, the French easily reached the conclusion that they were the victims of Anglo-American duplicity. Most importantly, the passivity and resignation of public opinion was due to the disillusionment relative to the settlement of the questions of reparations and security. There was nothing more that could be done.

Le Journal suggested that perhaps France should wait to see what would happen on the other side of the Atlantic before signing rather than risk the humiliation of seeing the American Senate refuse to ratify the treaty.¹¹⁶ Le

Temps appealed for confidence that the United States Senate would make the right decision on the ratification of the treaty.¹¹⁷ In l'Eclair Jacques Bardoux and Edouard Herriot expressed gratitude for American friendship without predicting the chances of the United States Senate's ratification.¹¹⁸ La Libre parole gave ratification little chance.¹¹⁹ L'Echo de Paris qualified the United States' guarantee "promesse américaine," and cited some of the speeches in the American Senate against the treaty.¹²⁰ La Politique and la République française suggested in repeated articles from American papers that United States ratification was doubtful.

L'Echo de Paris multiplied the alarming dispatches relative to the spirit of the American Senate.¹²¹ In September the French press began an inquiry into the opposition in the United States Senate. L'Echo de Paris ruefully stated that the future of France was being decided more certainly in Washington than in Paris.¹²² L'Action française argued that France should not build her hopes of security on a soap bubble that was ready to burst. It assumed a position against the treaty and asked the question: Who believes the Anglo-American guarantees?

Nevertheless, France remained optimistic about the reaction of the United States toward the Versailles Treaty and the Guarantee Treaty at the first session of Congress. As Jusserand reported,

The only thing that can be said is that the conditions imposed on Germany do not, as feared, appear excessive and although objections to the protection guarantee for France had been anticipated in view of its newness in a politically traditionalist country,

the guarantee has instead inspired understanding.¹²³

Clemenceau considered the outcome of the debates in the Chamber of Deputies so important that he made a personal appearance to warn the deputies that the security pacts were the best obtainable under the circumstances. Clemenceau revealed that he had told Wilson that, "You have a Senate and I have a parliament. We cannot be sure of what they will do ten years hence, or even of what they will do tomorrow. . . ." ¹²⁴ The Chamber of Deputies accepted the guarantee treaties and the Versailles Treaty with a unanimous vote shortly after Clemenceau's request.

Clemenceau also made an appearance before the Senate in an attempt to convince the senators that if the work done at the Peace Conference in Paris was rejected the entire security of France would be endangered. After Clemenceau's fervent appeal not one dissenting vote was cast. The President signed the projets de loi and on November 20, 1919 France was prepared to exchange ratification with the American and British governments.

Reports from the French Ambassador, Jules Jusserand, stated that the Washington Administration remained calm and that the majority of the American people wanted peace above all else and were in favor of the League of Nations.¹²⁵ However, in a report sent to Stéphan Pichon, the French Foreign Minister at Paris, Jusserand estimated that the mood of Congress tended toward isolationism in external politics and toward a return to normality and tax reform

in internal politics. The majority of Congress was hostile toward the President, and the upcoming election promised to aggravate the situation even more. Paris was further advised by Jusserand that political passion might prevent sane judgments in that some were over-excited in their personal opposition to Wilson.

Despite knowledge of the political strife and the opposition to Wilson in Congress, Jusserand advised that both parties were in agreement on treaty approval: the Democrats because it was the work of their party and the Republicans in the interest of world peace. Jusserand further advised that opposition being voiced against the treaty came from the Socialists and others who had no voice in Congress. The New Republic and the Nation, for example, published articles against a "punitive peace" and the "folly of Versailles," but they did not find an echo in Congress."¹²⁶

Charles Chambrun, Jusserand's assistant, explained that the violent resentment against the treaty and the League was a personal resentment against the President. On June 12, 1919, Chambrun sent an urgent message to Paris stating that he observed that while the President wanted to give France a guarantee against the eventuality of a new German aggression by means of the League and a treaty between France and the United States, the Republican party wanted to achieve the same results by a unilateral declaration.¹²⁷

The same day Chambrun sent a message to Pichon

relative to the Knox Resolution, a Senatorial "Round Robin" drafted by Philander C. Knox and read before the Senate, which rejected the League in its existing form and opposed further consideration until after the final peace settlement. Chambrun stated that the resolution was merely an expedient proposal of Senator Knox to enable the Republican party to oppose the internationalization and the liberal ideas of President Wilson. He concluded that the Knox speech was considered pro-German and generally condemned by the majority of the senators. Chambrun exemplified the desperate efforts of the French to find something positive in the American response to the treaty. He reported that Lodge's opposition to the treaty had grown weaker and his prestige was already diminished. Everyone had had enough of the Republican congressman, concluded Chambrun.¹²⁸

A different evaluation was sent from the New York Consulate. In a message to Tardieu, it was estimated that the United States Senate would not assume any responsibility to guarantee the territorial independence of any nation.¹²⁹ On October 25, 1919, the same idea came from Jusserand when he stated that while at dinner with Senator Hitchcock, the Democratic leader and partisan of the treaty, Hitchcock predicted that the battle would be very difficult. Since neither of the parties had a majority, there would be a compromise.¹³⁰ Since Wilson was incapacitated, having suffered a stroke during his tour of the West in an effort to take his case to the American people, he was of no

assistance during the critical period of the battle for ratification.

The first indication of the adverse American opinion developing toward the French caused great concern. Jusserand sent a confidential report to Paris stating that the United States always returned to the same point: the President wanted the country to be in the middle of the affairs of the world. However, events had proven that either the United States was not ready for such responsibility or the President himself was not able to fight for his ideals.¹³¹

Marcel Berthelot, Secretary General of the Quai d'Orsay, "the animator of French diplomacy," communicated to Jusserand on November 15, 1918, the official French position relative to the reservation being debated by the American Senate. He stated that it would be impossible to accept the reservations as part of the body of the treaty. However, if the reservations were merely interpretative and represented the manner in which the United States was committed to the treaty and if this interpretation did not commit the other allies or demand their consent, it was evident that this transaction was preferable to a refusal to ratify.¹³²

On November 6, 1919, Lodge reported a resolution of ratification accompanied by fourteen reservations which circumscribed American obligations under the covenant without seriously impairing the League. However, Wilson

obstinately instructed his supporters that the Lodge resolutions provided for the nullification of the treaty and urged its defeat. Consequently, the Treaty of Versailles and the League were defeated when a vote on the Lodge resolutions was taken on November 19, 1919.

Immediately after the vote an unnamed influential senator told Jusserand that a formal declaration to reassure the French would be forthcoming. Jusserand replied that although France did not need a treaty to give her confidence in the United States, a treaty was necessary so the Germans would know with certainty that any new threat on their part would be fatal. Only this fear of allied force and their own weakness would prevent the Germans from seeking revenge.¹³³

The French Foreign Office was alarmed when a message from Jusserand stated that Americans were being told that Clemenceau had proposed to go to the United States to influence American opinion in favor of ratification of the peace treaty. It was agreed that, although he would be well received, it would be a mistake to take such an initiative. Jusserand believed the rumor originated with American politicians in an effort to discredit the French position, but he felt it required a response. Clemenceau formally denied that there was any foundation to the report and assured the United States that he could not possibly leave Paris at that time and, furthermore, that he would not consider getting involved in the affairs of a friendly nation.¹³⁴

The French, however, found some reassurance in numerous voices of support as in the resolution of the American Chamber of Commerce favoring an international pact preventing war and stating that differences between Wilson and the Senate must be resolved without delay. The resolution went on to say that the United States had fought to end all wars but only a council of free nations could make this possible. Thus the United States needed the moral and economic power of the Versailles Treaty. In addition, it was bad for business when the distressed people of Europe were incapable of buying even the needed raw materials. Therefore, the United States should not make a separate peace and abandon the allies, concluded the resolution.¹³⁵ The French also were heartened by a part of the press, such as the Times and the World, which found the reservations of the treaty to be shocking and incongruous and humiliating to a proud America.¹³⁶

Jusserand reported on an interview with another "unnamed influential senator" who said that France should understand that many in the United States had strong sympathy for her. The senator was, however, gravely concerned about the treaty situation and feared that the League would be postponed completely. During a trip across the United States he had found Americans indifferent to the treaty and that most Americans believed France to be hostile toward America. The senator suggested that the French press should inform Americans of the strong French desire and need for the treaty. The senator concluded that American correspondents

in France should be prevailed upon to fortify favorable opinion in America which would, in turn, force the Republican party to ratify the treaty.¹³⁷

Articles unfavorable to America were again beginning to appear in the French press. L'Eclair stated that the Americans were present in Europe only as interested observers, refusing to accept any responsibility or risk: "Truly America wishes to show us clearly that she is no longer our associate and that we can no longer count on her in all cases."¹³⁸ The article concluded by asking the question: Where are those who made us consent to so many sacrifices and to accept the Wilsonian peace? La Libre parole wrote that while President Wilson continued to oppose compromise before the Senate he was using the embarrassment of France to prove the absurdity of total abstention to the United States, but it was France who bore the cost. The writer concluded that only formal repudiation of the Versailles Treaty by the United States could restore European liberty and thereby save France.¹³⁹

Although some French newspapers were reproducing the attacks against President Wilson appearing in numerous American newspapers, most of the French press observed a very courteous attitude toward Wilson.¹⁴⁰ However, Jusserand sent an urgent appeal to Millerand on February 25, 1920, relative to the anti-American articles that did appear in the French press. He asked the government to remind the press that attacking the United States and

accusing the American government of being pro-German was not the way to make Americans sympathetic to the French cause. The problems were difficult enough without the French press complicating them further. The Times reminded the French that attacks against America, as in l'Eclair, only served to help the Germans.¹⁴¹ Most American journalists considered the Eclair as an influential paper, representative of the thinking of principal French politicians. Tardieu's articles, attempting to correct these unjustified assertions being reproduced in the American press, helped counteract the adverse opinions expressed in the French press. It was understandable that the French were in a bad mood over the uncertainty of the treaty before the United States Senate. Jusserand demanded that the French be prudent because the situation was too difficult and the consequences too great for "a light-hearted approach."¹⁴²

The French Embassy in Washington communicated to Pichon an evaluation of the Democratic Party's opinion on the treaty and concluded that while the intransigence of President Wilson was a joy to his enemies, indications were that the American people wanted the treaty ratified, but without reservations. The Senate minority would not be conciliatory. The President repeated the same declarations. The report concluded that it was possible that there would not be a decision on the treaty until after the forthcoming elections.¹⁴³

Jusserand had a meeting on January 23, 1920, with

Mrs. Wilson at which time she gave the impression that the President was still as determined as his January 8 statement indicated. Jusserand insisted very strongly to Mrs. Wilson that it would be in the interest of all for the President to make concessions which would permit the ratification of the treaty.¹⁴⁴ On February 9, 1920, Jusserand reported to Alexandre Millerand, then President of the Republic, that the American President had modified his opposition and that the text was now almost identical to the one on which the Republicans had voted. Jusserand thought his talks with Mrs. Wilson may have helped persuade the President to make concessions, although he expressed surprise since the President had grown more and more stubborn as his illness had progressed. The treaty was now back before the Senate and Jusserand thought there was a good chance of a compromise by the two parties.

Continued French efforts to influence the ratification of the treaty were to no avail, for it was rejected by the United States Senate the third time on March 19, 1920. However, the foreign office took some consolation in the fact that the President was responsible for the Senate rejection of the Treaty of Versailles. The French Chargé d'Affaires in Washington reported in a message to Millerand that Colonel House revealed the real reason that the treaty was rejected: the intransigence of the President.¹⁴⁵

Despite the Senate's refusal to ratify the treaty, the French government continued to hope that the presidential election of 1920 which Wilson had declared would be a

"great and solemn referendum" would elect a Democratic candidate who would rally the Senate to ratify the treaty. French hope did not die until the Republicans won a landslide victory. Maurice Baumont, professor at the Sorbonne, in la Faillite de la Paix, expressed the general French evaluation of the reasons for the defeat of the Democrats. Baumont concluded that the Americans felt that Wilson had been duped by Clemenceau and Lloyd George and that Americans had repented of their participation in the war, which they attributed to allied propaganda. Many Frenchmen at the time believed that the rejection of the treaty was due to the general revulsion to the sufferings of war rather than a rejection of the treaty or a rejection of the French. This interpretation at least allowed the French to accept the treaty rejection with some measure of good will towards the Americans. Regardless of the reasons, "from 1919 to 1930 there was perhaps no decision more fatal for France."¹⁴⁶

Amazingly, even after the treaty had been rejected three times by the Senate and the Democrats were overwhelmingly defeated in the 1920 Presidential election, the French continued to express hope and determination that the treaty would yet be ratified. They continued to hope for ratification with reservations as the Harding administration assumed office. However, reason dictated that the only course open to France was reliance upon the League of Nations and continued efforts to cultivate American friendship. As Briand concluded, it was considered essential for France to support

the League of Nations since without the French the provisions of the treaty would be impossible to execute. Furthermore, since the treaty itself provided for modifications it could be revised to the satisfaction of the United States.¹⁴⁷

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

French hopes and dreams embodied in the American President were destined to be short-lived. French public opinion in 1919 became the victim of a double-illusion: the first, that of Wilsonianism; the second, that of a French peace.

The arrival in France of the Americans in 1917 constituted, for most, a new departure in the ideology of the war. The engagement of President Wilson seemed to many to be a confirmation of the combat du droit and for others a guarantee of the paix de justice. The entry into the war, and consequently into the peace, of the powerful American democracy, even richer in principles than in material goods, promised a peace regulated by an international organization that would prevent future wars.

Socialists and pacifists, not concerned about the capitalist character of American democracy, made Wilson a redressor of injustice, injuries and suffering. An important politic developed around the naive imagery of Wilson, which was for the Socialists and pacifists the only chance to make a universal peace. When Wilson presented a compromise League of Nations, which was only a parody of the ideal

society, there was nothing remaining for the Left to defend. Wilsonian idealism was dead.

The second illusion, that of a French peace, rested on the idea that France, having furnished the greatest effort in the war, must receive the most important compensation from the peace settlement. It became clear, however, at the moment of the campaign against the projet d'impôt sur le capital of Klotz, that it was impossible to count on Germany for funds to repair the ruins of war. Furthermore, France soon found that she was at the mercy of American creditors.

Likewise, French security on the Rhine suffered a repeated series of defeats. The Treaty of Guarantee, given by the United States and England, in compensation for the abandonment of the victoire française sur le Rhin, revealed that in regard to security, like reparations, France no longer had the means to determine her own destiny. Clemenceau, the patriot, had lost his mystical aura; he was no longer invincible. He had not been able to rally Wilson to the French position; he had not obtained a paix française. Another illusion had disappeared.

France received neither satisfaction nor security from the treaty; but was France justified in her disillusionment, disappointment and bitterness? First, France did have a good case against Germany and Clemenceau was determined that France be paid in full for the cost of the war. The French were convinced that Germany had caused the war. Since

the war had been fought on French soil, the destruction should be repaired by Germany. Furthermore, since Germany had suffered little war damage, she could afford to make retribution. France also questioned Germany's reliability as a trusted partner in the peace. Therefore, international safeguards against Germany's military and economic capacity were necessary.

Second, France had lost more of her young men in proportion to her population than had Germany. Since France would remain demographically inferior to Germany, there must be some compensation to deprive Germany of the means of launching another war. "Never again" and "Our dead shall not have died in vain" were sentiments at the heart of Clemenceau's diplomacy.

Third, there was a great discrepancy between what the French demanded and what they received. This fact cost Clemenceau the presidency in 1920. Most of the French demands were either opposed or softened by Wilson and Lloyd George. What security did France receive? Nothing but Germany's signature to a treaty which France soon learned was absolutely meaningless. Yes, France's attitudes and demands were understandable and to a great extent justifiable.

The German historian, Karl Alexander von Muller, wrote that the Germans could not live with the Treaty of Versailles. "Today we are out of danger of being destroyed by armies because we are disarmed. . . . Wait until the victors become divided."¹⁴⁸ In reality, the victors were

already divided. As Clemenceau said, "the solidarity of the allies" was essential for the application of the treaty. Yet over twenty separate conferences were held from 1920-1922 in an attempt to implement the provisions of the treaty. Taken in their entirety these conferences amount to almost nothing. They are, however, indicative of the basic division and misunderstanding among the victorious nations.

Almost immediately after the signing of the treaty, some of the principal authors, Italy and Britain, were viciously attacking its provisions and the United States had disavowed it altogether. In the absence of the American guarantee, Europe had the unhappy state of being abandoned to herself.

"We firmly count on the ratification of the treaty by the United States," declared Clemenceau on September 24, 1919. He went on to say, "The treaty exists. If the United States does not ratify it, if no one ratifies it, there will be nothing, it is understood."¹⁴⁹ After the November 19, 1919, negative vote by the United States there was absolutely nothing left. The French, stupefied, felt they were victims of a painful compromise and enormous trickery and had been denied the fruits of victory. After having been refused the frontiers which would give them security, they lost the guarantee promised them by the United States and Britain and they sensed that they would also be deprived of the assurance of reparations. The United States, by its withdrawal, prevented the peace from becoming a living reality. The League

of Nations had been created but, by a kind of irony, the creators were not members. "The French thought that they were dealing with allies, but they found judges instead, judges who were determined to bestow their impartiality on conquerors and conquered alike."¹⁵⁰

Little wonder the French largely blamed Wilson for their unhappy state. To the Socialists and to the Left, Wilson was a hoax since he did not champion the "peace of the people" and the anticipated political and social reforms. To the Right, Wilson had forced France to abandon its cherished security demands. The Center, likewise was disillusioned because after accepting the Treaty of Guarantee and the League of Nations as a substitute for its demands, it found that Americans had turned their backs on France. France experienced an almost total disillusionment.

FOOTNOTES

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⁸³Le Temps, January 19, 1919.

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⁹⁶Ibid., p. 429.

⁹⁷L'Humanité, February 13, 1919; la Vérité, March 8, 1919.

⁹⁸L'Heure, February 3, 1919.

⁹⁹La Vérité, le Progrès, l'Europe nouvelle, March 3, 1919.

¹⁰⁰le Petit parisien, March 5, 1919.

¹⁰¹La Croix, March 23, 1919.

¹⁰²L'Eclair, April 20, 1919.

¹⁰³Ibid., March 5, 1919.

¹⁰⁴Le Temps, May 5, 1919.

¹⁰⁵Ministère des Affaires-Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques: Documents relatifs aux negociations concernant Les Garanties de Sécurité contre une agression de l'Allemagne (10 janvier 1919-7 décembre 1923), (Paris, 1924), 16, 61. Hereafter cited as M. des A. E.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁷Miquel, p. 563.

¹⁰⁸Paris Midi, August 2, 1919.

¹⁰⁹Le Figaro, July 31, 1919.

¹¹⁰Le Radical, July 28, 1919.

¹¹¹L'Echo de Paris, l'Action française, August 30, 1919.

¹¹²L'Heure, l'Oeuvre, August 24, 1919.

¹¹³France libre, August 25, 1919.

¹¹⁴La Vérité, August 25, 1919.

¹¹⁵Miquel, p. 563.

¹¹⁶Le Journal, July 29, 1919.

¹¹⁷Le Temps, July 19, 1919.

¹¹⁸L'Eclair, July 3, 1919.

¹¹⁹La Libre parole, July 3, 1919.

¹²⁰L'Echo de Paris, July 3, 1919.

¹²¹Ibid., August 26, 1919.

¹²²Ibid., August 19, 1919.

¹²³M. des A.E., Documents diplomatiques, Le Traité de Versailles (18 mai 1919-31 décembre 1921), 38, 1.

¹²⁴Quoted by Tardieu, 210.

¹²⁵M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, 38, 2.

¹²⁶Ibid., 5, 6.

¹²⁷Ibid., 20.

¹²⁸Ibid., 81, 27.

¹²⁹Ibid., 38, 45.

¹³⁰Ibid., 53-6.

¹³¹Ibid., 74.

¹³²Ibid., 76.

¹³³Ibid., 81.

¹³⁴Ibid., 139.

¹³⁵Ibid., 38, 142-144.

¹³⁶Ibid., 148.

¹³⁷Ibid., 142-4.

¹³⁸L'Eclair, January 6, 1920.

¹³⁹M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, 38, 161.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., 39, 10.

¹⁴¹The Times, February 26, 1920.

¹⁴²M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, 39, 14.

¹⁴³Ibid., 173-6.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 191.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 118.

¹⁴⁶Baumont, p. 164.

¹⁴⁷M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, 38, 230.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., 160.

¹⁴⁹Baumont, p. 161.

¹⁵⁰André Siegfried, America Comes of Age (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927), p. 321.

CHAPTER III

SECURITY VERSUS DISARMAMENT: FRENCH DISAPPOINTMENTS AT THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE

The war effected some major changes in the international power structure. Japan and the United States emerged as the chief rivals in the Pacific while the Anglo-American naval rivalry dominated the Atlantic. The United States, Great Britain and Japan found themselves in the initial stages of a naval arms race. The depression of 1920, public pressure for arms reduction, and American uneasiness about the Anglo-Japanese alliance moved Congress to force President Harding to call for a conference on naval power in Washington: a statesmanlike attempt to adjust peacefully to these changes.¹

France, still trying to adjust to the political realities of the American refusal to ratify the Versailles Treaty and the absence of any kind of guarantee of French security, was forced to turn to the League of Nations for any hope of future security. The lack of cooperation on the part of England left France isolated on the continent; she was increasingly aware that her security depended on her army, the largest in the world, and on defensive treaties with the central European nations. The United States, in rejection of any accommodation on the inter-allied debt question, accentuated

to the French that America had never been an ally, only an associate, in the war. The incomprehension was total.²

France initially demonstrated little enthusiasm for President Harding's proposal for a conference to discuss the limitations of armaments and the Far East. The French were at a loss to understand the enthusiastic reception the American people gave to the Washington Conference proposal, especially in view of America's continual refusal to cooperate with the League of Nations which had two special commissions on disarmament. France's lack of confidence and enthusiasm was understandable.³

Stéphan Lauzanne, a French journalist and well-known supporter of America, was, however, an enthusiastic advocate of the conference from the beginning. While he was not representative of the French view, he did express a representative view of England; the British were responsible for all the diplomatic defeats of France since the war. Lauzanne expressed an exaggerated view of the French support for the conference when he said the whole of France received with favor President Harding's invitation. First, because it came from America; second, because the proposal intended to lead to something practical. He concluded that France would back America with her heart and her power.⁴

The official French attitude was a reserved enthusiasm. France was pleased at being accepted as a member of the conference. The Paris government announced that Briand would attend the conference in Washington to discuss disarmament

and the Far East. Briand told the French Parliament he would attend the conference because France had important interests in the Far East as well as an interest in securing a permanent peace. However, France's interests were meager in comparison with those of the United States, Great Britain and Japan. Nor were French interests in Indo-China seriously involved in the international rivalries in the Far East. Furthermore, the French were fully aware of potential dangers at the conference for their interests.⁵

French diplomatic correspondence reveals that the Paris government evaluated the Washington Conference vis-à-vis its interests and the difficulties that France could encounter. First, France felt she could render a service to America in the problem of the Pacific. Most importantly, it was in France's interest to help settle the Pacific question since she needed the United States to be involved in Europe. Nothing should be allowed to preoccupy the United States and draw them away from Europe and further isolate them. This approach was especially advantageous since French interests in the Pacific were insignificant in comparison to their interests in Europe. Second, the conference would give France a chance to re-acquaint the senators and the American people with the French cause and role in the world. Third, France felt she had a special relationship with the United States and could act as an arbitrator between the United States and England in their struggle for supremacy of the sea. It was imagined that a conflict of interest

would erupt between England and the United States over the domination of the seas. France's interest in the conference was primarily to cultivate the good-will of Americans and to establish closer relations and ultimately to drive a wedge between the United States and England. France never demonstrated faith in the idea of disarmament which was viewed as Wilsonian idealism.⁶

Intergovernmental correspondence reveals that the French were quite aware of the possible hazards for their interests. The conference would be under the scrutiny of the American public. Public opinion would determine what was accomplished. France remembered the Portsmouth Conference where American public opinion changed toward the Japanese because they remained secretive and distant and threatened re-opening hostilities over the question of indemnities. At the Washington Conference, the principle character would be the American people. In addition, if there was an agreement on naval limitations, a demand for land arms limitations would follow. It would be difficult to explain to the American people that France could not reduce land armaments unless there was general disarmament. If there was disapprobation of French policy by the American people, they would have an arm against France: the debts. France would have to plead for the necessity of maintaining a large army before the American people who already considered her to be imperialistic and militaristic.⁷

The recommended course of action for France was to

attempt to counter propaganda which accused France of imperialism. French representatives should talk to the American people as much as possible during the conference. Contact should be made with newspapers, men and institutions who helped during the war; all means should be utilized to influence public opinion. France should give the impression that she was laying her cards on the table; let the people judge the French situation, necessities and obligations. France should not, however, abandon the League of Nations as the legitimate organization through which disarmament should be discussed, for this would betray European interests. The League should also be allowed to discuss Pacific interests as well as the method for universal disarmament. There should be an understanding in advance or the United States might try to supplant the League of Nations. Most importantly, France's role was to render aid to the United States especially in their problems with Japan in the Pacific.⁸

Once committed to the conference, the French government and press enthusiastically expressed confidence and optimism that the conference would be a success, that French interests would be respected and that the United States would be sympathetic toward French demands. This optimism was communicated to Briand on September 24, 1921 when Jusserand expressed appreciation for the attitude of the American press toward the French position. He was encouraged because the United States was showing more interest in external politics and was discussing in advance the attitude

they would take on arms limitations. Jusserand felt that the American government was manifesting a sympathetic attitude toward France even though France did not always follow the interests of the American public.⁹ Le Temps (October 24, 1921) assured the French that Briand would be asking once again for a pact of guarantees, and if given, France would be the first to limit her arms. While the guarantees were not indispensable, France must insist, not only for her own good, but in the interest of world peace. This attitude would represent France at the conference, concluded the Temps.

As the French delegates arrived in Washington and final preparations were made for the conference, expressions of confidence that the conference would be a success and expressions of friendship came from all quarters. A message from Briand over the radio on board the Lafayette November 7, 1921, reminded the American people of France's gratitude for their help during the war; France would never forget. He said he was coming so he could personally bring a tribute of thanks to America for its aid during the war and to prove that France wanted above all else peace.¹⁰

Briand, the first French premier to visit the United States, was given a VIP reception with military bands and large crowds. He received the most enthusiastic welcome of any delegate. The Washington Post (November 8, 1921) called him a man of harmony and conciliation. Papers that were generally hostile to France were favorable toward Briand.¹¹

Even the New York American viewed Briand as an important influence in France because he was the best alternative to Poincaré who was viewed by Americans as a militarist who would be ruinous for France. If Briand, the statesman, talked too much of French sacrifices, said the New York American, it was to allow French opinion to hold off Poincaré. The Globe said that while some papers contended that Briand was coming to bargain French support of America in the Pacific for the resurrection of the Versailles Treaty, he had instead come to act as a mediator between Japan and America in the Pacific question.¹²

The Paris press reported with enthusiasm the great reception Briand received in Washington; however, some were skeptical about concrete results of the conference. While some declared there was a moral alliance between France and the United States, others said Briand's objective was to seek a guarantee of French security. Regardless, most of the French press concluded that Briand did well to go to Washington.¹³

French diplomatic correspondence reveals that the Paris government did feel that France had a special relationship with America. The French naively expected a radical confrontation between the United States and the English over the control of the seas, at which time France would serve as a mediator. The Paris government also expected to serve as an arbitrator in the Pacific question. Interestingly, France did not seem to feel that her position in Europe and her special relations with America would be

disturbed but rather thought that an Anglo-American rivalry would result in giving her an even more favored position with the United States. The French saw the conference as a method for the United States to accomplish with Japan what fifty years of negotiations had not produced: Japan would be forced to reveal any hostile designs she might have in the Pacific. England, torn between the possible renewing of her treaty with Japan and a closer relationship with the United States would use the occasion to secure her position in the Atlantic. The French-English rivalry was basic to France's attitude toward and participation in the conference.¹⁴

The first major confrontation came early over the question of limitation of land armaments. In 1921 France, with the largest army in the world, was following a policy of armed peace, designed to provide immediate security and force the collection of reparations. Briand came to the conference with the desire to make the other powers understand that in the present situation France could not disarm. Briand, at the second plenary session (November 15) requested the opportunity to make France's position known. His opportunity came on November 21 when, in an eloquent address, he stated that France could not consider disarming until she had the assurance that Germany would never again be a threat to her. Briand clearly stated that until France had a guarantee of aid in the event of another German attack she could not consider reducing her land forces below the level he had already recommended to Parliament. Baron Kato, the Japanese

delegate, supported Briand's position by stating that "the size of the land armaments of each State should be determined by its peculiar geographical situation and other circumstances, and these basic factors are so divergent and complicated that an effort to draw final comparisons is hardly possible." In short, Japan, like France, would not tolerate international interference with her army.¹⁵

In response to the demand for a reduction in land armaments, Briand concluded his speech by asking the allies to sign an official guarantee so France could reduce her army. At the silence of the delegates he said: "One dreams no longer of reviving these treaties, therefore we have the right to demand that we be permitted to protect ourselves, without being hindered by our friends."¹⁶

The discussion of the question of land armaments was continued at the meeting of the committee on land armaments held November 23, at which time Briand stood firm, stating that it would be a waste of time to discuss the question further unless the other powers were willing to share the burden of securing French borders. Since he heard no such offer he must insist that the question be dropped from the conference agenda. To avoid further discussion of a security guarantee, Hughes decided not to press the question of land armaments; the matter was dropped. Feeling he had accomplished his mission, Briand sailed for France on November 24, 1921, before the beginning of the discussion of the desired purpose of the conference: reduction of naval armaments and

questions relative to the Pacific. "This attitude disconcerted even Briand's friends."¹⁷

Briand was succeeded by René Viviani as head of the French delegation. Viviani, sometimes called Europe's greatest orator, was a most persuasive, open and straightforward statesman. While serving as head of the French delegation, Viviani lived up to his reputation by supporting the French position with eloquence and determination.

The Paris press gave pleasing reports of the conference and expressed appreciation of Hughes' sincere, practical and adroit speech at the opening. Le Matin (November 14, 1921) said that France was now in the orchestra seat watching and Lloyd George was only in a "tabouret." The Petit parisien (November 14, 1921) concluded that the French position was excellent. La Libre parole saw that Hughes had two objectives: (1) to destroy immediately the advance taken by Japan and England, (2) to assure in the future a favorable position for America. While the Action française worried about a new combination in the Pacific of the Japanese and the English, l'Ere nouvelle approved Hughes' peace initiative and expressed confidence that the proposals would be ratified. L'Oeuvre viewed Briand's sentimental discourse as supporting and completing Hughes' technical exposé. France would be ready to submit voluntarily to obligations if America would support sanctions.

Briand's eloquent speech was well received by the American public and press. Jusserand reported to Paris that

the American reaction continued to be favorable. The speech was totally reproduced in the press, something rarely done. The Times praised the noble character of Briand and said that even though the speech was translated, the emotion was preserved. The only discordant note came from H. G. Wells, who, writing in the World, said that the words of Briand excited skepticism. France was preparing for a new war.

The French, expecting to serve as mediator between the United States and Britain, were surprised to find that the Anglo-Saxon nations were in agreement on a common policy: preserving their naval supremacy. The French were further incensed when they realized that little attention was paid to the French position and that an agreement on naval arms reductions would be decided largely by the "Big Three:" England, Japan and the United States. France had great difficulty accepting her new position in a world tending toward an Anglo-Saxon supremacy.¹⁸

Hughes concluded that since the American proposal for an agreement on capital ships ratios affected England, Japan and the United States most directly and since France and Italy would not be required to sacrifice their present navies, the "Big Three" should meet informally to fix the ratio of capital ships. Thus secret negotiations were held between the three from November 19 to December 15, 1921, before an accord was reached: a 5-5-3 ratio.¹⁹

Simultaneously, the subcommittee of fifteen was instituted to secure French and Italian consent to the ratio

assigned to their navies: 1-75. Hughes, realizing that the French were bitter for being excluded from the meetings, tried to soothe them by contending that Japan, England and the United States would be forced to make great sacrifices whereas France and Italy would not. Albert Sarraut, who had replaced Viviani as the head of the French delegation, responded by saying that France had not been allowed to make her position known. Since the conference did not acknowledge French needs, Sarraut begged the fellow delegates to listen to Admiral de Bon.

Admiral de Bon delivered a passionate plea on the condition of the French Navy. He explained that the existing ten capital ships in the French fleet would be obsolete between 1930 and 1934. France planned to build 35,000 tons of capital ships, beginning in 1926, to effect the needed replacement. Furthermore, France's population and colonial empire demanded that she have a navy in accordance with these needs.²⁰

Italy appeared to be willing to reduce her navy to any level so long as it was on a parity with France. This created a disagreeable situation for France. The success of the conference was made absolutely dependent on France. France, having been placed on the defensive, struggled to guard her interests and at the same time maintain the good will of the French and American public. This debate proved to be a severe test of France's pre-conference enthusiasm.

French counter-proposals were assailed by all the

delegates; only Japan remained silent. Sarraut objected to the implication that French rejection of the 1-75 ratio on capital ships would make her responsible for a resumption in arms competition. Sarraut was well aware that France was left with a cruel alternative: should she accept what was offered it would mean the "decapitation" of the French Navy; should she refuse, the responsibility of frustrating the aims of the conference would be thrust upon her. Sarraut felt the situation was forced upon France by the American press campaign.²¹

Hughes regretted that the French had characterized the American plan as a "device," suggesting that it was something unpleasant concocted in secret. He expressed difficulty understanding the attitude of the Paris government since the French Navy would actually be allowed to increase its capital ships whereas the other nations would be forced to scrap a part of their navy. He reminded the French delegates that it was difficult for both the Americans and the English to understand why it was impossible for France to accept gracefully the ratio assigned her. Sarraut informed the committee that he had to await further instructions from his government.²²

Vice-Admiral de Bon prepared a secret analysis of the conference situation for the Minister of the Navy on December 1, 1921, in which he noted that the nations at the conference were becoming hostile because each was guided by the fear of a future war. America was afraid of the Japanese menace and was trying to get her to reduce both her military and com-

mercial fleet. England supported the United States willingly since her hegemony was assured. To keep an advantage, England dropped her old ally, Japan, and rallied to the United States against her. De Bon concluded that France should give the impression that she had no plans to build up her fleet. France could not afford to reveal her actual plans as the commission already had declared them excessive. Therefore, the French delegation was prepared for a lively discussion because the Americans insisted that France did not need an important navy. De Bon concluded that France absolutely would not go below the Japanese limit.²³

The French position was reiterated by a resolution from the Conseil de la Société des Etudes Coloniales et Maritimes prepared December 12, 1921, which concluded that the Washington Conference had made France a second rate naval power - incompatible with her history, geography and her role in world affairs. If it was legitimate that Great Britain had special needs because of her insular position, France had special needs because of her position at the extremity of the continent and because she was a colonial power. Should Great Britain and the United States be allowed to be the strongest and to be equal, there would be a hegemony of English-speaking powers and the continent would become inferior. This was an alarming prospect for France.²⁴

Sarraut assured Hughes that France was ready to make every sacrifice for the idea which had inspired the United States but France could not afford to disappear as a naval

and colonial power. The United States had used her power and influence to rally England and Japan to her point of view. Sarraut asked: Why could not the United States let France benefit from the same influence and help prevent France from being disarmed and her power diminished?²⁵

Hughes replied frankly to Sarraut's assessment and expressed his disappointment with the French position. He could not understand why France would not accept the dictated naval limitations. He insisted that the contemplated naval construction would be incompatible with French prosperity; furthermore, France had no real enemies capable of attacking her.²⁶

Realizing that the conference was at an impasse, Hughes went over the heads of the French delegates and appealed to Briand to concede the issue on the grounds that the attitude of France would determine the success of the conference.²⁷ On December 20, Hughes reported that Briand had accepted the American proposal. He read a part of Briand's letter which said that France was interested in defensive armaments; therefore, she could accept the capital ships ratio. However, France could not accept any reduction in light cruisers, torpedo boats and submarines, for this would be contrary to the vote of the Chamber. In this manner the submarine controversy, which proved to be the most damaging to French prestige, was introduced.

The American delegation, in its original disarmament proposal, had recommended that submarine tonnage be limited.

Balfour argued, in response, that the submarine tonnage proposed was far too high and recommended that submarines be further limited since they were offensive weapons. If possible, they should be prohibited altogether. The French, Italian and Japanese representatives denounced illegal warfare of submarines in the past but insisted that they were legitimate and effective defensive weapons. Sarraut reminded the delegates that the conference had agreed on reduction of offensive naval armaments but questions relating to defense were to be left to each country involved.

Both Hughes and Balfour were alarmed when Briand demanded a large submarine tonnage in his cable from Paris. Lord Lee of Foreham, First Lord of the British Admiralty, in a sweeping indictment of submarines, recommended their total abolition. He argued that recent history had proven that submarines were effective only against merchant vessels. Balfour firmly pointed out that France had prevented discussion on the reduction of land armaments and now she was insisting on the creation of a large submarine fleet which, from a strategic and tactical point of view, would be built mainly with Great Britain in mind.

The debate led the American delegation to revise the original proposal permitting France, Italy and Japan to maintain the status quo while Britain and the United States accepted a reduction from 90,000 to 60,000 submarine tonnage. On December 28, 1921, Sarraut read a statement from the French cabinet stating that France could not accept less

than 90,000 tons for submarines. Balfour objected saying that such a fleet of submarines would threaten the very existence of England.²⁸

On December 28 in an effort to set at rest the understandable fears of England, Root introduced a resolution proposing rules to deal with submarine warfare. The first resolution, dealing with already existing international law, was accepted with the endorsement of all delegates. The second and third resolutions, prohibiting the use of submarines for destroying merchant vessels and punishing violations as acts of piracy, was a revolutionary and drastic proposal. Admiral de Bon recommended that the Root resolution be referred to a committee of jurists. Despite a plea from Root, the French, Japanese and Italian delegates felt obligated to refer the resolution to their home governments.²⁹

It was at this juncture in the submarine debate that Lord Lee proceeded to read an article from La Revue maritime of January, 1920 by Captain Castex, Chief of Staff of the Admiralty of the Second Division in the Mediterranean and lecturer in the officers' course. La Revue maritime, an official publication, was issued by the historical department of the Navy General Staff. According to Lord Lee, Castex justified unrestricted submarine warfare. Lord Lee quoted Castex as saying that "it must be recognized that the Germans were absolutely justified in resorting to it. . . . After many centuries of effort, thanks to the ingenuity of

man, the instrument, the system, the martingale is at hand which will overthrow for good and all the power of England."

Admiral de Bon expressed regret that a misunderstanding had developed between France and England based on this article, which he officially repudiated in the name of France. Admiral de Bon insisted that the article expressed the opinion of only one man. Furthermore, according to a statement on the title page of the Revue maritime, the General Staff expressed no responsibility for opinions expressed on its pages. Sarraut, likewise, added his regrets and repudiation.

On January 4, 1922, Sarraut received instructions from Paris to correct the impression given by Lord Lee relative to the French submarine doctrine. Castex had no official authorization to speak for the French government. Furthermore, the French government denied that the article contained the statement read by Lord Lee. Castex was recapitulating Germany's position and his statement was expressing German thought on submarine warfare.³⁰ The French Embassy in Washington informed Briand that the Castex affair had done great harm to France. Since the Lusitania, submarines were odious to Americans. Now the French were viewed as the chief defenders of submarines.

David Lawrence wrote an article which appeared in a number of papers saying that the French obstruction of the conference would have far-reaching results. Disappointment with the French stand on submarines caused a violent

reaction in official circles. Some felt the controversy was the result of the French-English friction since the end of the war while others saw it as France avenging the failure of the Versailles Treaty ratification. At best the French attitude gave the impression of incoherent politics, reminiscent of Wilson's difficulties in Paris. Lawrence, an astute journalist, concluded that President Harding had begun to become more friendly toward Europe but his ardor had been cooled by the French maneuver.³¹

The French delegation reported to Paris on December 30, 1921, that the entire debate was being centered on the submarine question. Lord Lee still demanded that submarines be abolished against the opposition of Japan and Italy. De Bon refuted Lee's arguments and Balfour accused de Bon of wanting to make war. Submarines, argued Balfour, had no war efficiency but were intended only against commerce and as a threat to Britain. The debate became so heated that Hughes cut it short. Hughes had met with Sarraut and de Bon at which time Hughes insinuated that France might attack Great Britain or the United States. Since Balfour had stated that under the present conditions Britain could accept no limitations on either lighter ships or submarines, Hughes concluded that no agreement was possible on the submarine question.³² The debate did not end, however, until it culminated in more bitter exchanges, especially between the British and the French.

Amidst the bitterness over the submarine controversy

there was one beneficial result: it forced France to accept the Root Submarine Resolutions which would prohibit the use of submarines to destroy commercial vessels under any circumstances. France was obliged to accept the resolutions without qualifications in order to prove that the Castex article did not represent the official French position. This should have ended the Castex controversy but on January 31, 1922, Jusserand attempted to arrest the widespread belief that France approved of the German submarine tactics by noting that Lord Lee had misquoted the Castex article. Castex had prefaced his argument with "This is the way the Germans are reasoning" which was omitted by Lord Lee. Jusserand then assured the British that the attitude attributed to Castex was not being taught in the French naval college.

The Castex controversy continued to provoke exchanges and discussions even after the conference ended. Undoubtedly, the British used the Castex article to strike back at the French. It brought into sharper focus the centuries old Anglo-French distrust and competitiveness. The controversy over the limitation of submarines did more to destroy the influence of France at the conference and to discredit France in the eyes of the American public than any other thing. It provided ammunition for anti-French forces as they portrayed France as militaristic and ready to default on war debts.³³

The deteriorating relations between France and the

United States, as well as with England, were exemplified in the story circulated about a supposed secret French-American alliance concluded before the conference began, designed to drive a wedge between the United States and England. The English Foreign Office claimed to have proof of such an attempt on the part of the French. Jusserand officially denied the rumor and asked Hughes to make a statement, not necessarily public, to repair a terrible "tort" caused by this campaign in Washington. Finally, after almost a month, a denial of such an alliance, supposedly offered by Briand to Hughes, appeared in the World. Hughes also gave the French an official denial; however, the harm to French prestige had been done.³⁴

By fall great concern in the American government over France's delay in ratifying the Washington Conference treaties prompted a visit by a representative of the American Embassy to Mr. de Peretti to ask when ratification could be expected by the French. Senator Borah reproached the European nations for not having ratified the Washington Naval Treaties. Most of the American press echoed the opinion of the New York Times which concluded that if France did not ratify the treaties, the other European nations would rework the treaties before they would ratify.³⁵

The desire of the French to preserve American good will was expressed in an interview granted to Mr. Hyatt, representative of the Associated Press by the Ministre de la Marine, Mr. Raibetti, wherein he attempted to explain

to the American people the French position on naval armaments and the delay in ratification of the Washington Conference treaties. The delay was caused by budgetary discussions and other urgent projects. Under the French constitution, only Parliament could give or refuse sanctions. Raibetti concluded by asking Hyatt to inform the Americans that the French government wanted to obtain ratification as rapidly as possible to bear witness to her desire for peace and to the friendship between France and the United States. There was great satisfaction and relief expressed by both French and American government circles when on July 18, 1923, France finally ratified the treaties.³⁶

One of the consequences of the Washington Conference was a continued interest in disarmament. On January 21, 1925, the American Senate asked President Coolidge to invite all states with whom the United States had treaties to meet in Washington for a naval and continental conference to continue the work of the Washington Conference. The French expressed hope that France's creditor would not draw her into this conference by her throat. The United States wanted the conference so badly that tremendous pressure was applied to France to force her to participate. The United States tried to make it a matter of national honor to complete the work of the Washington Conference, stating that any nation not participating would be morally isolated.³⁷

The French Embassy in Washington expressed the general French attitude toward the conference initiative when it stated that American international relations were dominated by a reaction to Wilson's attempt to involve the United States in European politics. The disarmament, which gave the United States no international obligations nor tied them to the fortune of another power nor obliged them to intervene, seemed to Americans the best way to conciliate two opposing tendencies: fear of responsibilities and sentiment that America had a responsibility to play a world role.³⁸

The Paris Foreign Office stated that the French government considered security, arbitration and disarmament inseparable. France still considered it impossible to effect a disarmament treaty without first having an organization capable of enforcing its decisions. Furthermore, France considered questions of security to belong to the League of Nations which alone could handle European questions and furnish guarantees. Poincaré commissioned Jusserand to attempt to dissuade the American government from continuing with the project since the question was currently being considered by the League.³⁹

On February 10, 1927, President Coolidge called for a five power conference to be held in Geneva to consider limitations on the building of cruisers, destroyers and submarines which had not been curbed at the Washington Conference. Despite continued moral, political and economic

pressure from the United States, France declined to attend. The story of the efforts at agreement on the reduction of arms and attendant discussion in Washington and Geneva is one of frustration. This effort can be summed up as an interminable and never resolved debate: Security versus Disarmament.

The French press revealed the sense of injustice, disappointment and bitterness resulting from the turn of events at the Washington Conference. French public opinion believed the Washington Conference had not only been a failure for France but had done their nation great harm. Le Temps reasoned that after the war France was viewed as a calm, pacific nation, open and generous to ideas which would assure the future. However, the image of France after the controversies at the conference had changed to that of a militant conqueror; an image which stupefied the French when they saw it in the foreign press.

To what did the French attribute this failure? First, it was the fault of the French because they did not use the moral arm of propaganda to inform the American people of the true intentions of France. It became apparent in the submarine controversy that France needed to make a complete explanation to the American people, "who do not open up their ears unless one knocks hard repeatedly."⁴⁰

Second, the conference was a failure for France because of the Anglo-American bloc. The United States was willing to sacrifice France, England's only rival in

Europe, to influence England to abandon Japan. Hughes and the Republicans needed the suppression of the Japanese danger and to establish calm in the Pacific.

Third, the United States, as creditor to Europe, needed European markets and European help in the Far East. Americans, who previously did not want to be involved, had now "stuck their nose" into European affairs to the end that American capitalism could effect political and economic control of the world.

Fourth, the failure was the fault of the French political methods at the conference. Briand should not have gone to Washington unless he could stay throughout the conference, as did Balfour. The French delegation's brawling attitude made them rather unpopular. Only de Bon made a good impression with his good English and good humor.

Fifth, England had been more clever in the use of propaganda and in diplomatic maneuvers. The English delegates had effectively used the Castex incident, among other things, to turn the United States away from the French. Simply, England had won in the age-old French-English struggle for supremacy.⁴¹

Sixth, the French recognized that the failure was largely due to a lack of understanding between the French and Americans. The French viewed the Americans as being unprepared and totally ignorant of international problems. The narrow American spirit permitted sensationalism to control the American press.

France was almost universally castigated for following a policy which almost wrecked the conference at times or at least limited its success. The French policy unjustifiably provoked the storming of the French consulate in Italy for a supposed derogatory remark by Briand. The British falsely reported that Jusserand was no longer received at the White House by Secretary Hughes. Only after Jusserand insisted did Hughes deny the report but the damage had already been done. This and the way in which the British used the Castex article may have been the logical consequences of the obstinate attitude of the French delegation. The French policy aided the Japanese at the conference by making it look as if it were the French, rather than the Japanese, who were blocking the progress of the conference. In short, the French protected the Japanese from criticism by becoming the object of criticism. Even the friends of France found it difficult to justify the French policy. The French generally conceded that their policy had been a mistake.⁴² An attempt should be made to understand why the French behaved as they did.

It should be first recognized that France came to the conference at a great disadvantage. The conference was based on the assumption that armaments were the cause of war and that if the cause were removed, there would be no more war. Furthermore, it was the pressure of American public opinion which forced the administration to take the initiative in calling for the disarmament conference. Thus

any objection on the part of France would be taken by the American public as proof of France's militarism. For France to go along with the dictates of the "Big Three" would have resulted in her complete humiliation. It was of little consequence that France could not compete in a naval building race; the humiliation was in being forced into a position of weakness that she was not ready to accept. "It was a measure of France's power and of her isolation at Washington that in the end she yielded." Furthermore, any demand on the part of France for an increase in armaments would inevitably result in a demand from the Americans for France first to pay her debts. Even though the debt question was studiously kept out of the conference, the debts were always there as a veiled threat. In sum, despite the initial French optimism there was absolutely no way France could win at the Washington Conference. If no results were achieved, it would be the fault of France.⁴⁴

Second, the French had little faith in the decisions made at the Washington Conference since there was no guarantee of their execution. There was no permanent international organization created for that purpose. The conference had left too many open doors through which nations could escape their responsibilities. There was simply no possibility that France would give up her military security for agreements which had no force behind them.⁴⁵

Third, they did not understand the role of the press in America in forming public opinion. The French did not

understand that the press was not controlled or directed by the administration in power. The French arrived at the conference, unaware of this, thinking the press would be guided by the State Department and under its control. The French delegates failed to establish contact with the press because they were ignorant of the power of the press on public opinion. Furthermore, when press conferences were held, they had to be conducted in French. American correspondents tried to persuade the French delegates to hold daily press conferences. Their refusal to do so left the impression that the French expected to lose the moral support of America. The French cause was poorly presented and defended and the American public was completely misled.⁴⁶

Fourth, France reacted most strongly to the fact that the invited nations were divided into large and small powers and France was placed in the latter category. A reaction should have been expected from France when the larger powers decided among themselves on conference proposals and merely notified others what had been done. Apparently few understood the humiliation of the proud colonial power, which still had the largest army in the world, in being treated as a second rate power. When France insisted on military strength in accordance with the actual needs of the empire, she was held responsible for the failure of the entire conference and accused of being militarist.⁴⁷

Fifth, few seemed to appreciate the fear that France had of an Anglo-Saxon domination of world affairs and es-

pecially of an English domination in the Mediterranean. This stemmed from the age-old French-English competition. Understandably, the French reacted negatively when they realized their isolation at the conference, largely due to the American-British bloc, according to the French appraisal of the situation.

Despite their previous failure to get a commitment from the United States to defend French frontiers, the French delegation went to the Washington Conference optimistic that such a commitment could still be obtained. The French saw their role as a mediator between the United States, England and Japan but found themselves instead in the position of defending their interests against the plans "concocted" by the "Big Three." The Paris government's policy resulted not only in humiliation but also in France being discredited in world opinion. The French almost unanimously concluded that the Washington Conference was not only a failure; it was a disaster for France.

FOOTNOTES

¹Raymond J. Sontag, A Broken World: 1919-1939 (New York: Harper Torch Books, Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 96-100.

²Maurice Baumont, La Faillite de la paix (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), p. 173.

³New York Times, July 13 and 15, 1921 and Outlook August 10, 1921.

⁴Le Matin, July 17, 1921 and Outlook, August 24, 1921.

⁵Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques: Conférence de Washington, 80, p. 110. Hereafter cited as M. des A. E.

⁶Ibid., 160.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 139-144.

⁹Ibid., 81, 168-169.

¹⁰Ibid., 83, 93.

¹¹Ibid., 115.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., 80, 139-144. Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars: Conflicting Strategies of Peace Since Versailles. (New York: Harcourt, 1940)

¹⁵Raymond Leslie Buell, The Washington Conference (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1922), p. 203.

¹⁶M. des A. E., 84, 218.

¹⁷Jacques Néré, La Troisième République (Paris: 1965), p. 35.

¹⁸M. des A. E., 84, 97.

¹⁹Ibid., 85, 79-83.

²⁰Ibid., 84, 131.

²¹Journal des débats, February 10, 1922.

²²M. des A. E., 84, 119-120.

²³Ibid., 85, 79-83.

²⁴Ibid., 99.

²⁵Ibid., 267-272.

²⁶Ibid., 86, 1.

²⁷Ibid., 8.

²⁸Ibid., 139-148.

²⁹Ibid., 254-5.

³⁰Ibid., 88, 155.

³¹Ibid., 87, 116-118.

³²Ibid., 88, 57-64.

³³Ibid., 91, 30-31.

³⁴Ibid., 177-8.

³⁵Ibid., 92, 3-4.

³⁶Ibid., 96, 78.

³⁷Ibid., 76-8.

³⁸Ibid.,

³⁹Ibid., 102, 151-6.

⁴⁰Ibid., 88, 228-230.

⁴¹Ibid., 89, 240.

⁴²Echo de Paris, February 10, 1922 and Journal des débats, February 14, 1922.

⁴³René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p. 416.

⁴⁴M. des A. E., 90, 218.

⁴⁵Ibid., 91, 4.

⁴⁶Ibid., 6.

⁴⁷Ibid., 88, 4.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTER-ALLIED DEBT QUESTION

The inter-allied debt question, the most recurrent issue of the decade, resulted in a sharp clash of philosophies and demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding. This question, more than any other, demonstrated the dichotomous French approach to relations with the United States. France was at once desirous of gaining the good will of the Americans and determined that she would not be forced into a debt repayment schedule which would threaten her economic and military security. While France realized that she was dependent upon the United States, her pride and determination that France would remain a world power, along with adherence to outdated economic principles, pushed the French to act contrary to their best interests and alienated the Americans. The whole drama of the debt question, played on the backdrop of the breakdown of the Versailles Treaty, the deterioration of Anglo-French relations and the failure of the Washington Conference, resulted in the lowest ebb of French-American relations before a final agreement was reached. French actions were not, however, motivated by spite or arrogance but stemmed rather from lack of understanding of American actions and attitude.

To begin with, the French did not understand the American view of the loans. France regarded the loans totaling \$3,811,818,945. as a part of America's contribution, given by an ally in a common struggle to preserve civilization. France had paid the most dearly in men, material and destruction to her homeland. The United States had not only escaped unscathed but had profited from the war. Abstract justice dictated a pooling of resources. The French found it particularly difficult to understand how Americans could demand repayment of the debts when the money had been spent in the United States, resulting in increased American prosperity while French industry and economy were being directed toward rebuilding a devastated country. These attitudes ultimately led the French to demand cancellation of the debt, or failing that, linking the debt with German reparation payments.¹

While the idea of debt cancellation was abhorrent to Americans, the European allies understood that war loans made to other allied nations would be subject to post-war adjustments. Allied governments regarded loans among themselves as a phase of their cooperation in winning the war. Thus it was not unthinkable to the French that the Americans would share this view.²

The French approach clashed with American provincialism, the emphasis on the work ethic and strong belief in the "American dream." The French did not understand the limited experience of Americans in the larger political and

economic issues involved. Nor did they understand how deeply ingrained was the idea that nations, like individuals, must pay their debts. It would be immoral to do otherwise. The American attitude, in contradiction with European tradition, baffled the French.³

While it was the British who early in 1920 made the first official request for a general cancellation of war debts, the French generally felt that justice demanded that the United States cancel all or part of the war debt. Despite Wilson's categoric rejection of the British demand, the French continued to hope and work for debt cancellation throughout the decade. Wilson, by opposing debt cancellation, established the American policy followed by succeeding administrations throughout the 1920s.⁴

Despite warnings from those who understood the American mood and advised that "chances of debt cancellation were very fragile," demands continued to be heard from the French press as well as from many in government. Jusserand advised Briand (July 19, 1921), "It is highly unlikely that . . . Congress (or) . . . American public opinion, will permit ever any cancellation of any part of these debts as a means of finding a practical solution to the reparation question."⁵ However, the hope that all or part of the debts would be cancelled was kept alive by many in the United States such as Supreme Court Justice John Hessin Clarke, who argued that they should be cancelled from a moral viewpoint.

It seemed to matter little that the majority of Americans were opposed to debt annulment in any form. Continued warnings against self-delusion were voiced by the French diplomats in the United States. Only gradually did the majority in France come to realize that the United States would never consent to total cancellation. The French government had never denied the war debts but had a difficult time leading French opinion around to accord with the American position: maintain total debt cost and amortization independent of German payments.⁶ Even as late as 1927, while the French Chamber was debating the Mellon-Berenger agreement, le Temps (September 6, 1927) stated that the current idea in France was that the debts would be annulled.

In addition, France's continued adherence to an outdated economic philosophy forced her into economic policies which alienated the United States. France attempted to hold on to economic practices responsible for pre-war stability and prosperity. The war and the tumultuous aftermath had, however, wrecked the foundations of the French economy despite the apparent recovery of the early 1920s.

The French had an almost pathological addiction to monetary stability and orthodoxy. Inflation, due to the war and reconstruction, shook confidence in the franc at a time when other pre-war landmarks were being swept away. Understandably, anxiety about the stability of the franc was most acute among the bourgeois families who badly needed

assurances that the franc would not be devalued by inflation like the currencies of some other European states.⁷

French inflation had its source in inept financial methods which depended upon borrowing rather than higher taxation during the war and continued borrowing after the war to finance urgent reconstruction in the devastated areas, with the assumption that the cost would be borne by German reparations payments. While the generous compensation payments made to French industry permitted a substantial part of French industry to modernize, contributing to the prosperity and competitiveness, the inevitable consequence was continuous inflation at home and the depreciation of the franc.⁸

Efforts to restore confidence in the franc were exceptionally complex due to the political instability of post-war France. The disaster of the Ruhr invasion and the events of 1924 marked the defeat of those who wished to uphold the Versailles Treaty and committed France to a policy of conciliation toward Germany. France had failed because her leaders had mismanaged public finance. This situation in turn was a relection of deeper defects in the French political system and French inability to adjust to new economic challenges. France was ill adapted to the demands of a new industrial age.⁹

Failure to gain German reparations payments to solve her financial problems and to save the franc caused France to become increasingly dependent on the support of American

bankers. France was forced to accept the new approach to German reparations, embodied in the Dawes Plan, because she needed foreign financial aid to overcome the financial crisis of January 1924.¹⁰

Potentially a greater industrial power than before the war, France found that every step toward a more industrialized economy forced her to become more dependent on international trade. On the surface the economic picture was a very favorable one: rapid recovery and large government expenditures, industrial growth and investment. However, the period from 1924 to 1926 witnessed a disastrous devaluation of the franc.¹¹

It was during this period that great pressure was put on France to negotiate a settlement of her war debts. France was denied access to the American money market until she negotiated an acceptable payment schedule despite the opposition of many American financial leaders to such "government blackmail."¹²

Finally, the French economic outlook and political background made it impossible for them to accept the obstinate refusal of the United States to recognize a connection between the war debts and reparations payments. It was incomprehensible to the French that they should be expected to pay the war debts if the Germans did not make reparations payments. To the French mind, reparations and debts were inextricably linked. The French first attempted to establish this link at the Paris Peace Conference.¹³

Louis Lucien Klotz, the French Minister of Finance, was the first to gain the consent of the American government for a joint consideration of the war loans. During the preliminary stages of the conference at Paris, Oscar T. Crosby, a member of the Inter-Allied Council on War Purchases, was approached repeatedly with suggestions that the American loans should be jointly discussed at the conference. French representatives in Washington were commissioned to make an official request to the American government for a discussion of war loans at the conference. The basis of this approach was the belief that war loans concerned all the allies and demanded "general and simultaneous" settlement, taking into consideration the situation of each nation. To this request, the Secretary of the Treasury, Carter Glass, replied on January 29, 1919, that any discussion on repayment of debts should take place in Washington and only after the financial terms of the peace were settled. Thus the policy, to which the American government adhered unwaveringly, was established: war debts could not be discussed at the peace conference.¹⁴

Despite this clear stand by the American government, several other attempts were made by the French to force discussion of the inter-allied debt question as part of the conference. The French and Italian representatives made another attempt by requesting to the Financial and Drafting Committee that the inter-allied loans be discussed in connection with reparations. Too, the French plan for the creation of the Société financière des nations would inter-

nationalize reparations and debts and place the United States in a position of guaranteeing and equalizing the financial situation of the allied government. To these attempts to get the debt question on the agenda of the conference, the American government informed Klotz that the United States Treasury did not have the authority to cancel debts and, further, Washington was concerned about making additional loans to governments who were attempting to escape payments on loans already made to them. Although American protests determined that debts would not be discussed at the conference, the issue was not dead.¹⁵

The American position, against which the French had to contend, was well established by the conclusion of the conference. In brief, the policy had four important points: (1) loans to the allied governments could be discussed only in Washington, (2) these loans had no relation to German reparations, (3) these war debts were legitimate loans, therefore, a debt of honor to the American people and (4) only Congress had the power to remit or cancel any part of the debts.

Jusserand and other Frenchmen who understood the American mentality attempted to make the Paris government understand that their approach antagonized the Americans and produced an adverse response. Jusserand advised his government that France would do well not to pressure the Americans but rather appeal to American sentiments, to enlighten them discreetly and to allow an American instigated

response. He concluded that if France tried to postpone interest payments, the delay would have a regrettable impact on public opinion and on Congress. He strongly recommended that the French government express the desire to do its best toward payment of the debt. Regrettably, the French did not heed Jusserand's advice.¹⁶

The common position of France and England was made known in the Hythe communique of June 19, 1920: inter-allied credits and debts should be balanced. France and England officially recognized that there was a correlation and a necessary dependence between allied debts and German payments. In the common struggle, France and England furnished more than other nations, the battlefield and the men; therefore liquidation should be the rule.¹⁷

Despite insistence and repeated warnings by those who understood Americans, the French press continued to print articles damaging to the French cause. The most antagonistic were articles comparing Revolutionary War debts of the United States to World War I debts. Jusserand insisted to Briand that it was not in France's interest to start comparing and calculating figures, especially if France left the impression that she considered it as America's duty to come to France's aid to return a favor. Jusserand tried desperately to persuade the French to forget about the Revolutionary War debt question as it could only destroy French chances, already slight, of getting a favorable debt settlement.¹⁸

Despite Jusserand's efforts, the French never abandoned the demand that war debts and reparations be considered together. This constantly recurring debate revealed the very heart of the mutual misunderstanding between the French and the Americans. These differences, clearly defined, were so sharp that there was little left for France to do but to let the matter rest as long as possible. Meanwhile, the United States changed administrations and France concentrated on the reparations question and binding up her wounds.

Soon after Warren G. Harding assumed office, his Secretary of Treasury, Andrew Mellon, asked Congress for plenary powers to refund foreign debts. Since the Treasury possessed no authority to grant postponement of obligations, on June 21, 1921, Mellon asked that Harding request from Congress full authority to deal with the debt question. Refusing Mellon's request, Congress responded with the creation of the World War Debt Commission, which was given the responsibility of collecting war debts although its powers were strictly defined and circumscribed by Congress. The Commission was instructed to negotiate repayment schedules for the principal of the debts within a twenty-five year period for nations which had funded their debts during 1922. The period would be automatically shortened for nations who delayed their funding negotiations. The interest rate was fixed at 4.25 percent. Congress strictly forbade the Commission to accept from any debtor nation obligations other than its own. Congress further stipulated that no agreement

could be made to cancel "any part of such indebtedness except payment thereof." Furthermore, any settlement made with the Commission could not be revised at a later date. Any modification of these terms must be submitted to Congress. Thus Congress retained authority to review each agreement.

Both the French government and press exploded in anger over the terms of the debt funding bill. Henry Leméry, a senator from Martinique, asked, "Has America which but yesterday was acclaimed for her generosity and idealism, fallen to the role of a shylock?" The New York Times (February 7, 1922) and Le Journal (March 9, 1922) stated that these terms violated the most elementary concept of justice. Le Matin (March 18, 1922) said France would pay these debts to the United States on two conditions: (1) that France be given terms and a delay, (2) that the United States not prevent France from recovering reparations from Germany without loss of credit. Le Temps (May 6, 1922) concluded that repayment of the debt would be impossible without German reparations payments.¹⁹

The depth of the French indignation over the terms of the debt funding bill was exemplified by the recommendation of the French Chamber (March 6, 1922) to Poincaré that an official examination of the historic background of the Revolutionary War debts be undertaken. Furthermore, recommended the Chamber, the United States should be reminded that she had profited from the war since the money

loaned to her allies was spent in the United States to purchase war materials and there had not been a flow of gold from the United States.²⁰ Le Temps reported on a speech by Clément Loucheur, former Minister of Reconstruction, to important businessmen in Lyon on February 22, 1922, wherein he recommended that all Frenchmen should let the Paris government know of their opposition to France paying the war debts.²¹ By the time the story reached the American press, Loucheur had supposedly said that France would never pay a penny of what she owed the United States.²²

These expressions of anger and disappointment prompted Jusserand again to caution the French that their approach was unwise. Wisdom dictated that the French listen to those who were speaking out in interest of debt cancellation rather than treating Americans as shylock.²³ It was encouraging, for example, that President John Grier Hibben of Princeton argued that the war debts should be cancelled on the grounds that France had suffered more than the United States and that repayment would force France to pay twice.²⁴ William D. Guthrie of the New York Bar Association declared that debt cancellation was the American debt of honor.²⁵ Jusserand again expressed regret that the French felt compelled to express their anger and disappointment in such uncharitable ways just when American opinion toward France had been improving week by week.²⁶

France responded to the Debt Commission's request that she appear before the Commission to consider funding

proposals by announcing on June 22, 1922, that Jean Parmentier, an important official in the French Treasury, would be sent to Washington. His mission was not to negotiate a debt settlement but rather to inform the Debt Commission that France could not possibly refund the debt on the terms dictated by the Debt Funding Act.

Instructions signed by Poincaré and Minister of Finance de Lasteyrie stated that " . . . the French government does not in any way deny the political debt which it contracted during the war with the United States government . . . , but it considers that the federal law of February 9, 1922, which deals with the payment of inter-allied debts, is presented in terms not acceptable to France." The instructions further stated that all inter-allied debts must be regarded together and linked with reparations.

Your mission to the United States has no other object than to inform the members of the World War Debt Commission and to make it clear to them that, under the present circumstances, France is not in a position to make any agreement concerning the payment of her political debt. . . . You will act in such a way that the government of the United States cannot at any moment conclude from what you say to the World War Debt Commission or even from your silence that France has tacitly accepted the principles of the federal law of February 9, 1922.²⁷

These instructions to Parmentier which were made public in l'Avenir (June 10, 1926) and the Livre Jaune, an official exposé of secret and confidential information, also compiled in 1926, reveal that the Paris government sent Parmentier to Washington as part of a delaying tactic.

He was sent to "give the impression" that France was ready to reach an agreement when in reality this was never its intention. Accordingly, the Président du conseil de la ministre des affaires étrangères informed the diplomatic personnel to exercise extreme caution not to give the impression that the Parmentier mission was sent for "purely courtesy and that we consider the mission futile."²⁸

Parmentier gave the World War Debt Commission a memorandum which revealed the financial condition of France and declared that the actual situation was too complicated and uncertain to permit France to make extreme payments or to make firm promises with reasonable assurance of meeting the obligations. Parmentier's mission accomplished nothing of significance since "he could say nothing definite" to the Commission.

Finally, convinced of France's inability to pay even the interest, the Commission accorded a delay. Parmentier, summoned home in mid-August, reported to Poincaré that the Commission was extremely limited by the powers granted by Congress, public opinion and the forthcoming election. France might have been able to get special treatment, reasoned Parmentier, due to her economic situation but the Balfour note of August 1, 1922, had destroyed that hope. Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, sent a note to the allied powers indebted to England offering to abandon all further claim for payment and all claims to reparations provided a general settlement could be made which would end "the economic injury inflicted on the world by the present

state of things." If the United States would not cancel the debts owed by European nations, England would have to demand sufficient reparations to cover her debt payments to the United States.²⁹

Parmentier counselled the French to take a passive role, repeating to the Commission that due to financial uncertainties, formal promises could not be made. The American government could ask for immediate payment or exchange of obligations but would accept consolidation under commission powers. Parmentier reasoned that the French government, by maintaining a passive attitude and by relating her difficulties, might change nothing, but since October's interest payments were beyond France's means, consolidation would allow sufficient delay for American public opinion to change relative to all war obligations.³⁰

Jusserand was to keep negotiations open to avoid giving the impression that France did not intend to come to an agreement with the debt commission. Jusserand was not, however, given any official instructions, not even the official figures of the amount of the debt. Without the needed information, he was powerless.³¹

Liebert, the French Consulate General in New York, reported to the Paris Foreign Office that the Parmentier mission had done great harm to French interests. Frustration over the inconclusiveness of the mission prompted, in France as well as in the United States, a rash of articles and speeches which greatly inflamed public opinion.³²

For two and a half years efforts to reach an agreement on the debt question were adjourned. The Debt Commission took no immediate steps to force France to come to terms. In the meantime, an Anglo-American debt agreement was reached on June 18, 1923, which refunded the English debt over a sixty-two year period at an average interest rate of 3.3 percent. From the American viewpoint, the British settlement was an example of a reasonable and businesslike agreement based on "capacity to pay" and served as a model for subsequent negotiations. Consequently, the United States could not understand why the French could not be as accommodating as the British. The death of President Harding, the succession of Calvin Coolidge to the presidency, and pressing domestic issues caused American interest in the French debt to be less intense than it would have been otherwise. Pressing events in France, as well, along with domestic and social issues, prevented the French from beginning repayment of the war debts or even discussing the American loans.³³

With the German military threat removed, the provinces of Alsace-Lorraine restored, and the promise of vast sums in reparations from Germany, the French had hopes of restoring their productive capacity and of meeting the massive debts incurred. However, within five years, the Versailles Peace settlement was crumbling and successive Paris governments were desperately seeking a new basis for French military and economic security. At the same time, Germany was recovering her position as the leading economic power in Europe. Furthermore, America appeared to be withdrawing further from

involvement in European affairs.³⁴

The debt question became more complex when the Reparations Commission declared Germany in default of her reparations payments and on January 11, 1923, Poincaré, pushed by French President Millerand and in accord with French public opinion, ignored British protests and ordered French and Belgian troops into the Ruhr. The troops were sent only to protect a civilian mission of engineers who were to control the mining of coal as a means of collecting reparations. The affair, however, quickly took on a much greater proportion than Poincaré had envisioned.³⁵

The American government was quick to make known its disapproval of the Ruhr invasion. Tardieu expressed the popular French view when he insisted that if necessary the French would solve the reparations problem alone. While the French were desirous of American friendship, France felt there was no other recourse since it was going bankrupt paying for reconstruction. After three fruitless years attempting to explain the French position to the United States, Tardieu concluded: "We will cease annoying you by asking your opinions on questions which do not interest you or your domestic questions which do not interest us. We will try to apply those international contracts which you refused to ratify after signing and England refused to execute after ratifying."³⁶

The French, however, were very desirous of American support and good will in the Ruhr episode. Poincaré attempted

to make Hughes understand that all France wanted was to be paid. It was obviously in France's interest that Germany be prosperous enough to pay reparations. France public opinion was, however, out of patience since France had not received the reparations due and could not continue to advance money for the reconstruction of war damages. Poincaré concluded: "I don't doubt the good intentions of the Secretary of State toward France. If someday, Americans believe . . . that their interest commands them to get involved in European affairs, I am certain that they will have the same sentiment for us as when they entered the war."³⁷

Despite the refusal of the American government to announce an official policy toward the Ruhr invasion, Washington's opposition was well known. Jusserand reported that the dominant attitude among senators and politicians relative to the rupture of the Paris reparations conference was one of sadness and apprehension. The expected massive American criticism of the French government did not develop.³⁸ Although there were numerous opponents of the French policy, Jusserand was encouraged by expressions of support from many quarters.³⁹

The French were encouraged by the change in public opinion in regard to the Ruhr occupation. Liebert reported on February 14, 1923, the shift toward support of the French and increased approval of their policy.⁴⁰ He enthusiastically reported on February 21 that public opinion had become so pro-French that the American government would do nothing

to hinder France's actions at that critical moment. Jusserand, likewise, noted as evidence of the changing American attitude that the World, usually unfavorable, was publishing articles favorable to France.⁴¹

Evidence suggests that Americans were not as opposed to the Ruhr invasion as is generally assumed. The American Legion was especially active in improving American public opinion of France's Ruhr policy.⁴² A Western Union survey of its employees revealed that the majority supported the French.⁴³ The New York Tribune also conducted a survey whose results were published in the April 24th issue, revealing that fifty-seven percent of Americans felt that the Ruhr mission was justified.⁴⁴

The fact remains, however, that the Ruhr episode further damaged French-American relations on the governmental level. Generally, the official attitude was that it was incompatible with the French reluctance to make arrangements to commence payments of the French debt to America. The French on the other hand, insulted and hurt, felt it incongruous for America to demand collection of her debts while showing leniency toward Germany.

The Ruhr invasion had a tremendous impact on the inter-allied debt controversy. Poincaré, having won a victory, lost the advantage by permitting the intrusion of Anglo-American influence in the implementation of the Dawes Plan, which was an indication of the limitation of French power. France had been borrowing money with the an-

ticipation that the loans would be repaid from reparations. Creditors at home and abroad lost confidence in the French credit and the franc fell drastically. The battle of the Ruhr brought about the battle of the franc. The defeat of Poincaré and the victory of the "cartel des gauches" in the election of 1924 resulted in a government headed by Edouard Herriot.⁴⁵

The disastrous consequences of the Ruhr invasion and the bad economic situation in France further postponed a debt settlement. On June 28, 1924, the French Minister of Finance informed the French Embassy in Washington that the time was not favorable for a resumption of talks with Washington relative to the debt settlement.⁴⁶ Paris further stated that in view of France's financial situation the longer the delay in renewing the talks the better. It was hoped that eventually the good will of the American people would result in a more favorable settlement for France. The French were, however, cognizant of the fact that an immediate accord would contribute to the rebuilding of confidence in France's credit.⁴⁷

An official survey of French public opinion relative to the inter-allied debt question revealed that after the conclusion of the Versailles Treaty the French reluctantly came to realize that the United States would never consent to total annulment. As an alternative the French demanded that debts and reparations be considered together. The survey further revealed that the French government had always

accepted the validity of their debts to the United States. The French, however, felt that since France had made heavy commercial and debt payments abroad, especially to the United States, their balance of payments had been further upset. France could only pay as she was paid.⁴⁸ Thus according to the survey, the French had largely abandoned their hope of cancellation of war debts but were still expecting better terms than any yet offered by the United States. Le Temps (January 4, 1925) argued that the United States should deal with each country individually and take into account its capacity to pay. The evidence suggests that the French fully expected eventually to pay the debt.

The Ruhr invasion had catastrophic consequences for France. Sufficient reparations were not collected to avoid a financial calamity. Furthermore, French political power on the continent was undermined. With the disaster of the Ruhr episode and the failure to gain German reparations, which they had hoped would solve their financial problems, the French government became increasingly dependent on American bankers. This situation in turn forced a measure of agreement with Germany in the interest of international economic stability.⁴⁹

At a time when France was suffering from the humiliation of failure in the Ruhr episode, the frustration of seeing Germany re-emerging as a strong economic power and a threat to French security, combined with the decline of the franc, France was denied access to American loans.

Much of the United States' attitude was expressed in Herbert Croly's words: "The most effective way to discourage French imperialism is to deny the French access to American money markets until France makes some attempt to pay the war debt and until she allows Germany a chance to recover." France's hope of remaining the leading power in Europe was over. She needed foreign financial help to overcome the severe financial crisis of 1924. When that help was not forthcoming, France was forced to accept the only alternative: the new approach to the problems of German reparations embodied in the Dawes Plan. The French accepted the inevitable change of policy toward Germany only reluctantly.⁵⁰

The Ruhr episode and the Dawes Plan were a defeat for those who wished to uphold the Versailles Treaty. France, forced to accept a policy of conciliation, would never again seriously consider coercion against Germany. The structure of European politics had been radically altered with France substantially weakened in its position in the European power structure and its economy in a crisis situation. Understandably, the Paris government was not in a mood to discuss the repayment of war debts.⁵¹

The French, accustomed to the stability of the franc, found it difficult to adjust to the inflationary waves of war and reconstruction. The French government continued to borrow heavily, anticipating that the cost would be met by reparations from Germany. Government compensation made it possible for a substantial part of French industries to re-

equip and modernize, allowing them to compete in the growing world markets. This apparent prosperity was undermined by continuous inflation and the depreciation of the franc on the foreign exchange. The lack of confidence of the rentiers resulted in a "flight of capital" accelerating the depreciation of the franc.⁵²

The long and complex battle to restore confidence in the franc was greatly hampered by political instability. The eleven ministries who came and went between March, 1924 and July, 1926 grappled unsuccessfully with the problem of the franc. Poincaré, who would ultimately effect a restoration of confidence in the franc, took office in an atmosphere of acute national crisis, evidenced by street demonstrations, and an extraordinary exhibition of xenophobia. A restoration of confidence in the franc resulted in a flow of gold to the Bank of France and an exceptional reserve position. The under-valuation of the franc at the 1926 rate permitted France to participate in the late 1920's economic boom. Overall the economic picture of the late twenties was a favorable one: rapid recovery, speeded by large government expenditures for reconstruction, continued industrialization and modernization and expansion in exports. Poincaré's stabilization of the franc helped to end inflation and wild speculation as well as to restore confidence in the franc, resulting in repatriation of funds which had taken refuge abroad. However, the Ruhr episode, the change of government, and the economic crisis dictated that the Paris government

continue to delay debt refunding talks as long as possible.⁵³

In 1924 after Coolidge's election, the French Inspector of Finances reported to the Minister of Finance that France should make an official proposal to the United States. The report advised that the procedure was important. An official delegation with sufficient powers to make an official proposal to the War Debt Funding Commission should be sent.⁵⁴ The Paris government was also influenced by reports that a spirit of hostile recrimination was developing in the United States. The French Embassy in Washington advised that the longer negotiations were postponed, the more difficult it would be to maintain cordial relations with the United States. The French were warned that President Coolidge was being pushed by public opinion to show some progress toward concluding the debt problem.⁵⁵ Likewise, the French Direction Politique warned that an aroused American public opinion would make a favorable decision increasingly difficult to achieve. It was, however, the re-imposition on the ban on loans that was most effective in persuading the French to act. Hughes, disappointed with French procrastination and with her opposition to allotting the United States a small share of German reparations as compensation for the American cost of the occupation, refused to approve a French loan request for one hundred million dollars through J. P. Morgan and Company. Finally, however, when France agreed to allow the United States a share of the reparations, the loan was

approved.⁵⁶

The American idea of an acceptable settlement was presented to Jusserand on December 1, 1924, when the French envoy called on Secretary Mellon. The French were informed that the Debt Commission would propose to Congress the British model, "with such modifications as would meet the differences in the existing economic situation of France."⁵⁷ Mellon stated that the Debt Commission was willing to make some concessions consistent with the French capacity to pay. That France had different ideas about her capacity to pay was apparent when Etienne Clementel, the Minister of Finance, submitted to the Chamber the "balance sheet of France," which did not even contain the debts owed to the United States. Clementel in turn proposed a settlement of the debts to the United States: a complete moratorium for ten years, no interest for the following ten years, and five percent for the following ninety years. The French were informed that the United States would not begin negotiations on the basis of such an unrealistic proposal. Most importantly, the French proposal included a "safeguard" clause which would provide France lower interest payments should Germany fail to remit its full quota of reparations provided under the Dawes Plan. The "safeguard" clause was totally unacceptable to the War Debt Commission since it was in direct contradiction with the frequently stated position which would not allow linking reparations with debt payments.⁵⁸

After three years of failure and frustration, Washington reimposed the loan ban. In response on May 7, 1925, Joseph Caillaux, the new Minister of Finance, proposed that the two nations should agree on some general principles as a prelude to a final agreement. Caillaux's "general principles," which envisioned a ten-year moratorium and payments extended over eighty years, were unacceptable to the War Debt Commission. Frank Kellogg, the new Secretary of State, rejected the Caillaux proposal even as a starting point for negotiations. That feelings were extremely delicate was demonstrated by Ambassador Herrick when he advised that the French government was reluctantly coming to the conclusion that there was no alternative to refunding the debt. Herrick warned that should an official French proposal be made and then rejected by the United States, irreparable damage would result in both countries.⁵⁹

While the Americans were frustrated and were becoming impatient with the lack of initiative on the part of the French in bringing the debt question to a conclusion, the French were freely expressing their bitterness and disappointment. Le Temps (July 2, 1925) forcefully expressed the current French attitude:

We don't doubt the friendship and liberal spirit of the American people and beside her self-interest should lead her to consent to conditions which correspond to France's actual possibilities to pay. Because France is scrupulous and wants to pay her obligations and because she plans to act in complete good faith as always toward other countries, she has the duty toward her creditors, as toward herself, to measure her effort by her means. The Americans and

English should not be surprised that the French are a little bitter because the inter-allied debts are imposed on France in the conditions and circumstances that could not possibly be imagined during the war. All ideas of justice and moral politics are shocked when one realizes that the sacrifices of the French for a common victory don't even deliver France from the debts contracted to assure the victory, that the blood shed and the ruins accumulated weigh less in the balance than the money due. France is being treated less generously than Germany in defeat.

Responding to American pressure, the French government acknowledged that there was no alternative to commencing negotiations. Briand discussed the situation with Ambassador Herrick and Caillaux at a luncheon meeting on June 16, 1925, at which time he insisted that France intended to refund the debt to the United States but only on terms which took cognizance of France's financial condition. Briand informed Herrick that announcements would be made at a meeting with important businessmen in Paris on July 3, 1925.⁶⁰

While the announcement was the most straightforward admission by the French government of the validity of the debt, it fell far short of the Debt Commission's hopes. Briand pledged "to send in the very near future a commission to the United States to settle the debt, naturally in such a manner as the state of French finances permits." Briand promised privately that France would not insist on linking the debt settlement with German reparations.

The Caillaux mission was a sad failure. The Livre jaune reveals that the Paris government did not intend it to result in a final settlement. In any case, the mission could not have succeeded because neither side could yet

understand the intricate political difficulties involved. Caillaux prepared a payment schedule for home consumption which was totally unacceptable to the War Debt Commission. In addition, contrary to Briand's promise, Caillaux insisted on linking reparations to war debts by insisting on the inclusion of the "safeguard" clause which would make the French payments dependent upon the Dawes Plan annuities from Germany.⁶¹

After several French proposals had been rejected, Caillaux offered to raise the level of French payments: forty million dollars annually for five years, sixty million dollars the following seven years and one hundred million dollars for the next fifty-six years. Caillaux's final payment proposal was likewise unacceptable to the Debt Commission. The French also continued to insist on the "safeguard" clause which Washington was not prepared to accept. When Secretary of the Treasury Mellon made a counter-proposal, Caillaux insisted that he must personally present the proposal to his government in Paris. Clearly the Caillaux mission was intended to placate the Americans and to strengthen the political base of the Paris government. Any agreement would not have been reached with enthusiasm in the French parliament. The American rejection of the Caillaux overture convinced many in France that the Americans were indeed materialistic and tended to strengthen the "shylock" image.⁶²

There was, however, a victory for the French. The

Debt Commission for the first time gave official recognition to the principle of capacity to pay. The commission stated on October 1, 1925, "We believe it is fully recognized by the commission that the only basis of negotiations fair to both peoples is the principle of the capacity of France to pay." The commission not only recognized the principle of "capacity to pay" but acknowledged the immediate economic difficulties of France. When Mellon proposed a temporary arrangement with France paying forty million dollars the first year to be credited on account of interest, Caillaux replied that he would have to report to his government in Paris. Since France was not anxious to make a settlement, except on French terms, the Caillaux mission accomplished more than expected. However, from the moment that Caillaux's first offer was rejected, negotiations had been little more than a formality.⁶³

There was general disappointment in Europe as well as in America that an accord was not reached. Most papers expressed disappointment and recognized that the provisional agreement was only to allow the mission to leave cordially.⁶⁴ The official reason for the failure of the Caillaux mission was misunderstanding, insufficient knowledge of English, interference by Senator Borah, and anti-French sentiments on the part of Hoover. The French delegation felt that the United States did not yet understand French economic difficulties. The fact that Caillaux was the only member of the French delegation who spoke English and that he found

Mellon's speech difficult to understand was a significant factor in the failure of the negotiations.⁶⁵ The French delegation felt that there was a chance that a compromise proposal would have been accepted had not Senator Borah put pressure on some members of the committee. The French concluded that Hoover's desire to put himself into a dominant position dictated that he oppose any proposal coming from Mellon. The French were not surprised when Hoover, considered to be anti-French, told them "France finds the medicine bitter but she will have to take it just the same."⁶⁶

French-American relations suffered because of the failure of the Caillaux mission. American interests would have been better served by the acceptance of the second offer rather than leaving the issue unsettled. First, the economic situation did not permit France to make an offer of payment substantially greater than Caillaux's final offer. The difference between the offer of sixty-two annual payments totaling six billion two hundred twenty million dollars and the Mellon-Berenger accord later signed was trivial. Second, the controversial "safeguard" clause could have been easily worked out then as well as later. Had the United States and France been willing to circumvent the "safeguard" clause by an exchange of letters in the manner in which the issue was handled in the Anglo-French debt settlement, the chances of agreement would have been greatly improved. The Debt Commission's rejection of Caillaux's

final offer because of the "safeguard" clause further convinced the French that the Americans were indeed blinded by materialism.⁶⁷

Despite the consequences of the Caillaux mission, a much more favorable atmosphere soon developed both in France and in the United States, making the prospects for a French-American debt settlement almost inevitable. First, the French government selected Henri Bérenger, the newly appointed ambassador to Washington, to head the mission to re-open negotiations. Bérenger, having served as a member of the Caillaux delegation, was familiar with the details of the previous negotiations. He spoke out in favor of abandoning the "safeguard" clause during the earlier negotiations. According to the Echo de Paris (September 30, 1925), "He spoke as a champion of an accord more like that wished by the Americans than the one by Caillaux." Most importantly, he had the authority from his government to abandon the "safeguard" clause as a necessary condition for an agreement. According to the Livre jaune, Bérenger was the first who had instructions from his government to negotiate a settlement.⁶⁸

Second, the French Embassy in Washington informed their government that it was the best possible moment, both politically and financially, to obtain a favorable settlement: politically, because Washington wanted a settlement before the opening of Congress in December, 1925, and financially, because the Americans were in a

better mood due to ever-increasing prosperity. The climate of prosperity helped the Americans to have greater sympathy for the economic crisis in France.⁶⁹ Claude Aubert advised his government that France should take advantage of the prosperous times to consolidate the debt and to stabilize the franc, concluding that it was a miracle that all had fallen in place at the same time.⁷⁰

Third, the French were aware of a widespread determination in the United States that no more loans be made until an agreement was reached. Robert LaCour-Gayet, the French financial attaché in Washington, informed the Minister of Finance in Paris that American bankers were, for the first time, in general agreement with the government that loans should be withheld from nations with outstanding debts.⁷¹

Fourth, the French were encouraged by an apparent changed attitude on the part of the American government. Secretary Mellon informed the American Foreign Relations Committee that definite action must be taken to settle all international obligations.⁷² The French Embassy informed the Minister of Finance that a new mood was visible in both the government and the American press but warned that a new refusal to accept the American proposal would bring violent attacks. Mellon and Wilson, the Secretary of the War Debt Commission, held a number of conferences during February and March, 1926 with Bérenger and LaCour-Gayet before a final agreement was reached on April 29. Despite

the desire of both to reach an agreement, the negotiations were almost broken off on several occasions. In the end, however, Bérenger obtained a favorable concession in the interest rate and smaller payments for the first five years. These concessions were made on the grounds that the deterioration of the value of the French franc had diminished France's immediate capacity to pay.⁷³

Both the American and French negotiators breathed a sigh of relief when the accord was signed. Bérenger enthusiastically expected prompt ratification by the French parliament. Unexpectedly, the franc experienced a disastrous plunge, and a hostile press campaign and parliamentary opposition made ratification doubtful. The franc was experiencing its most severe decline. Normally worth about twenty cents, it declined to a value of two cents by June.

Press hostility was expressed from almost every quarter. "The debt accord does not settle anything for us: it is servitude with hard labor and for life," protested the Presse. Le Temps (May 1, 1926) in disappointment expressed the feelings of many in France by proclaiming: "In the scales gold outweighs sacrifices. This is what international morality is worth these days." M. Jeze, professor of law at Paris stated in Le Temps (June 29, 1926) that Americans were foolish to think that France would pay for sixty-two years. Although economists knew that it was impossible, the illusion must be perpetuated since France needed ratification in order to stabilize the franc. Le

Figaro (May 1, 1926) insisted that "the opinion of our people is almost unanimous in being hostile to a pure and simple ratification of the Bérenger-Mellon agreement."

Le Figaro (May 29, 1926) concluded that the French-American controversy must be brought to an end because France would need American friendship for a long time in the future.

Parliamentary opposition concentrated on the "commercialization" provision and lack of a "safeguard" clause. The so-called commercialization clause permitted the United States to request at any time that France exchange the original bonds for marketable obligations. The commission insisted on this provision so that the United States could legally possess all rights of ownership. Naturally, the French objected because it was conceivable that these bonds might be sold in Germany. French fears were somewhat allayed when Mellon gave explicit assurances in a letter to LaCour-Gayet that the United States had no intention of selling the French obligations. Unfortunately, no further conciliatory gestures from Washington were forthcoming relative to the "safeguard" clause, for such a gesture might have placated French public opinion. M. Franklin-Bouillon, President of the Foreign Affairs committee of the Chamber of Deputies, was cheered by the majority of the Chamber when he proclaimed:

It is impossible that the world should see the spectacle that a people who have suffered such sacrifices, who saved the world, should perish under the weight of debts to its friends and allies. I am certain of this: that the government thinks as I do, and as a whole the country does.⁷⁴

It was at this point that Clemenceau, the "Tiger of France," broke a long silence on political affairs to write his now familiar letter to President Coolidge to plead for more favorable considerations on the debt issue. "Our country is not for sale, even to her friends," declared Clemenceau. Needless to say, his letter was not well received in America, especially in the Middle West.⁷⁵

Opposition to the Mellon-Bérenger agreement had mounted to an emotional pitch in France by mid-summer 1926. André Tardieu, French Minister of Commerce, accorded an interview, published in the August issue of Nation's Business and Herald Tribune (June 27, 1926), wherein he warned that America could not bind France for sixty-two years. He expressed the general French sentiment when he stated that since the war, the United States had become proud and self-righteous. With bitterness, Tardieu asserted that America possessed half the world's gold supply because she had prospered from the war while the French had paid dearly in men and materials.

Demonstrations against the agreement became frequent. Although the incidents of anti-Americanism against tourists were exaggerated in the American press, there were cases of isolated indignities against Americans. The most influential demonstration against ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger agreement was the march of twenty-five thousand crippled veterans on July 27, 1926, before the statues of Washington and Alan Seeger, which were draped in black, symbolizing

mourning for France. American reaction to this "funeral of French-American friendship" ranged from sympathy to horror. While the spokesman for the wounded veterans insisted that the parade was directed against the "vultures of international finance" rather than the United States, the distinction was difficult for Americans to make. Despite such demonstrations, the French were not generally anti-American. French opposition to ratification, however, remained almost unanimous.⁷⁶

The French opposition to the agreement must be seen in the context of the economic and political situation in France in 1926. It was in July, 1926 that the franc reached its all-time low on the international market. Much of the French reaction to the agreement was merely frustration over the bad economic situation and jealousy of American prosperity. With American tourism in France at an all-time high, the impression Americans left was not always the best.

The unstable political situation also contributed to frustration and increased opposition to the ratification agreement which would bind France to payments she would be unable to meet. In the ten months before Poincaré took office in July, 1926 eight Ministers of Finance had been unsuccessful in attempts to stabilize the franc. Thus the controversy over the Mellon-Bérenger agreement took place in an atmosphere of acute national crisis and a wave of xenophobia. Despite rapid improvement of the political situation and recovery of the franc after Poincaré took office, the chances for ratification were nonexistent.

Consequently, the agreement was not even submitted to Parliament.⁷⁷

However, events soon produced a different atmosphere. That passions so quickly subsided is evidence that French-American relations had a solid foundation. Poincaré's program witnessed a remarkable restoration of confidence in the franc. In early 1927, Poincaré made a ten million dollar payment toward retirement of the war debt as well as the annual twenty million dollar interest payment on the 1919 purchase of surplus war materials. In response, there was a partial relaxation of the State Department's ban on additional loans to France.

La France militaire (July 3, 1927) declared that Lindbergh's historic flight across the Atlantic in the Spirit of St. Louis and his reception by the French at Le Bourget did more for French-American relations than all the efforts by statesmen. According to a Paris report, Lindbergh's flight prompted Americans to deluge President Coolidge with letters asking that the French debt be annuled.⁷⁸ Surely, the spontaneous ovation of the French crowds, who had no ulterior motives, was evidence that Ambassador Herrick was correct when he said that anti-American sentiment was not as deep-rooted as pictured.⁷⁹

The support for the forthcoming visit of twenty thousand American Legionnaires in September of 1927 represented a supreme effort by the French to transcend the ill will created by the debt question. An all-out effort

was made by the government, press and businessmen to assure the Legionnaires an enjoyable and trouble-free visit. The visit was viewed as an opportunity to enhance and cement French-American friendship.

Colonel Paul Azan urged the French to use this rare opportunity to destroy false legends and to reveal the true soul of France. He continued, "Let the American Legion delegates tell what they think of us, like we did Lindbergh; this honest approach is the right one."⁸⁰

The Legion's visit went remarkably well. The only major disagreeable incidents were related to the execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeno Vanzetti on the eve of its arrival. The attack came primarily from the Left press. L'Humanité (August 27, 1927) called the Legionnaires Fascists and enemies of the working people and urged workers not to join in the festivities. In response, the government took precautions to keep radical demonstrations to a minimum. Despite a serious Communist menace, the festivity honoring the American Legion was not substantially modified. Poincaré presided over the inauguration banquet.⁸¹ According to Le Temps (September 12, 1927) many French cities requested the Legionnaires to make an official visit but time permitted visits to only six cities.

The American Legion's visit was pronounced a great success by both French and Americans. This visit opened a door to even better relations between France and the United States, declared l'Oeuvre on September 26, 1927.

It was predicted that these improved relations would result in increased American economic penetration in all the European markets. An editorial in the St. Louis Star (September 17, 1927) commented on the "enthusiastic reception being accorded General Pershing and the Legionnaires in Paris. . . . The French and Americans will come to understand each other and make it harder for politicians to bungle so badly."

The French consul at Chicago reported to Paris that most American papers emphasized that the success of the visit demonstrated that the French had never changed their sentiments toward the United States. However, lest the Paris office get an exaggerated view of the interest of Americans in the Middle West concerning the affairs in France, he concluded,

As to Chicago, this city has given little attention to the American Legion meeting; the Chicago Tribune especially was opposed to holding the convention in Paris and has not had a single editorial about it. . . . The attention of the entire city the last few weeks has been concentrated on the Tunney-Dempsey boxing match and papers have had neither the time nor the taste to be concerned with what is happening elsewhere.⁸²

Toward the end of the decade, the one large obstacle to the generally improved political and economic atmosphere in France was an explosion over the perennial tariff question. The Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act, passed September 19, 1922, to protect the expanding American industry, put the French at a great disadvantage. This act contained the highest rates in American tariff history. The ad-valorem duties

assessed on the foreign value of goods were designed to equalize the cost of American and foreign productions.

The French protested the provision which placed the value on which the tariff would be imposed not on the value of the French market but on the value of similar products manufactured in the United States. Especially galling to the French was the provision allowing les fonctionnaires (the customs bureaucrats) to establish the value of French products coming into the United States. Furthermore, these customs officials could demand to examine the exporter's books. If the French exporters refused, the Secretary of Treasury could prevent the entry of such products into the United States.⁸³ In 1925, the United States began sending agents to France to verify the application of the Fordney-McCumber Law.⁸⁴

This emotional controversy was especially important to the French who were being asked to commit themselves to a rigid schedule of debt payments. They repeatedly asked: "How can the United States ask France to make such heavy payments while the protective tariff dictates that France would have a perennial deficit of trade vis-à-vis the United States?" By 1927, the French were buying more than twice the volume from the United States as the United States was buying from France. It was incomprehensible to the French that Washington did not understand that to close her doors to French merchandise was to seal France's ability to repay the war debts.⁸⁵

In the spirit of the International Economic Conference at Geneva (May 1927) the French government made new trade agreements with Germany giving her the most favored nation status. This, along with domestic pressure, prompted the United States to re-enter discussions with France with the aim of reaching an agreement which would improve trade and relations between the two nations. In response to the high American tariff, the French had raised their tariff on certain American goods imported from the United States.⁸⁶ The United States was studying the feasibility of lowering its tariffs to allow comparative French-American prices.⁸⁷ While these trade negotiations resulted in some changes in the application of tariffs, the basic law remained unchanged. The United States continued to sell more to France and to buy less. In the end, France also accorded the United States the most favored nation status in 1927. The French concluded that "any attempt to improve the situation always ends by benefiting only America."⁸⁸

Continued emotional involvement was assured by such statements as the one made by Tardieu, printed in the August 1927 issue of the Chicago Journal of Commerce, wherein he stated that the Mellon-Bérenger agreement was as much as dead and that the Americans should be thankful for any payment they might receive from France.⁸⁹ At the August 1927 meeting of the Institute of Politics at Williamstown, the question of the inter-allied debts was the subject of several discussions. The charge was made that France was spending

a considerable sum in the United States for propaganda to influence public opinion in favor of cancellation of the debts.⁹⁰ Surprisingly, even at that time the idea current in France was that the debts would be annulled.⁹¹ Consequently, Poincaré did not attempt to secure ratification until the summer of 1929. Final ratification came on August 1, 1929, with little opposition despite the fact that the agreement remained extremely unpopular.

There were several important influences which made final ratification possible. First, more reasonable voices advised ratification because France had no real alternative. On March 31, 1928, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent the Finance Minister an analysis of the possibilities open to the French government. The report advised that the best option was ratification. The conclusion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was based upon the belief that ratification of the agreement was the only hope for a recognition that war debts and reparations were inseparable. It concluded that with the reservations attached to the accord especially in regard to Germany, the tie which France wanted to establish between payments and reparations would become a reality.⁹²

Second, German dissatisfaction with the reparations program resulted in a new series of negotiations. The subsequent Young Plan reduced the amount of reparations due from Germany and extended it over a longer period of time. The Young Plan provided for annuities to be arranged

in such a manner that France would receive sufficient sums to cover her own war debt payments. Despite many warnings from economists, most considered the present period of prosperity to be permanent. The Young Plan was conceived as a final settlement. The restoration of the franc to a convertible gold basis by Poincaré's law of 1928 led many in France to believe that a new and indefinite era of currency stability had begun. Most importantly, the Young Plan recognized that reparations and war debts were inextricably linked.⁹³

Third, continued pressure from the American government helped to persuade the French to ratify the accord. Secretary Mellon had notified the French government that he had no power to delay stock transfer unless Parliament acted by August 31, 1929, the due date for the principle of the war stocks obligations.⁹⁴

Fourth, French bitterness and disappointment had subsided sufficiently for the ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger agreement to be accepted with relatively little opposition from the press and public. No doubt the French became apathetic toward the whole issue because it had been dragged out for so long. They were tired of the debt question.⁹⁵

CONCLUSION

Most historians have condemned the American approach to the debt question. The United States was viewed as fol-

lowing a foolish, selfish and unsound economic policy which hindered the French recovery and exemplified American financial imperialism. Some, on the other hand, emphasize the uncompromising attitude of the French which angered and frustrated the Americans. In an attempt to understand the attitudes responsible for the political impasse which developed over the inter-allied debts it is not necessary to establish blame. In truth, both the Americans and the French followed an unwise course which worked to the detriment of both. The approach to the debt question can more correctly be viewed as a tragic misunderstanding.

This misunderstanding was apparent in the different attitudes toward the loans. While the French accepted the legitimacy of the loans, it was generally felt that France had paid sufficiently in terms of suffering and physical destruction. Consequently, to the French mind, justice demanded that the loans should be at least partially cancelled. The French could never comprehend the American mentality which demanded full payment of the loans without any compensation for the tremendous price that France had already paid. The French rebelled at what they viewed as injustice. They felt that the Germans were being shown more compassion than the French despite their sacrifices. It was felt that France was being sacrificed to the economic and political interest of her allies. This situation was especially difficult to accept since it was believed that the United States had prospered at the expense of the French.

The inability of the French to understand the American mentality resulted in many mistakes in their approach to the debt question. Pursuit of the only alternative which the French government believed would guarantee their security antagonized the United States and, for a time, alienated the two peoples. This estrangement was tragic because the United States was the only nation who could help the French. The Americans were the only people who had any real sympathy and friendship for the French. As the French became increasingly dependent on the United States government and American bankers, the consequent resentment and frustration led them to increase their expressions of disappointment and bitterness toward the Americans.

However, while the French were voicing their hurt, there remained a general realization of their need for American sympathy; they wanted American friendship. Throughout the course of this highly emotional and volatile controversy, there remained a solid foundation for friendship with the United States and genuine admiration for Americans. This fundamental friendship was demonstrated by the rapidity with which most of the hurt and disappointment was forgotten, the renewed good will engendered by the Lindbergh flight, the outstanding reception of the American Legionnaires, and the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

FOOTNOTES

¹Ministère des Affaires Etrangères: Direction des affaires politiques et commerciales. Series B. Carton 14: 226:81-86.

²Ibid., 88.

³Ibid., 108-112.

⁴Ibid., 115-116.

⁵M. des A. E. Finance - Dettes interalliées. Series B. Carton 14:227: 118-120.

⁶Ibid., 234:157-163.

⁷Tom Kemp, "The French Economy under the Franc Poincaré," p. 67. John C. Cairns, Contemporary France, (New York: New Viewpoints, 1978).

⁸Harold G. Moulton and Leo Pasvolsky, War Debts and World Prosperity, (New York, 1932), pp. 418-419.

⁹Kemp, pp. 68-71.

¹⁰Stephen A. Schuker, The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan, (University of North Carolina, 1976), pp. 20-28.

¹¹Ibid, p. 285.

¹²Ibid., p. 387-91.

¹³Moulton, p. 49-57.

¹⁴Benjamin B. Rhodes, "Reassessing 'Uncle Shylock': The U. S. and the French War Debt, 1917-1929," The Journal of American History, LV, (1969) 789-790.

¹⁵M. des A. E. Finance-Dettes Interalliées, 227:41-42.

¹⁶M. des A. E., 228:32.

¹⁷226:88.

¹⁸227:48-49.

¹⁹229:9.

²⁰228:76-77.

²¹228:65.

²²228:102.

²³228:32.

²⁴231:163.

²⁵232:139-146.

²⁶228:173.

²⁷L'Avenir, June 10, 1926 and an English translation in European Economic and Political Survey, September 30, 1926.

²⁸Correspondence relative au Livre jaune. 246:B 14:29.

²⁹230:117.

³⁰230:182.

³¹246:B 14.

³²230:215.

³³232:60.

³⁴232:62.

³⁵Maurice Baumont, La Faillite de la paix (1918-1939), (Paris, 1967), 275.

³⁶Ministère des affaires étrangères, Documents diplomatiques, Le Traité de Versailles (1 novembre 1922-31 décembre 1929), 98-99. Hereafter cited as M. des A. E.

³⁷Ibid., 95-6.

³⁸Ibid., 183.

³⁹Ibid., 140.

⁴⁰Ibid., 113.

⁴¹Ibid., 70.

⁴²Ibid., 113.

⁴³Ibid., 156.

⁴⁴Ibid., 50, 201, 202.

⁴⁵Schuker, 390.

⁴⁶M. des A. E. 233:27.

⁴⁷233:27.

⁴⁸234:154.

⁴⁹Schuker, p. 390.

⁵⁰234:157-160.

⁵¹234:163.

⁵²Kemp, pp. 67-68.

⁵³Le Temps, January 4, 1925.

⁵⁴236:23.

⁵⁵236:175-79.

⁵⁶Rhodes, p. 394.

⁵⁷234:43-106.

⁵⁸237:1-75.

⁵⁹Le Petit parisien, July 4, 1925.

⁶⁰237:17.

⁶¹246:B14

⁶²:237:136.

⁶³238:62-3.

⁶⁴240:73.

⁶⁵238:18.

⁶⁶238:62-63.

⁶⁷238:101.

⁶⁸246:B.

⁶⁹238:109-114.

⁷⁰238:114.

⁷¹238:60.

⁷²238:165.

⁷³238:165.

⁷⁴New York Times, June 8, 1926.

⁷⁵New York Herald, August 6, 1926.

⁷⁶250:100.

⁷⁷Rhodes, p. 802.

⁷⁸290:2.

⁷⁹290:1.

⁸⁰290:3.

⁸¹290:9.

⁸²287:3.

⁸³182:70-71.

⁸⁴182:213.

⁸⁵182:209.

⁸⁶182:209.

⁸⁷182:213.

⁸⁸182:222.

⁸⁹244:1.

⁹⁰244:3.

⁹¹244:7.

⁹²244:90.

⁹³Moulton, pp. 378-391.

⁹⁴244:90.

⁹⁵Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales, pp. 346-353 (Paris: Hachette, 1957).

CHAPTER V

THE KELLOGG-BRIAND PACT

In our sophisticated and complex age of diplomacy, which has witnessed the failure of numerous peace efforts, it is easy to dismiss cynically the Kellogg-Briand Pact as "an international kiss": the product of a naive search for peace. It was, however, one of the most significant events, relative to French-American relations, of the decade. Furthermore, it was the only departure from the dull diplomacy which characterized the decade of the 1920s.

Although France gave the impression of being militarist, she wanted peace above all else. To the French mind, disarmament of any kind was impossible until the problem of security had been solved. Americans had difficulty understanding that the French demand for a large military force and for a system of alliances was the result of an inordinate desire for peace. This decade has been accurately defined as the "search for peace."¹

From the standpoint of a positive effect on United States' opinion in her behalf, the French initiative which led to the Kellogg-Briand Pact was perhaps the most salutary endeavor of the decade. Although the utopian idealism behind the idea was not French, it was seized by the French as an opportunity to lead America into greater involvement in

European affairs, France could never have led the United States to a closer association with Europe without the encouragement and assistance of many Americans. It is also apparent that France had learned something in her ten years of dealing with the Americans as shown by more adroit handling of American public opinion.

In an atmosphere of disillusionment resulting from the futility of the Great War, the ineffectiveness of the subsequent Versailles peace settlement and the bitterness caused by the inter-allied debt discussions, the almost universal idealistic desire for peace set in motion a series of events which led to the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The creation of the pact, signed by fifteen nations on August 24, 1928 and ultimately signed by sixty-two nations, was the result of the efforts of millions who had a utopian dream of a world free from the threat of war.

The search for peace found expression in two general lines of diplomacy - treaties for avoidance of war and treaties for disarmament. The latter led to the Washington Conference which was harmful to French-American relations. The Washington Conference recognized Italy's claim to naval parity with France but France maintained that the United States did not understand her Mediterranean position. Not only was the Washington Conference ineffective, but it took years to soothe wounded French pride. For this reason, the French refused to attend the Geneva disarmament conference which met in a three power naval conference from June 20 to

August 4, 1927, in an effort to reach an agreement on cruisers, destroyers and submarines. The conference failed to reach an agreement. Consequently, it became apparent to most that disarmament was impossible and peace would have to be achieved by some other means.²

Therefore, it came to be generally accepted that the most effective means of achieving peace would be by treaties which would compel nations to avoid war. One consequence of the futile Geneva naval disarmament conference was the increased belief that peace would be maintained not by limiting arms but rather by abolishing war completely.³ The ultimate conclusion of this line of diplomacy was the attempt to outlaw war.

The new terms coined by the diplomats during the decade are indicative of the trend toward a universal search for peace. The diplomacy of the 1920s created "non-aggression treaties," "pacts of guarantees," pledges of "perpetual friendship" and protocols rather than alliances. To the minds of most "alliances" were associated with war. While peace was on the lips of people all over the world, it was in France that the demands for peace were the most ardent. The threat of another holocaust was very real to the French. The organized peace movement was larger in both the United States and England, but the desire for peace was no less urgent for France, who had no fewer than thirty-eight peace organizations, than in either of those two nations. The Ligue des droits de l'homme was the largest and most im-

portant peace organization with a membership of one hundred twenty thousand and the Herriot Socialist political party was the most intensely peaceminded of the French political groups.⁴

Since France had been abandoned by the United States and England and left with the responsibility of enforcing the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, she, understandably, rejected any proposal of further arms limitations. While the French maintained a large standing army, it was intended for use only to guarantee her security. France did also attempt to further guarantee security through diplomatic means. This quest for security was vital to her survival, and led the French to experiment at times with rapprochement with Germany and at other times with making the League of Nations an alliance against the resurgence of German power and ultimately a new system of alliances.

Furthermore, the French "Pactomania" was an expression of a desire to sign a promise with anyone to protect la patrie against a possible attack from Germany.⁵ Since France already had treaties with Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia, the next logical place to seek new allies was the Balkans. Thus Briand set out to secure a treaty with Rumania and Yugoslavia. Briand anticipated the Kellogg-Briand Pact by signing treaties of "constant peace and perpetual friendship" with both Rumania and Yugoslavia. Thus a treaty to disavow war was signed between France and

these Balkan states.⁶

However, the American movement to disavow war is generally credited to Salmon O. Levinson. The proposal for nations of the world to band together in a pack pledging never to go to war and to regard warring nations as international outlaws was contained in Levinson's "A Plan to Outlaw War." Levinson gained the support of Senator Borah who later became known as the "godfather" of the idea. Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University and of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, persistently spoke out in support of the proposal to outlaw war. It was, however, Professor James T. Shotwell, a faculty member at Columbia, who provided the final impetus leading to an articulation of the French proposal. Contrary to Borah, who was an isolationist, both Butler and Shotwell supported the League and desired rapprochement with Europe.

Briand, one of the most brilliant statesmen of his generation, never ceased his search for allies who could be useful to French security. He was depressed over the misunderstanding in the United States of France's alleged militarism. Briand, the shrewd diplomat, quickly recognized an unusual opportunity when on March 22, 1927, Professor Shotwell was ushered into his office. When Shotwell proposed to Briand that the best way to erase American suspicion of French militarism would be to propose a treaty between France and the United States renouncing war as an instrument

of national policy, the French-American treaty of Perpetual Friendship was about to expire. Briand saw this as a possible means of involving the United States in a series of alliances. Briand and Shotwell agreed that the Foreign Minister should address a message to the American people on April 6, 1927, the tenth anniversary of the American entry into the war, announcing France's willingness to sign a pact renouncing war with the United States. The message was not sent through regular channels but in a letter addressed directly to the American people. This message, a breach of diplomacy, greatly annoyed both President Coolidge and the new Secretary of State, Frank B. Kellogg.⁷

To understand the reaction in Washington to Briand's message, it must be remembered that the Coolidge administration was already extremely unhappy because France had refused to participate in the Geneva Conference. Further, in the spring of 1927 the debt question had reached an impasse since the Chamber of Deputies' commission on finance had indefinitely shelved ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger debt funding agreement. Thus the mood in Washington was not too favorable toward France when Ambassador Myron T. Herrick advised Washington that the debt settlement would not be ratified until after the 1928 elections. The essence of Washington's response to Briand's proposed treaty was in the admonition that France would have done better to have attended the disarmament conference.⁸

While defending France's failure to attend the Geneva

Naval Conference, Briand's message appealed to the "common inspiration and identity of aims which exist between France and the United States" to the end that France and the United States would be leaders in maintaining world peace. Briand affirmed that France stood ready publicly to "subscribe with the United States to any mutual engagement tending" both to outlaw war and to renounce war as an instrument of public policy. The message composed by Professor Shotwell and released by Briand provoked very little response in the United States.⁹

What were Briand's aims in addressing this message to the American nation? First, Briand sought the interests of France in her struggle for survival. To Briand, peace and French security were almost identical issues. Since Briand considered that the ideas were included in the League of Nations charter, the most important need was to get the United States to agree to these principles. Second, such an agreement between France and the United States would be of value to France's prestige among the nations of Europe. Third, should the United States agree to these principles, she would have announced her neutrality in the event of war between France and any other nation. Fourth, Briand, along with most Frenchmen, believed that the United States owed such an alliance to France. While one can never know all Briand had in mind the evidence seems to suggest that he intended it to be much more than a ploy to get the United States into a negative treaty with France.

The Briand proposal received little notice or publicity until April 25, 1927, when Butler wrote a letter to the New York Times expressing regret that Briand's message to the American nation, indicating that France was ready to sign a treaty with the United States condemning war forever, had received so little attention. A flood of letters and articles followed, endorsing the idea. A few cautioned against such a treaty, fearing it could lead to United States involvement with the League. The initial interest appeared to die but the New York Times took the initiative in a campaign to outlaw war.¹⁰

On June 8 the Times published an article about Herrick's visit to the State Department to present a pact between France and the United States. The American government, still annoyed because France had refused to participate in the Geneva disarmament conference, replied that the time was inopportune and that the idea was unconstitutional. But with the active support of Borah, steady pressure was applied for American participation. By the end of 1927, petitions bearing more than two million signatures had been received in Washington. The proposal had united the American peace movement, both pro and anti-League factions, and public lobbying for the pact was even stronger than Harding had encountered before the Washington Conference.¹¹

While the State Department maintained a studied silence, the imagination of the American public was soon stirred to action by the news media. The French Embassy

in Washington reported that numerous American newspapers were encouraging Washington to take favorable action on Briand's proposal.¹² On September 21, 1927 the American Legion adopted a resolution in support of the proposition to outlaw war.¹³ The French Embassy concluded that this revolutionary idea pleased the imagination of the American people and was destined to play an important role in future international affairs.¹⁴ The French were especially encouraged by the fact that for the first time a proposition coming from France was well received by the Midwest: Americans who had no direct contact with Europe.¹⁵

In a speech Briand suggested that a new treaty be signed on February 6, 1928, the anniversary of the first treaty with the United States, signed in 1776. He stated that he looked forward to a future in which joint confidence, arbitration and conciliation would guide French-American relations. Paul Claudel, French ambassador in Washington, reported to Briand that his speech was well received by the American public and that numerous speeches were being heard supporting the French Foreign Minister's ideas.¹⁶

Kellogg was furious with Briand because he had successfully marshalled the American peace movement in support of the anti-war proposition. Enormous pressure was being applied to the Washington government to sign the agreement with France. However, in his anger and embarrassment, Kellogg found a way to outwit the French Foreign Minister; and proposed to Briand a multi-national treaty

renouncing war. Assistant Secretary William R. Castle expressed the prevailing feeling in Washington when he stated that the tide had been turned and that Briand was now out on a limb.¹⁷

Now it was Briand's turn to be embarrassed. Briand informed the embassy in Washington of some difficulties in Kellogg's proposal to enlarge the pact to include all nations. First, there was the possibility that all nations would not accept the treaty. Second, France had envisioned a French-American treaty of reciprocal renunciation of all war as an instrument of national policy while Kellogg's proposal would only outlaw aggressive war. Third, France saw a great difficulty relative to her obligation to the League of Nations. Finally, Briand concluded that a multinational pact renouncing war must be signed by all nations to be of real value.¹⁸

On January 19, 1928 Philippe Berthelot informed the French Embassy that France found the proposal for a multinational pact to be impossible since it would prevent even the United States from aiding France against an aggressor.¹⁹ In response to a communication from Kellogg on January 11, 1928 Berthelot affirmed France's desire to associate herself with any declaration condemning war as a crime and instituting international sanctions which would prevent it. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was concerned, however, that the pact would impose obligations supplanting France's obligations to the League of Nations and the Locarno Pact.²⁰ The

French position was unequivocal. The treaty could not in any way be incompatible with anterior agreements: that is, it would not affect France's obligations to the League of Nations or other treaties still in effect.

The Journal des débats registered its opposition to the proposed pact when it reminded its readers that the outlawing of war was the basis of the Wilsonian idea which had led to the creation of the League of Nations and that Kellogg's idea of a multi-national pact would endanger the League. Once again an outburst of anger came from much of the French press. Some expressions of anger were quite strong, accusing Coolidge of "hypocrisy" and "duplicity" and calling Kellogg "une véritable idiotie" and the "saboteur" of the League.²¹

The French Embassy continuously advised the French press of the adverse effect such attacks were having on French-American relations. Claudel asked what good such inane words and tone of superiority would do for the French cause. The ambassador expressed his discouragement in his attempt to make Americans love and understand France only to see his efforts compromised by "this critical and ignorant spirit, so far-reaching in France." Further, Briand was warned that an unfavorable reception of the American proposal would result in renewed pressure for the ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger agreement which would make favorable negotiations impossible on either question.²²

While Claudel, the French ambassador, was officially attempting to scuttle the anti-war negotiations, he was

advising Briand that France should take every precaution not to alienate America. Any support, moral or otherwise, from the United States was of immense importance to France.²³ France should do everything possible to secure that support. However, in a conversation with Castle, Claudel advised that the world was not sufficiently advanced to make a treaty of this nature acceptable. It was agreed by Castle and Claudel that while a multi-national treaty would be meaningless, it would do no harm and public opinion would be appeased. Claudel proposed an arbitration pact between France and the United States to be signed on the 150th anniversary of the first treaty signed between the two nations.²⁴

Two days later the New York Times reported that the State Department had accepted the idea of an arbitration treaty with France as a renegotiation of the Root treaty. Kellogg envisioned the arbitration treaty serving as a model for similar treaties with other nations. The arbitration treaty was to contain a statement in the preamble giving expression to Briand's anti-war proposal.²⁵ However, some in Washington feared that such a treaty would give France a free hand in Europe once she had assurance that the United States would not impose restraints in the future.

The French attempted to make the most of the arbitration treaty. Briand exaggerated the importance of the bilateral arbitration treaty in an effort to head off the movement for a multi-national treaty. The State Department, well aware of Briand's attempt to play up the arbitration

treaty, was not surprised when Briand insisted that the preamble contain the essentials of the proposed multinational treaty.²⁶

The arbitration treaty was signed in Washington on the anniversary of the French-American alliance of 1778 accompanied by an impressive ceremony. Claudel, the French signatory, attempted to make it appear like a treaty to outlaw war. "The first treaty gave a start to a new nation: the second treaty gives the start to a new idea. Outlawing of war is a specifically American idea."²⁷

An impressive ceremony was sponsored by the two most important French-American societies: la Fédération de l'Alliance Française and the American Society of the French Legion of Honor. During the evening festivities at the New York Waldorf-Astoria Claudel, in praise of the arbitration treaty, said that "No negotiations were ever concluded in a more open light and in a freer air, an air so free and so fresh that it makes old diplomacy quiver."²⁸ The French ambassador later reported to Briand that the United States press greatly supported the Friendship Pact and concluded that it had a great psychological impact.²⁹ In a following report to Briand, Claudel was enthusiastic that both the American press and Washington were receiving a tremendous number of favorable letters from the American people.³⁰

In Paris, the festivities included a luncheon at which time the French-American Alliance of 1778 was taken out of the archives of the Quai d'Orsay and read by Briand

and Ambassador Herrick. Briand expressed great enthusiasm for future French-American relations and vowed that the spirit of the arbitration treaty would never die.³¹

However, the futility of the efforts which culminated in the arbitration treaty were more apparent when Kellogg declared in anger that the treaty "is not intended to take the place of the Briand proposal for an antiwar treaty."³² The French soon learned that Kellogg had come to believe that the "multilateral treaty really would be a great gift to the world" and that he intended to pursue the project with all seriousness.³³

After months of discussions and exchange of notes between Briand and Kellogg without much success, some had concluded that the chances of signing an antiwar treaty were slight. However, as March 1928 drew to a close, Briand, the "man of peace," concluded that he could not be known as the one who refused to sign a treaty to outlaw war. Briand considered that he must accept Kellogg's proposal for a multilateral antiwar treaty since reservations could be added. On March 30, 1928 Claudel presented Briand's proposal which no longer insisted on an unconditional outlawing of war. Briand insisted on three reservations: (1) that the treaty would be universal, (2) a breach of the treaty would release the signatories, (3) the treaty would not prohibit the right of self-defense.³⁴ Briand had instructed Claudel in a note on March 29, 1928 that the general thrust must be not to antagonize the United States. America should

be assured that France was ready to cooperate with Washington to insure the solidarity of the nations in the cause of peace. Briand emphasized that the pact was largely theoretical as there was little possibility of war with the United States. France must, however, insist upon the importance of anterior promises and the right of legitimate defense.³⁵

Claudel's reports to Briand during the following months assured the Paris government of the continued support of the antiwar treaty by the American public and the news media. He was especially interested in two important observations made by Borah in an interview with the New York Times on March 25, 1928. (1) One important result would engage the United States in common action against a nation guilty of a flagrant violation of outlawed war. The United States reserved the right to decide if the treaty was violated and the United States would not remain inactive in case of the violation of a treaty the United States had signed. (2) The obligation of the signers of the League Pact could easily be protected by enlarging the multilateral pact to include nations most susceptible to aggression, such as Belgium. Claudel found it most interesting that Borah, the isolationist, had rallied to the thesis which would involve the United States with Europe in maintaining world peace and was most hopeful that France would recognize the sincerity and value of the American gesture.³⁶ Equally interesting to the French was Coolidge's Memorial Day speech at Gettysburg in which he declared that all war, wherever in

the world, was an act damaging to American interests.³⁷

It is generally assumed that Briand's reluctance to negotiate a multilateral treaty was due to his embarrassment when Kellogg turned the tables on him. There was likewise a great deal of reticence and outright opposition to the pact expressed by the French press. The Journal des débats reminded its readers that the outlawing of war was the basis of the League of Nations. The Quotidien (January 14, 1928) reasoned that Washington possessed a subtle art of scrambling simple things and had complicated a simple proposal by expanding it to include other nations, and thus had endangered the League. The Petit bleu (March 30, 1928) also expressed fear that the high ideals would only end in destroying the League. Consequently, Briand was reluctant to negotiate a multilateral treaty due to the opposition at home.

The French press which supported the multilateral treaty did so only reluctantly. Even le Temps (January 5, 1928) which usually took the position of the government, included the text of Kellogg's proposal of December 28, 1927 and commented that a careful reading of this document revealed that reservations were necessary. However, le Temps found value in the treaty and concluded that, most importantly, for the first time, and at French initiative, the United States would be solidly with the powers which had established themselves as guardians of the peace. Nevertheless the comprehensive French response to the Kellogg proposal for a multinational treaty was unequivocal: the treaty could not

be in any way incompatible with anterior agreements; that is, it could not affect France's obligations to the League of Nations or other treaties still in effect.³⁸

Beyond the demand that the treaty protect French security by respecting her prior treaties, the attitude was one of condescension. In general, the French press, in a tone of superiority, made fun of the treaty but concluded that France should sign it since it could do no harm. French realism dictated that France had no alternative to negotiating a treaty even though nothing would be accomplished. French cynicism was expressed by l'Echo de Paris which said that some kept their dreams of attracting America in a European guarantee treaty, even though it was contrary to the lessons of the past ten years. "We would be quickly back in the trouble and controversy from which we are only now exiting with great effort and distress."³⁹

Once negotiations were underway, the French ambassador, cognizant of the press' role in the disastrous Washington Conference, communicated some advice to Briand in a "très confidentiel" message. Too much publicity was being given to the early exchange of letters. Claudel suggested that Briand's compte-rendus to the press were resulting in erroneous versions of negotiations with attendant harsh reactions on the part of the French press. The ambassador reiterated the harmful role of the French press, which was often misquoted in the United States. He added, "It would be preferable if press information were given only

at the beginning and end of negotiations. When each phase is noted problems result, paralyze negotiations and cause misunderstandings."⁴⁰

The French government was now resigned to the fact that there was no alternative to a multinational antiwar treaty. The correspondence between Paris and the French Embassy in Washington demonstrates, however, that their approach to the proposed treaty was more than a reaction to the embarrassing position in which Kellogg had placed Briand. While insisting on some reservations protecting the interest of France, the instructions were to follow American suggestions without appearing to initiate anything. On June 11 Berthelot instructed Claudel that it was the right of the American government to prepare, under its own responsibility, a conciliatory project - reconciling Kellogg's views with those of the different governments. "In no way should we compromise solidarity," concluded Berthelot.⁴¹ In short, the French had relinquished the initiative to the United States.

The French later came to support the multinational treaty and expressed real enthusiasm and anticipation for the conclusion of the agreement. Claudel reported to Briand on June 25, 1928 that despite President Coolidge's declaration in a press conference that the principle of renunciation of war was unconstitutional since it took away from the Senate and House the legal right given them by the constitution, the idea of outlawing war could not be ignored

because it had become an integral part of the American sentiment. Claudel concluded that it would be unfair not to recognize the powerful influence of Borah, the "godfather," who made himself the champion of the idea to outlaw war, or to forget Butler's eloquent speeches.⁴²

Ambassador Claudel, likewise, found some advantages that France had already received from the period of negotiations. First, pride in seeing an American idea adopted by European statesmen improved America's attitude toward France. Second, Protestant opinion in the South and West, formerly anti-French, had responded to this French initiative with growing ardor and increased numbers. Third, every American citizen, from coast to coast, was aware of the treaty and was aware that it was initiated by France. Fourth, the increased good will had eased the strain caused by the debt question and led to lifting the embargo on loans.⁴³

The French were careful to obtain all the benefits possible from the antiwar treaty. They were extremely pleased that Kellogg had suggested that the treaty be signed in Paris. However, they were concerned when it was revealed that Kellogg's presence at the signing of the treaty was in doubt.

Berthelot wrote the French ambassador in Washington:

Use all arguments, psychology and politics the most apt to influence him personally showing how much his absence would cost in significance to be lost at the signing ceremonies. Public opinion needs his witness, with all the sympathy and admiration his presence inspires.⁴⁴

Since Kellogg had chosen Paris for the signing, to affirm the French-American collaboration, he should be there when it came to fruition, concluded Berthelot.

France recognized fully her good fortune in being a friend of the United States. Despite bad experiences, a bad attitude and the current low ebb of French-American relations due to the debt question, France had never given up hope of involving the United States in her security. The favorable reception of the pact by France did appear to be resulting in a break in tensions. The loan embargo was lifted on January 14, 1928, a clear sign of a desire for rapprochement to and moral support for France.

The French embassy commented on the solid base of sympathy and good will France enjoyed in America in spite of her "maladresse." Since no one could go to war without the good will or neutrality of the United States, it made sense to associate with them in any initiative to maintain peace and accord between nations and to do anything possible to bring the United States out of isolation. Far from diminishing the value of or disparaging America's motives, French interests dictated that she cultivate the foundation of good will among Americans. Parenthetically, Claudel added that he was sure the French press would not follow his advice - "Paris wasn't built in a day" - but France should learn to take advantage of opportunities. The ambassador further advised that the superior tone of the French press demanding radical changes in America led Americans to

wonder if France was not expecting debt renunciation on a silver platter.⁴⁵

England provided the opportunity for French fears to be allayed without further articulation on France's part. The English who had now been approached on the pact wanted a reserve clause forbidding intervention in areas of the world where English interests were involved. Though the United States said nothing officially at this point, the Monroe Doctrine would demand the same clarification. American press opinion recognized that each nation must be allowed to protect its own vital interests. These reserve clauses could appear in appendix documents or in the treaty without violating the principle. The French desire to maintain the old treaties would apparently be recognized.⁴⁶

Thus the Kellogg-Briand Pact, officially called the Pact of Paris, the product of a naive and idealistic enthusiasm for peace and some moments of shrewd diplomacy, was signed by fourteen nations in Paris on August 27, 1928. The substance of the treaty was contained in two articles:

(1) The high contracting parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another;

(2) The high contracting parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.⁴⁷

The pact was signed by diplomats most of whom were

fully cognizant of the futility of their efforts. The "international kiss" was predestined to be ineffective by virtue of the reservations demanded by each nation. Further, the pact, by not defining "legitimate defense" or "war of aggression," now permitted nations to fight wars under justification of self-defense or formal declarations of war.⁴⁸

After the experiences of the Versailles Treaty, the French government was somewhat apprehensive over the ratification of the treaty by the United States Senate. The French ambassador reported on December 11, 1928 that the dominant impression was that the treaty would be easily ratified. There was, however, some opposition by a vocal minority. The French government was not disturbed by the criticism of the Hearst press and the Chicago Tribune. Nor was Paris overly concerned when politicians such as Henry Cabot Lodge and Senator Reed were outspoken about their fear that the treaty would lead the United States to involvement in European affairs and that it would destroy the force of the Monroe Doctrine.⁴⁹ The French, along with most Americans, expected the Senate to ratify the treaty, especially with Senator Borah pushing for its approval. The French felt it rather curious to see Borah assuming this new role. On all sides organizations, especially feminist and religious, applied pressure on the State Department and the White House to assure ratification before the Senate recessed. It was necessary to employ

an extra secretary to answer calls and letters received at the White House. But the Senate did not ratify.

When the debate on the Kellogg-Briand Pact was resumed in the Senate on January 3, 1929, it took precedence over all else. The debate, mostly of academic nature, exhibited little animosity. The French ambassador commented that Borah had taken the place of Bryan, man of the West, on the pacific and idealistic platform which responded to the sentiments of a large part of the population.

The final vote of eighty-five to one for ratification reflected the personal intervention of the President, the Senate Leader and the Secretary of State but especially the irresistible pressure of public opinion. The French ambassador told Briand that his proposal had crystallized in the spirits of a large part of the American population in which "naive idealism" merited respect, if only by force of numbers. This insistence forced the senators to vote for the treaty.⁵⁰

However, Claudel warned his government that ratification would not result in the rapprochement of the United States with the League of Nations or the Court of Justice. If rapprochement came, it would be by other means, concluded the ambassador.⁵¹ As Claudel advised, the French were destined to be disappointed that the Pact of Paris did not redress the absence of the United States from the League of Nations.

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

France, one of the victors in the Great War, was in an extremely vulnerable position. Germany, the vanquished neighbor across the Rhine, with twice the population of France and an enormous industrial capacity, was a constant threat to France. The French depended upon their army and post-war military alliances for security since both England and the United States had withdrawn from responsibility in providing for French security. Understandably, Briand took advantage of the first reasonable opportunity to involve the United States in French security.

Unfortunately, the United States State Department thought that Briand's proposal of a Pact of Perpetual Friendship was intended only to embroil the United States in European rivalries. Briand and the well-organized and vocal American peace movement used each other to accomplish their aims. Briand used the peace movement to pressure the State Department to agree to the Pact of Perpetual Friendship. The peace movement used Briand, the popular "man of peace" and holder of the Nobel Peace Prize, to force a disinterested State Department into action.

After months of inaction, pressure from the peace advocates forced the stubborn Kellogg into action. Shrewdly, Kellogg, who had been both angered and embarrassed by Briand's original proposal, offered a multilateral treaty for renunciation of war. Briand, in turn, was embarrassed because he did not want a multilateral treaty which stood

to destroy anterior treaties. After an attempt to disentangle himself from the whole affair, Briand agreed to the multilateral treaty, but with reservations: self-defense and respect for prior agreements. For the peace movement, the signing of the Pact of Paris was the apex of efforts of an enthusiastic, if naive, determination that the holocaust of the "great war" would never be repeated. The Kellogg-Briand Pact was a demonstration of both desperation and hope: France's desperate search for security and genuine hope of the peace advocates that civilized man could rise above the recent exercise in self-destruction.

The world was in the mood for peace. Nevertheless, the aims of both Briand and the peace advocates were not to be realized. However, despite the ineffectiveness of the treaty there were some definite consequences.

First, the entire episode was indicative of the political naiveté of the majority of the population of both France and the United States, including most of the leaders. The pact satisfied those - and there are always many of them - who believed that diplomatic parchment could do the work of blood and iron in guaranteeing national security. This naive search for security permitted Briand to manipulate the American peace movement and Kellogg to use the peace enthusiasts in both France and the United States to achieve his goal of a multilateral pact. Likewise the whole affair revealed a desperate and unintelligent search for peace: in the United States simply to avoid war and in France to provide for her security.

Second, the events which culminated in the Kellogg-Briand Pact demonstrated that a foundation of friendship and good will continued to exist between the two nations despite numerous serious conflicts of national interest.

Third, the signing of the treaty improved French-American relations at a time when due to the debate over the repayment of war debts, cooperation was at an all-time low. The treaty was hailed as the beginning of an admirable relationship between the two nations. Even though this ideal was not achieved, the Kellogg-Briand Pact was the most significant event leading to a period of improved understanding.

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert H. Ferrell, Peace in Their Time (New Haven, 1952), p. 13.

²René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 41-3.

³Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955), p. 707.

⁴Ferrell, pp. 16-17.

⁵Robert H. Ferrell, American Diplomacy (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1969), p. 564.

⁶Ferrell, Peace in Their Time, pp. 52-63.

⁷Bailey, pp. 707-9.

⁸Ministère des Affaires-Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques: La pacte Briand-Kellogg, 65_119. Hereafter cited as M. des A. E.

⁹Ibid., 112.

¹⁰Ibid., 119.

¹¹Ibid., 117.

¹²Ibid., 120.

¹³Ibid., 123.

¹⁴Ibid., 123-138.

¹⁵Ibid., 146.

¹⁶Ibid., 66:1-4.

¹⁷Ferrell, American Diplomacy, p. 566.

¹⁸M. des A. E., 66:79-81.

¹⁹Ibid., 113-114.

²⁰Ibid., 115-120.

²¹Ibid., 149-153.

²²Ibid., 153.

²³Ibid., 149.

²⁴Ferrell, Peace in Their Time, pp. 132-3.

- ²⁵New York Times, December 18, 1927.
- ²⁶M. des A. E., 66:150.
- ²⁷New York Times, February 7, 1928.
- ²⁸Ibid.
- ²⁹M. des A. E., 67:43-50.
- ³⁰Ibid., 90-92.
- ³¹New York Times, February 9, 1928.
- ³²Ibid., February 12, 1928.
- ³³Ferrell, Peace in Their Time, p. 165.
- ³⁴M. des A. E., 67:104.
- ³⁵Ibid., 105-112.
- ³⁶Ibid., 134-6.
- ³⁷Ibid., 68:130.
- ³⁸Le Temps, January 9, 1928.
- ³⁹M. des A. E., 69:23-9.
- ⁴⁰Ibid., 66:128-134.
- ⁴¹Ibid., 68:134.
- ⁴²Ibid., 69:29.
- ⁴³Ibid., 29.
- ⁴⁴Ibid., 58-66.
- ⁴⁵Ibid., 1-127.
- ⁴⁶Ibid., 70:12.
- ⁴⁷Ferrell, American Diplomacy, p. 567.
- ⁴⁸Pierre Renouvin, Histoire des relations internationales (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1957), p. 312.
- ⁴⁹M. des A. E., 70:1.
- ⁵⁰Ibid., 25.
- ⁵¹Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER VI

FRENCH EFFORTS AT INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

Before the war, France had been one of the most powerful nations in the world; firmly established as a colonial and continental power. The French had a keen sense of their civilizing mission in the world. This sense of power and mission was part and parcel of the French self-concept. France believed in the cultural superiority of the French civilization. Consequently, she felt little need to impress anyone. The world would come to France; France would not go to the world.

Accordingly, France was slow in recognizing the importance of the United States. Moreover, France was oriented politically toward Europe while America had remained on the periphery of her attention. The actions of President Roosevelt at Algeiras in 1906 symbolized a new cooperation which was to reach its apex during the Great War.

By the close of the war, France occupied a place of primary importance in American thought. Ties with France, which had always been good, were stronger than ever before. America had come to the assistance of France and together they had triumphed in what was regarded as a conflict for basic human rights. France, who had suffered devastating losses in human lives and property, had the sympathy and

good will of the American people and was the recipient of much unsolicited publicity. The French came to expect this unrequested attention in the United States and often expressed disappointment when their expectations were not realized. Although France had used propaganda to get Americans involved in the war, she could see little need of that in the post-war decade.

It is worth noting that while France complained of lack of publicity, according to Jusserand, the distinguished French ambassador, she always had the most press coverage of any foreign power. American papers continually printed French news and French politics were followed more closely than those of any other nation; England being the only possible exception. In the arts, literature and fashion much newspaper coverage was given to France. The New York Times even reviewed new French books. Political coverage was good, for Jusserand said that American correspondents analyzed French political events so clearly that he was more aware of French politics by reading the New York Times than by reading French newspapers. Paradoxically, while the American press made an effort to make France known to the American people, the French press did not make a reciprocal effort.¹ Due to the lack of a correspondent or news service, no French paper had the means to publish more than simple news of events in the United States. This neglect was inexcusable since the French people had begun to exhibit an increased interest in American culture. In general, the

French knew that France's dependence on America dictated that they maintain an acute awareness of political developments in the United States.

Fortunately, American opinion toward France had not been outraged by belligerent actions on the high seas, as was the case with both Germany and England. To most Americans France, the invaded nation, was clearly not responsible for the war. The embellished saga of Lafayette and an effective group of Francophiles in the United States contributed to an important movement to support France. American sympathy for France resulted in an impressive volunteer effort even before America's official entry into the war. This sympathy and support did not end with the war but continued during the reconstruction period.

Despite this American good will toward France, the divergencies of ideas and interests of the two nations became evident when it was time to make the peace. These differences were clearly symbolized by the contrast in temperaments and ideas of Wilson and Clemenceau. Americans, naive and idealistic, were disillusioned when they realized that the French were insisting on their parochial and national interests. This disillusionment, coupled with a reviving prosperity, served as an opiate which quieted American interest in European affairs and gave justification for abandoning France.

The French initially thought that the United States, especially President Wilson, could be managed and used for

their purposes. French political parties, from the Left to the Right, all attempted to persuade Wilson to support their political interests. The French soon learned, however, that Wilson could not be managed.² It was painful for France to concede that she was dependent upon the United States for the success of the Treaty of Versailles. Furthermore, it was distressingly clear that the United States would have to support any international solution to the French financial crisis. The realization that the future of France was being decided in Washington led France to attempt to influence the United States Senate to ratify the Versailles Treaty. Even if little was done outside normal diplomatic channels, France had finally realized that she must actively seek to influence the American government.³ Consequently, when the French delegation arrived at the Washington Conference, the delegates were keenly aware of the importance of American support. France also naively felt that she could be of service to the United States in its naval supremacy struggle with England. France envisioned that in the end there would be a French-American rapprochement. Thus France went into the conference, confident of United States friendship; and felt little need to use the news media to influence American opinion. However, as the conference progressed France found herself involved in a struggle to maintain the good will of the American people. It was during the Washington Conference that the French first realized that France would be under

scrutiny of the American public. When, in the end, France ratified the Washington Conference treaties, she did so only because of her reluctance to destroy American good will for France.⁴

Ironically, at a time when the United States was withdrawing from political involvement in European affairs, American prosperity sent large numbers of American tourists to France. Unfortunately, most Americans had little knowledge of France, the French language and the French culture and many American tourists returned home even more convinced that the French were materialistic and immoral. Furthermore, Americans mistook the intense French search for security and determination that such a holocaust would not happen again as excessive chauvinism. They misinterpreted French expressions of frustration, fear and disappointment and responded with extreme criticism of the French. These American attitudes were of great concern to the French.⁵

At the same time, the few French tourists who went to the United States often returned home with an uncomplimentary, distorted and often prejudiced view of America as a mechanized and assembly line society which destroyed creativity and which was characterized by a general bad taste. André Siegfried in his America Comes of Age gave a more reasonable picture of American society but even he found America to be a "materialistic society, organized to produce things rather than people, with output set up as

god." Most importantly, Americans responded adversely to these criticisms.⁶

Ultimately, the French, almost universally, accepted their dependence on the United States and expressed a desire to influence Americans to support French security efforts. Such attempts took many forms and became more intense, oftentimes outrageous, as it became increasingly evident that France could not count on American support. Regrettably, when France wanted most to sway Americans, her fear and frustration drove her to strike out at America with bitter attacks through the French press in a misguided attempt to influence American opinion. Tragically, French efforts at affecting American opinion were unorganized, sporadic, ineffective and often counter-productive.

In view of her blundering, pride and misunderstanding of the American culture, it even appeared at times as if France was trying to destroy American sympathy. Oftentimes it would have been better had France done nothing. One example of a lack of understanding of the American culture was an unsuccessful attempt to cultivate American public opinion through a pamphlet on French art which contained a reproduction of a nude. The resulting protest caused the Commissariat Générale de l'Information et de Propagande to investigate and to conclude that it would be preferable, due to differences in artistic conceptions between the French and Americans, not to send pictures of this nature. Such errors caused more harm than German

propaganda.⁷

Despite the constant pleading of French diplomats for the French government to create effective programs to exploit the potential American support, little improvement was ever realized. However, even during the lowest ebb of French-American relations there continued to be a substantial amount of support for France. There could always be heard some criticism, but amidst the criticism there were always voices of praise for France, "the guardian of western civilization." Although the efforts were feeble, it is to be noted that the French did attempt to create better understanding and good will.

Jusserand, the Washington ambassador, Liebert, the New York consul, Casenave, Directeur Générale des services français aux Etats-Unis, Barthelémy, the Chicago consul and many others, including subsequent ambassadors in Washington, regularly reminded Paris of the need to influence American opinion in an organized way. They constantly asked for the establishment of a bureau of information and for a systematic publicity campaign. They also appealed for a press correspondent sur place so the French be better informed about American culture and attitudes which would in turn influence French attitudes toward Americans. In the end Americans would respond to an improved French attitude with a greater degree of cooperation with France, reasoned the French diplomats.⁸

Since sophisticated machinery for evaluating public

opinion did not exist at that time, diplomats were forced to rely on newspaper sentiment and personal impressions. Consequently, any survey, however unscientific, was of great interest. Liebert reported to Paris of one such survey: an unpublished Western Union opinion survey among fifty-five thousand telephone and telegraph employees regarding the French action in the Ruhr. He reported that, surprisingly since the Midwest was considered to be increasingly anti-French, the action had met with almost unanimous approval.⁹ There was rarely encouraging news to report to Paris and diplomats often appeared to be searching for a favorable report.

Time brought few changes, for as late as 1928 the French ambassador was writing Briand of the necessity of American support, moral or otherwise. Rather than being spiteful in misinterpreting American gestures, as he claimed the French press was doing, it would be in France's best interests to exaggerate American good will. He asked of what advantage to the French cause were the "superior tone and inane words" of the French press, and he acknowledged discouragement in his attempts to get America to know and understand France when his efforts were undermined by this "critical and ignorant spirit."¹⁰

A survey of diplomatic correspondence reveals that there were three major obstacles to the realization of French dreams of influencing American opinion. First, poor understanding of the American mentality. This problem was

dramatically emphasized by the fact that qualified men such as Jusserand and Liebert were often wrong in appraising a situation and the mood of the American people. Jusserand knew the American people well. He had lived among them since 1903 and he spoke the language fluently. His wife was American. Jusserand was a favorite companion of President Roosevelt. He generally seemed to be in tune with the American people but even his observations, usually astute, were completely wrong at times. For example, both Liebert and Jusserand advised Paris that the Hearst press had little influence in the United States.¹¹

An example of a grave miscalculation of American mentality was an article in Eclair, now of the Left, which inferred that Americans had only been returning a favor in coming to the assistance of France. The perennial controversy over the debts from the American Revolution was gaining steam during Viviani's mission to Washington.¹² This seemingly trivial debate over the Revolutionary War debts was important enough to be discussed in the French Assembly on numerous occasions. A Tribune article told of French archivists, "affolés," trying to find proof that America did not reimburse Revolutionary War loans. In response, Jusserand, a student and writer of American history, wrote Paris that the truth was that France had declined recompense. He urged that rebuttal be discreet and originate from Americans. However, the controversy continued throughout the decade with many articles in French, Canadian and

American papers. The French gravely miscalculated the effect this debate would have on American attitudes toward France.¹³

In the same vein, the French penchant for demonstrating their belief that the French were culturally and intellectually superior to Americans was a barrier to winning American friendship. In general, the French viewed Americans as poorly educated, uncultured and not as intelligent as the French. Americans were, likewise, viewed as being less interested in politics and poorly informed on world affairs. In contrast to the French, Americans were idealistic, naive, and generally uninvolved in human rights issues, concluded most Frenchmen. The French diplomats reasoned that Americans were keenly aware of their cultural inferiority but warned that they resented the air of superiority projected by the French. In the final analysis, such attitudes could not have been removed, even had the French wished to do so. Consequently, the assumed French superiority remained as an obstacle to improving French-American relations.

Second, there was an ambivalence about to whom the propaganda efforts should be directed. The main propaganda efforts remained at the level of the elite and were oriented toward a small group on the Eastern seaboard. Liebert preferred to have private talks with influential leaders on questions that he considered insufficiently explained. These were carefully chosen groups of men from all sectors

of the intellectual and business elite whom he felt "would be able to understand and diffuse ideas." Liebert felt that he had been warmly received by these groups and that, consequently, France was finally being understood and the American people enlightened.¹⁴

Generally speaking, contact with other than the Eastern seaboard was rare for the Washington ambassador and the New York consul. There was not enough French representation in centers without consuls or in those with only one agent. This lone agent of France was usually a small businessman with no "standing" and no authority in American circles, and often he was not at all concerned with his responsibility. In an official document written in January, 1927, calling for closer liaison between diplomatic posts and Quai d'Orsay, it was suggested that France appoint, as other countries had done, honorary consuls in all important cities. They would be important men locally: men who had the financial and moral means to surround themselves with representatives of French societies in the region.¹⁵ Unfortunately, this recommendation was not acted upon.

At the same time, influential men like Bryan and Borah were forcing the French to recognize that important decisions were being made by men who did not come from the East. In addition, the Chicago consul advised Paris that one-third of the American population lived in his area and was predominantly anti-French. The East Coast and New York

did not represent all of America, he reminded Paris.¹⁶ However, even after the French diplomats realized the significance of public opinion in areas away from the East Coast, very little was done to capture support in the politically important Middle West.

Recent studies by American historians have produced evidence to suggest that the Middle West was not as isolationist and anti-European as has been assumed. As early as 1949 Richard Van Alstyne observed that the Middle West did not hold ideas on foreign affairs different from those of other parts of the country.¹⁷ Other recent studies have led to similar deductions. Warren F. Kuehl concluded in his recent study of thirty newspaper editors in the Middle West that an isolationist mood did not dominate that area in the 1920s. While the studies on Midwestern attitudes during the inter-war period are inconclusive, it is apparent that the area was less isolationist and anti-European than the French believed. The important thing is that the French assumed that the Midwest was isolationist, and above all, that it was anti-French. This conclusion was largely influenced by such important newspapers as the Chicago Tribune and by the fact that there was a large concentration of people of German descent.¹⁸

Third, the French failed to understand the difference between the nature and role of journalism in France and in the United States. The different American and French concepts in regard to the function of journalism served to

further misunderstanding. The New York consul, Liebert, seemed to recognize the positive and negative aspects of American journalism and attempted to explain these differences to Poincaré so that more effective use could be made of the press to counteract the unfortunate French response to American journalistic coverage of the news. Indicative of the general French attitude, this report concluded that American papers were of inferior journalistic and intellectual quality.

French news reported in the American papers came directly from the French papers, which were clearly politically directed. Particularly in the immediate post-war period, the French government continued to exercise censorship of papers, although the political leanings of each paper remained clear. It was often difficult for the American correspondent to distinguish objective reporting from political reporting. Frequently, stories were filed based on French newspaper articles attacking America or reporting on some alleged scandal in the French government. In addition, the account would then be subjected to the American press' tendency to exaggerate and the final article might little resemble the actual event. Unfortunately, articles from papers like Eclair, most often critical of the United States, appeared most frequently in American papers and often excited emotional reactions from Americans.¹⁹

Besides the absence of an effective propaganda

campaign of her own, France was at times the victim of German and English propaganda. The Hearst press, strongly Anglophobe, linked France repeatedly with England in its attacks. At other times, France was the subject of English attacks when it suited the propaganda purposes of England. Both France and England transported their intense political differences to the United States.

In September of 1923, Liebert stated that seventy per cent of the American people approved of France but that this was no longer true in December due to English and German propaganda. He said that he felt like a man defending himself with a wooden rifle while being attacked by a machine gun and artillery, in reference to the repetition of German propaganda and lack of effective support from Paris.²⁰

Lloyd George at the time was touring the United States speaking on the war and attacking the French at every opportunity. He had in early 1923 attacked France through articles in the Hearst press. This assault had been so violent that the New York Times and Tribune cancelled the contract for the exclusive rights to his memoirs. Nevertheless, Lloyd George's anti-French speeches were given an enthusiastic reception in the United States, especially in the Middle West.²¹

One of the constant complaints of French diplomats was the influence of the British press and journalists upon the American press. The coverage of foreign affairs

which appeared in the American papers was reprinted from the British press and news service. The French believed that the constant British attacks on the French were a major influence in shaping American opinion. Most news of America published in French papers also came via London, was often reproduced inexactly, and expressed definite political tendencies. This was partly due to the fact that there were several English journalists but no French journalists in Washington.

When le Temps complained of the inadequate and suggestive character of French news coverage in America, a New York Times reporter replied that if the French did not want to be at the mercy of the English, they should pay their own special correspondent.²² Very simply, the French did not want to spend the necessary money and deceived themselves in thinking that letters by mail were as valuable as wired news. In the final analysis, the French papers should have joined together for a wire service instead of expecting the government to pay for it. Why should the government pay since the duty of the papers was to inform their readers - a different thing from what the government was attempting to accomplish abroad?

This is not to say that the French made no effort to influence American opinion, but rather that their attempts were inadequate and ineffective, based upon French mentality and methods without considering the mentality of the American people. The realization that France must have

American good will, however, did drive the French to explore numerous avenues which they hoped would create sympathy and support for France.

For one thing, the diplomats advocated using Americans who supported France to defend and promote France in the public eye. In a 1922 article in la République française, Casenave stated that the "American people have good sense and . . . will understand if it is properly presented. They are practical and have a sense of justice. Be courageous and frank. Americans like that. Don't be afraid to tell them the truth; it will always triumph."²³ This frankness, the initial French approach, was in keeping with their own value system which said that man is rational and logical. But the problem was compounded by the fact that even the word propagande did not translate well and had a pejorative connotation in English. Also, the French were too proud to consider stopping to what they considered as low-class propaganda methods of which they said the Americans "se méfient." It was also often expressed by both diplomats and the press that most French were more cultured, better educated, and perhaps more intelligent than most Americans. But then, they (the diplomats) would be dealing with the elitists who would be able to influence the relatively unlettered masses.

The French often relied on American writers to support or defend their point of view before the American people. One of their most loyal supporters was Frank Simonds who was regarded as writing the "real American

opinions and sentiments."²⁴ Liebert called him a sincere, proven friend of France who presented the French viewpoint with "force and clarity, reaching a logical conclusion." Needless to say, Simond's views were generally compatible with the French viewpoint.

In this vein Jusserand, when asked by his government to prepare a rebuttal to John Maynard Keynes' arguments in his book, The Economic Consequences of the Peace, which was causing a reaction in America as well as in Europe, replied that it would be much more effective if the reply came from Americans. Therefore he asked Professors Hastings of Harvard and Hazen of Columbia to write articles refuting Keynes' thesis. Both, being supporters of France, responded with strong arguments for France.²⁵

The French also counted for support on French language papers printed in the United States. L'Abeille, published in New Orleans, was at one time, according to the French ambassador, one of the most influential dailies in the South but had been purchased by the Times Picayune whose editor knew little French.²⁶ The French felt that a source of information for French news was desperately needed especially since the South was the most poorly informed section of the country. Efforts to save the Abeille failed in 1923 when due to a lack of funds and insufficient circulation, it discontinued publication. Little by little, apathy and indifference forced the disappearance of other French institutions in Louisiana. In reality, newspapers printed in

French had been of limited influence since they were read by few Americans. In any case, the few French immigrants became rapidly assimilated into the American culture, and consequently, did not form a ready-made pressure group.

The French did have access to a number of American newspapers and magazines for publication of articles written in a way to stimulate public interest in France. Many continued to support France and often published articles to that effect. Tardieu, for example, had an article in the first issue of Foreign Affairs in October 1922.²⁷ There were, in addition, several official French publications to promote better understanding. In 1923 the Comité de Paris de relations avec les Etats-Unis d'Amérique began publication of a French-American bulletin. The consul in New York published a daily bulletin and compiled a mailing list for the dispersion of documentation on France. Similar efforts were made at other consular offices.²⁸ Likewise, the French worked with numerous American organizations to stimulate American interest in French culture. One such organization established to create better French-American relations was the Washington-Lafayette Institute which emphasized the tradition of French-American military cooperation.

France attempted to exploit American sympathy by keeping alive memories of her wartime sacrifices, by taking advantage of America's interest in French war heroes and by the conferring of medals on American heroes. The parade of French war heroes began when the American Legion invited General Foch to be the guest of honor at the 1920 convention.

Since he could not make the trip, General Marie Emile Fayolle, Commander of the French Sixth Army, and one of the greatest war figures, was sent as Foch's representative. The Fayolle mission, only the first of numerous visits, was judged by the French to have rekindled the flame of French-American friendship. In the interest of gaining supporters for France, these visits were frequently used to confer on Americans the Legion of Honor or other medals.²⁹

Visits by French war heroes became so frequent that Jusserand advised the Paris government that they be halted because the United States had become saturated with French war heroes and decorations were awarded to Americans so frequently that they were becoming meaningless. The French believed, however, that Americans were impressed with ceremonies and continued to award medals and decorations to Americans both in the United States and in France. Even when prominent Americans visited France, they were often given receptions and honors by the Paris government.³⁰

Remembering the influence of the Sorbonne during the Middle Ages, the French were anxious to use the American College of Paris to attract scientists, doctors and students from American schools who would like to study the French language, customs, manner of thinking and methods of instruction. The French especially wanted America to appreciate the moral and intellectual prestige of France. The most urgent aim of the school was to give American intellectuals an understanding and appreciation of French

culture to prevent them from being attached to Germany.³¹

The Paris département des affaires politiques et économiques suggested places to propogate French thought: through the universities, through exchange programs, through speeches by former American soldiers in France who "know the country better than tourists," and through women's clubs, for women "are more interested than men in Europe." It also encouraged the consuls to travel more, emphasizing the need of their presence at ceremonies honoring France and at gatherings of local French societies. But funds were lacking to implement this and often the consul had to meet these expenses out of his own pocket.³²

For this reason in 1929, two other areas of French influence were brought to the attention of the minister in Paris. The Paris government had encouraged the promotion of programs which would send French students to the United States. As a part of this program a group of students from France were feted by the city of New Orleans in an effort to "maintain cordial relations" between France and areas of French origin in the United States.³³ This was especially important since there were few centers of French population in the United States.

The French also sought ways to tap the unused resources of the two million French-Canadians living in the United States. They did not assimilate well; they kept their language; they maintained their own schools and churches; they opposed intermarriage; and they read their own French

newspapers. They did, moreover, have political ambitions and had elected two governors in the state of Rhode Island. Although the French-Canadian was little known in France, many French felt that the French-Canadian's increased influence in the United States could be a positive factor in relations between the two countries.³⁴

The latter example is particularly striking, for it shows how poorly the French diplomats understood French-Canadians. Contrary to French aspirations, the French-Canadians did not consider themselves French, nor did they feel any strong allegiance to France. They were French-Canadians and their culture was French-Canadian, not French. Consequently, the French-Canadian living in the United States had little ties to France. Any national ties other than to the United States would be toward Canada as evidenced by the fact that the average French-Canadian lived in the United States sixteen years before becoming a citizen.³⁵ They would not prove an effective voice for the French in North America; but it is indicative of the desperation of the French that the French-Canadians were cited as a new-found treasure.

The French saw in the Catholic church an opportunity to combat the idea held by many Americans that France was atheistic and the enemy of religion as well as an opportunity to denounce Germany as an enemy of Catholicism. To this end on June 18, 1918, the Conseil du Président sent a recommendation to the Direction politique à New York for a

course of action to exploit the American Catholics.³⁶ It had been charged that religion had been excluded from the French army and that French politics were anti-religious and especially anti-Catholic. These ideas were so deep-seated that French priests who came to the United States had difficulty getting an audience with American bishops because of their hostility to the French. Therefore, it was thought, a French bishop, preferably from Nancy or another of the destroyed cities, should be sent to the United States since he could command an audience with the American clergy. The task of this bishop would be to show the American Catholics that they were playing into the hands of the enemy in repeating fabrications about the French church.

The French had been alarmed by the effectiveness of German propaganda among the American Catholics. The French diplomats believed that the Germans understood the force of Catholicism in the United States and had used it to their advantage. For example, the Catholic Tribune of Chicago talked about the beastly character of Clemenceau; the Echo of Buffalo said the French occupation army had committed terrible acts; and the Catholic News said France was ungrateful and had abandoned the cause of Ireland. Nevertheless, the Catholic World consented to create a source of information on the Catholic church in France and to distribute information about French Catholicism.³⁷

The French also exerted enormous efforts to get the maximum publicity from the American Legion's visit to France

in 1926. The importance the French attached to the visit was demonstrated by the fact that both the government and the press spent a lot of effort to assure that everything would be in readiness for the Legionnaires. The French wanted, for example, to avoid any criticism of hoteliers profiteering from the Legionnaires. The hotel keepers were accordingly cautioned to be certain that their rooms and linens were clean so the American Legion would return home and tell of French hospitality, cleanliness and honesty.³⁸

In the interest of making the best impression on Americans, officers who had lived among the Americans during the war were to serve as liaison officers between the French and Americans during the Legionnaires' visit. They were asked to put aside self-pride, placing national interests above their own feelings, and to recognize the importance of the Legion to France since it represented all sectors of the American population. The Paris government wanted to be sure that the two peoples, who knew so little of each other, not be misunderstood. The French were even cautioned about discussing controversial issues, such as the debt question. France should show her true, not touristic, self, concluded the press. Given this honest approach, most French were confident that the reaction of the American Legion would be the same as the French reaction to Lindbergh had been.³⁹

It was especially significant that the French were taking Napoleon's flag out of the Invalides and using it in honor of the Americans under Napoleon's own triumphal arch.

Both parties were keenly aware of making the right kind of impression on each other and on the general public.⁴⁰ La Victoire, a radical Right paper, was concerned about the impression French "lieux de plaisir" and political quarrels would make on the visitors and requested tolerance on their part.⁴¹ The Intransigeant, a Center newspaper, reminded the French that each Legionnaire was paying his own way and that the French should be hospitable and friendly.⁴² However, most of the French press pronounced the Legionnaires' visit a success and reasoned that French-American relations had been improved. This was especially important in view of the debt controversy.

Most American papers carried stories of the cordial and enthusiastic reception accorded the Americans. The visit was as good for the "bonne entente" as had been Lindbergh's landing. Finally the French and Americans were getting to know each other, concluded the majority of the press. It is noteworthy that the St. Louis Globe reported that the French police were complimentary about the behavior of the Legionnaires while in truth all incidents were handled diplomatically by American judges selected from among the Legionnaires.

Despite the success of the visit, travel in France did not appear always to help relations, for President Coolidge had to remind Americans that all countries were different and that Americans should not be too critical when traveling in France. Americans were urged to ignore anti-American

demonstrations and to attempt to be understanding or to stay home.

The French were alleged to believe that Americans had prospered from French poverty and that Americans should pay for their exploitation of the French. Numerous incidents were reported in the American press to support this viewpoint. However, some manifestations in Paris were used to good advantage by American media to create a better attitude toward the French. The 1926 parade of wounded veterans, who were passing before the statue of Washington, which had been draped in black, protesting the debt question, greatly impressed Americans. While the Herald-Examiner called it the funeral of French-American friendship, according to the New York Herald, it actually rekindled sympathy for the French cause and resulted in an easing of pressure on the inter-allied debt question.⁴³

Finally, one of the most significant events from the standpoint of public relations was the initiation of the Kellogg-Briand pact; rivaling the influence of Lindbergh's flight. This is an example of what France could have done more frequently if she had been attuned to the need. The idea to outlaw war appeared to please all, even the conservatives, but especially those who had no direct contact with Europe. This idea was so close to American sentiments that even without the support of the press it worked itself into the spirits of the people, said the French ambassador. It was supported by many politically involved

organizations. Protestant opinion in the South and West, formerly anti-French, supported the idea. Philanthropic and moral associations and feminist organizations were all responding and growing in number and support. The French took pride in the fact that the idea had been given great publicity and that all were aware of the French initiative. The only sour note was that part of the French press still had a "tone of ineffable superiority" and made fun of the treaty. Despite the naiveté and ineffectiveness of the effort to outlaw war, the whole episode had a tremendously good effect on French-American relations.⁴⁴

In conclusion, in the present age of sophisticated international spy operations and of intense propaganda warfare it is difficult to appreciate the meager efforts of France to influence American public opinion for what it was: an expression of her intense desire to capture American good will. It would be very easy to dismiss these French activities as insignificant but understood in the context of the nineteen-twenties they are evidence of a gradual evolution from a position of self-sufficiency to an ultimate realization of her dependence on the United States. This was a painful process for France. In addition, France, along with other nations, had not become involved in the battle for the minds of men. For her, international relations was still largely a matter of traditional military and economic strength.

Although France had a better opportunity than any

other nation to build good relations and to gain the support of the United States, she failed to take advantage of her unique position. Despite the paucity of French efforts at influencing American opinion and despite the frequent and bitter expressions of disappointment, American sentiments continued to be generally favorable. Even in view of the bitterness engendered by the failures of the Versailles Treaty, the Washington Conference and the debt question, the seriousness of the conflicts could have been lessened by a more effective use of available avenues for French propaganda in the United States. Furthermore, these issues could have been exploited to the advantage of the French. The events surrounding the Washington Conference forced the French to recognize the role of the American press as a powerful instrument in shaping public opinion and to better appreciate the role of public opinion in American politics. Unfortunately, the French never made adequate use of this knowledge.

FOOTNOTES

¹Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Documents diplomatiques: La Presse, 32:2-11. Hereafter cited as M. des A. E.

²L'Humanité, December 27, 1918.

³Pierre Miquel, La paix de Versailles et l'opinion publique française (Paris: Flammarion, 1972), p. 45.

⁴M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, Conference de Washington: 96:78-78.

⁵Ibid., Propagande, 26:43-49.

⁶André Siegfried, America Comes of Age (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927), p. 348.

⁷M. des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, Propagande, 23:3,4.

⁸Ibid., 26:40.

⁹Ibid., 49:156.

¹⁰Ibid., 28:4-116.

¹¹Ibid., Dettes interalliées, 232:69.

¹²Ibid., 227:73-74.

¹³Ibid., 233: 57, 87.

¹⁴Ibid., La Presse, 49:4.

¹⁵Ibid., La Propagande, 27:136-139.

¹⁶Ibid., 25:75.

¹⁷Richard W. Van Alostne, "The Significance of the Mississippi Valley in American Diplomatic History, 1686-1890." (Mississippi Valley Historical Review 36 September 1949), p. 238.

¹⁸Warren F. Kuehl, "Midwestern Newspapers and Isolationist Sentiment," Diplomatic History, Vol. 3, No. 3, Summer 1979.

¹⁹M des A. E., Documents diplomatiques, La Presse, 35:39.

²⁰Ibid., 49:7.

²¹Ibid., 32:42.

- ²²Ibid., Propagande, 26:40.
- ²³Ibid., Dettes interalliées, 229:72.
- ²⁴Ibid., La Presse, 49:35.
- ²⁵Ibid., Propagande, 23:139-140.
- ²⁶Ibid., 32:134.
- ²⁷Ibid., 31:113.
- ²⁸Ibid., 22:105-116.
- ²⁹Ibid., 24:14-16.
- ³⁰Ibid., 23:209.
- ³¹Ibid., 27:136-9.
- ³²Ibid., 23:33.
- ³³Ibid., La Presse, 275:19.
- ³⁴Ibid., Autorisations français en Amérique, 275:1.
- ³⁵Ibid., 275:72.
- ³⁶Ibid., Propagande, 22:1.
- ³⁷Ibid., 23:160-9.
- ³⁸Ibid., Armée Américaine en France, 290 from Journal l'Hotelier, August 1, 1927.
- ³⁹July 3 and 4, 1927.
- ⁴⁰Le Temps, July 30, 1927.
- ⁴¹August 13, 1927.
- ⁴²August 27, 1927.
- ⁴³July 7, 1926.
- ⁴⁴M. des A. E., Pacte Briand-Kellogg, 67:43-50.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of the "war to end all wars" there was an atmosphere with high and dangerous expectations of a future with peace, security and prosperity. The French had been fed by their political leaders with lavish promises which cast President Wilson in the role of a Messiah and builder of a new world order. Thus the French thrust President Wilson into the role of world leader who represented to France the hope of security assured by the new world power. The initial acceptance, even glorification of Wilsonianism, was at once based upon the expectations of a peace which would guarantee French security and upon the French awareness of their weaknesses. French security could have been assured either by the continued economic and military weakness of Germany or by an Anglo-American guarantee to France against German aggression - - or preferably, both. In either case the French understood that they must have the support of the United States. The structure of world power had been radically changed; the United States had emerged as the leading power. Despite American reluctance to accept that role, America wielded tremendous influence in the reconstruction of Europe.

Having been weakened greatly by the war, France was

forced to recognize the new status of the United States. At first, the French of all political persuasions expected to use Wilson and the United States to achieve a French-conceived peace which would provide for French security. However, French expectations of having their security buttressed by the power of the United States were shattered when the Senate failed to ratify either the Treaty of Versailles or the tripartite Anglo-French-American treaty of guarantee. Most importantly, the French felt they were the victims of painful compromise and enormous trickery. They had been denied the fruits of victory. However, they did not abandon the hope that in the end the United States would prove to be a friend. Understandably, out of this failure grew a sense of grievance and a search for alternatives. France's foreign policy was at once a search for other sources of power to insure her security and a continuous effort to extract from the United States a commitment to guarantee French security.

Since that pledge was not forthcoming, French leaders had no choice but to attempt to provide for that security through the League of Nations and alliances with the central European nations. The French desire for security dictated that the League concept would be attractive to the political Left and to the humanitarian and international traditions in France. In contrast, Conservative and nationalistic elements in France viewed the League with disdain since it had no power. They doubted that it would enlist other

nations to defend the status quo on the continent. It was this lack of confidence in the League which impelled France to seek security in a system of alliances with the central European nations.

Likewise, the French determination to collect reparations from Germany, an improbable feat, grew out of the feeling of insecurity. For France the whole reparations episode was a painful lesson in the realities of economics. Reparations, on the scale anticipated and under the conditions of a capitalist economy, were impossible to collect. Unhappily, France had geared her whole economy and reconstruction of her devastated areas upon the collection of reparation payments from Germany.

Although the French, except the Left, were vigorously opposed to disarmament, there was a reserved enthusiasm among the French when Briand received an invitation to attend the Washington naval conference. The French welcomed the Washington Conference as evidence that the United States had not completely succumbed to isolationism. Furthermore, the French leaders expected the conference to provide a forum for France to make known her security needs. In addition, the French saw in the Washington Conference an ideal opportunity for French mediation between England and the United States, thus giving France the chance to create a closer relationship with America.

The French came to the Washington Conference still confident of American friendship, still persuaded that

France had a special relationship with America. Once again, the French were disillusioned to find that not only did they not have a special relationship with the United States government but, to their dismay, the United States had formed a bloc with England on the issue of naval disarmament. The French press revealed the sense of injustice, disappointment and bitterness resulting from the turn of events at the Washington Conference. French public opinion believed that the Washington Conference had done their nation great harm. When the French expressed their objections to the humiliation France suffered at the conference, the American public took those objections as evidence that France was militaristic and ungrateful for American assistance during the war.

The Washington Conference was a catalyst for French-American relations, for it brought the French to realize for the first time the extent of their loss of power. A measure of French weakness and isolation was France's acquiescence in the face of Anglo-American pressure and final agreement to the provisions of the Washington Conference. To retain the friendship of the United States, she was asked to give up a portion of her military, the only security available to her.

French grievances over the failure of America to support their security demands were overshadowed at times by their distress over American financial policies. To France these two issues were inseparable and equally irritating. Especially after 1924, the issue of the pre-

ponderance of American power served to connect the debts and security in the French mind. However, despite the intensity of the debate over the debt issue, the question of security and disarmament remained the most urgent problem for France. Nevertheless, the debt question was viewed by many as the key element in the deterioration of the war-time entente. For this reason, the French image of American idealism gave way to an image of America as a selfish, materialistic and imperialistic nation.

Furthermore, the debt issue was intertwined with other aspects of an extremely difficult financial situation. The most important aspects of French financial difficulties were the reparations problem, the tariff question, the French monetary situation and the availability of credit. Often French bitterness toward America was triggered by one of these financial issues but only because they were related to the debt issue. The debt issue provided a convenient means of expressing resentment against the French financial situation as a whole. These financial issues gave the French reason to resent American domination. Economic realities predetermined that, due to the enormity of the debt, the declining value of the franc, and the inability to collect reparations, France became increasingly dependent upon American loans. The French were becoming exasperated that while the American government refused to acknowledge the link between debts and reparations verbally, in practice it acted differently. The settlement of the Dawes Plan

forced France, for the first time, to accept her financial dependence upon the United States.

The debt question was, likewise, linked to the monetary situation in France. Due to mounting financial obligations, inability to collect reparations, and the decline in the value of the franc, the question of monetary stability became a major domestic issue.

It is significant that the strongest French expressions of bitterness over the debt issue came in July 1926 during the crisis of the franc. Undoubtedly, the injustices of the debt agreement were more apparent after the fall of the franc. Understandably, the French image of America as "shylock" intensified when, at the time of their greatest financial difficulties, the State Department imposed a ban on loans.

The debt question was also affected by the American tariff policy. The Fordney-McCumber Tariff of 1922 established trade barriers that hindered the sale of French goods in the United States, eliminating the only feasible method of repayment of the war debts. Naturally these restrictions on French goods provoked adverse French opinion. Thus the debt question, a very sensitive issue in its own right, was compounded by the unreasonably high tariff barriers. The debt policy, apart from high tariffs, reparations and loans, would not have caused such vehement reactions from the French.

Initially the Paris government, along with the French

public, believed that the debts would never have to be repaid. This impression was reinforced by numerous statements from Americans who supported the French position and by the fact that the American government did not press France to negotiate an immediate settlement. The French also insisted that France could not repay the debts unless Germany made the reparations payments. Finally after the settlement of the Dawes Plan, they realized that the United States was serious about demanding repayment. Negotiations were drawn out until finally the Mellon-Bérenger agreement was signed in April, 1926. However, the financial crisis in France and vigorous protests from the government, the public, and the press delayed ratification until 1929.

The intense opposition by the majority of the French to the ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger agreement was centered on two objections. Most felt that the United States had been unfair in both. First, those who felt that the demand for repayment of a loan to a wartime ally was immoral continued to urge the cancellation of the total debt. The sacrifice of French soldiers represented repayment of the loan in blood. The enthusiastic reception of Louis Marin's speech before the French Assembly in January, 1925 and the Wounded Veterans' March in 1926 are examples of the support for this position. It was easy for Frenchmen who were looking at the debt question from a moral viewpoint to condemn the United States as being excessively

materialistic and insensitive to the plight of a nation which had already paid dearly.

Second, those who expected France to repay the debts argued for a special standard to calculate the total cost. These Frenchmen demanded that the same economic criteria be used to calculate their debt as had been used to calculate the German reparations payments: the capacity to pay. The French government insisted that debts and reparations had already been linked in practice, if not in theory. The French felt that the Dawes Plan had established the precedent for an equal reduction of France's debt. To the French mind, Germany was being treated more leniently in defeat than France was being treated in victory.

Improved economic conditions in France permitted the French to turn their attention away from the debt issue. While the intensity of French-American relations abated, French resentment at paying debts which were considered unjust remained as a constant irritation. However, the French assembly ratified the Mellon-Bérenger agreement in 1929 without much opposition from either the press or from public opinion. Opposition had diminished because of improved economic conditions, a general amelioration of French-American relations, and the realization that there was no alternative to ratification. The conclusion of the Young Plan and the ratification of the Mellon-Bérenger agreement seemed to normalize the reparations and debt questions. Most, in both nations, felt that the issue

had been settled and the future looked bright.

In view of the misunderstandings and expressions of bitterness and disappointment on the part of many in France, it has often been concluded that the French were extremely anti-American during the 1920s. This is, for example, the theme of David Strauss' recent book, Menace in the West: the Rise of French anti-Americanism in Modern Times.

However, these outbursts of anger and bitterness were only one part of French opinion and not always representative of attitudes held by the majority of the French. While there were numerous expressions of anti-Americanism emanating from the press, intellectuals and the government, the French government constantly sought American friendship.

While the French objected to American policies, it was not because they were especially anti-American but rather because they saw France's security and position among the world powers being threatened. Furthermore, as the French became increasingly financially dependent upon the United States, the consequent resentment and frustration led to increased expressions of disappointment and bitterness toward Americans. Significantly, when French-American relations were at their lowest point Lindbergh's flight, the visit of the Legionnaires and the signing of the Kellogg-Briand pact quickly led to a period of improved relations even before the debt controversy was settled. That much of the bitterness was so soon overcome by these events suggests that a basis for friendship continued to

exist between the two nations despite numerous serious conflicts of national interests.

In view of France's desperate search for security, it is understandable that the French were profoundly disappointed when the United States failed to carry through with the promise to guarantee that security. It is likewise understandable that the French reacted with bitterness to being forced to repay a loan to the most powerful and prosperous nation in the world while France was devastated and at times on the verge of bankruptcy. The French would have been an unusual people indeed, had they responded to American policies in any other way. Despite the paucity of French efforts to influence American opinion, they always desired American friendship and hoped to be the beneficiaries of American financial and military power. In the midst of all the expressions of disappointment and frustration, it was always understood that the United States would remain a friend to France. Despite some difficult periods in French-American relations, the mystique of the Marquis de la Fayette was still alive at the end of the decade.

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