

Reparations: the Dawes and the Young Plans

In early 1923, France had invaded the Ruhr area to make Germany pay reparations. Sending soldiers into the Ruhr solved nothing. The use of force did not make the Germans pay up. In November 1923 France was forced to agree to take part in a review of the reparations organised by an American banker, Charles Dawes. The Dawes Plan was agreed in April 1924.

THE TERMS OF THE DAWES PLAN

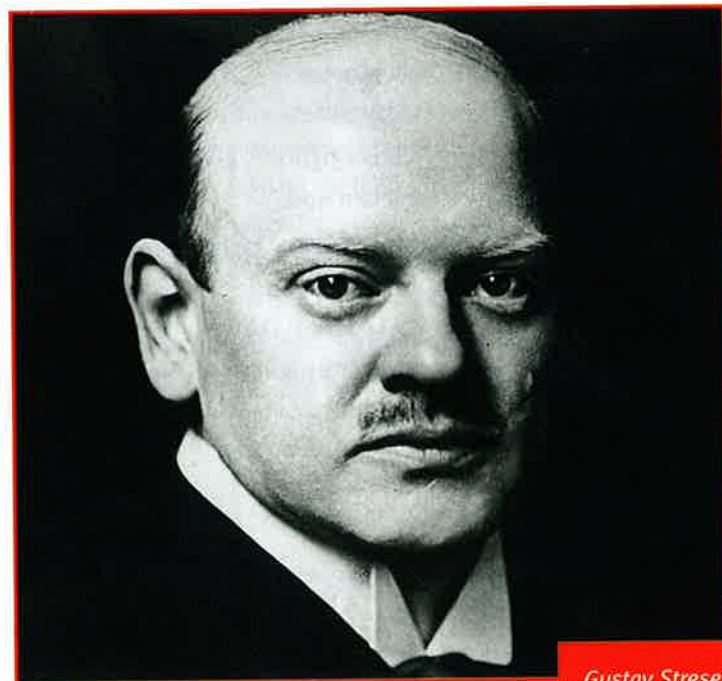
- > There was to be a 2 year freeze on the payment of reparations.
- > The level of German payments was scaled down.
- > The USA offered huge loans to Germany.
- > The French agreed to get their forces out of the Ruhr.

The consequences of the Dawes Plan

During the following five years the Germans paid a reparations bill of about \$1 billion, and received American loans of about \$2 billion. Germany did well out of the Dawes Plan. Much of the money from the American loans was spent on building new German factories. The French had wanted reparations in order to make Germany weak. The Dawes Plan helped Germany to become even stronger. As a result of the occupation of the Ruhr the Treaty of Versailles had been significantly altered in Germany's favour.

The Young Plan: 1929

The German government continued to complain at the level of reparations. The question of reparations was reviewed in 1929 by a committee led by an American called Owen Young. The committee produced the Young Plan. This considerably reduced the amount of reparations. The Young Plan was a considerable achievement for the German Foreign Minister, Stresemann. However, it did not bring peace and harmony to Germany. Extreme nationalists objected to the payment of any reparations and bitterly denounced the Young Plan.



Gustav Stresemann.

After 1929 the Great Depression led to a great rise in unemployment in Germany and reparations effectively came to an end. In 1932 the participants in the Young Plan met to agree a conclusion to the sorry story of reparations. After a three-year freeze Germany was supposed to make a final payment. This payment was never made.

Discussion points

- > How successful were French attempts to make Germany pay reparations?
- > What was agreed in the Dawes and Young Plans? Who gained from these Plans?
- > Why did the payment of reparations finally end?

The spirit of Locarno

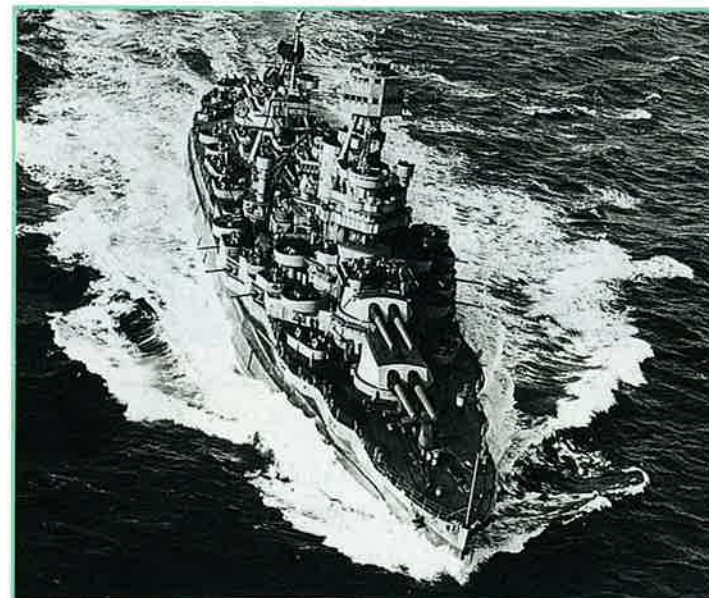
In the 1920s there was much discussion and debate among the most powerful countries of the world. A number of international treaties were signed.

Did the agreements of the 1920s make the world a safer place?

Discussions in Washington 1921-2

The USA had refused to support the League of Nations. America ignored the League and organised conferences of its own in Washington in 1921 and 1922. The conferences concentrated on trying to limit tension in the Pacific Ocean between Japan and the USA. This was precisely the sort of dispute that the League was intended to sort out. The Washington Conferences showed the world the limits of the authority of the League. The Washington Treaty was signed in February 1922. The USA and Britain agreed to have navies of equal size. The Japanese navy was limited to three fifths of the size of each of the American and the British navies. The proportions of the navies were, therefore, set at 5:5:3.

SOURCE A



An American warship in the early 1920s. To comply with the Washington Treaty of 1922 the United States had to scuttle 30 warships, Britain destroyed 19 and Japan 17. France and Italy also agreed to limit the size of their navies. The League had no involvement in the Washington conferences.

The outcasts club together: Rapallo 1922

The British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, organised an international conference in Genoa in 1922. He wanted to find a solution to the argument between Germany and France over the payment of reparations and the level of German disarmament. The conference was a disastrous failure: the Americans refused to attend and the French and the Germans continued to disagree about reparations and disarmament.

Germany and Soviet Russia had not been invited to join the League of Nations. While the main conference was taking place at Genoa, the German delegation had discussions with the Soviets at the nearby town of Rapallo. A treaty was signed on 16 April between Germany and the Soviets. It became known as the Treaty of Rapallo. The two governments agreed to establish friendly relations, and secretly agreed to co-operate on military planning. News of the treaty and rumours of the secret military deal shocked the French government. The deal between Germany and the Soviet Union enabled Germany to get hold of most of the weapons banned under the Treaty of Versailles. As a result, the Treaty of Rapallo was a blow to the authority of the League of Nations.

>> Activity

- 1 Explain in your own words what was agreed in the Treaty of Rapallo and the Treaty of Washington.
- 2 For each treaty explain whether you think it made the League of Nations more or less powerful.

Locarno: 1925

After the failure of the occupation of the Ruhr, France looked for compromise with Germany. This search for compromise continued in 1925 when a major conference took place at Locarno, Switzerland. The key players at Locarno were the Foreign Ministers of France, Britain and Germany: Aristide Briand, Austen Chamberlain and Gustav Stresemann. The talks produced treaties that were greeted with wild enthusiasm. Many people saw Locarno as an end to the bitterness of the war and the start of a new period of peace in Europe. The three leaders won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work at Locarno.

SOURCE B



The signing of the main Locarno Treaty, 1925. Stresemann can be seen signing on behalf of Germany. Despite the enthusiasm of people at the time, Locarno did not bring permanent peace to Europe.

SOURCE C

A German newspaper described the scenes at Locarno. When the delegates arrived in their cars they passed through dense crowds. When the document had been signed, the Belgian, Rollin, went to the window, opened it and held the pact aloft. Loud cheers and prolonged applause arose from the street. Then came the speeches of Stresemann, Briand, Chamberlain, and finally, Mussolini. Soon afterwards the delegates left the building. The crowd shouted its approval, especially at the German delegates. Chamberlain, sitting in his car held a copy of the pact in his hand and received the cheers of the crowd.
Berliner Tageblatt, 1925

THE TERMS OF THE LOCARNO TREATIES

- > Under the main Locarno treaty Germany, France and Belgium agreed to accept their existing borders with each other as set up by the Versailles Treaty.
- > Britain and Italy agreed to 'guarantee' the main agreement; this meant that Britain and Italy promised to take action if any of the three countries attacked each other.
- > The main agreement and the guarantee did not apply to the eastern borders of Germany as laid down by the Versailles Treaty.
- > Germany agreed to join the League of Nations.
- > In separate treaties signed at Locarno, France promised to defend Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia if any of these countries was attacked by Germany.

In September 1926 the German delegates took their place at the League's Assembly Hall in Geneva. People saw this as a very historic and hopeful moment. They felt that the scars of the First World War were beginning to heal. The French leader, Briand, gave the Germans an enthusiastic welcome in his speech to the Assembly, saying, 'Away with rifles, machine guns and cannon! Make way for arbitration, conciliation and peace!' Locarno was seen as a symbol of a new period of peace and stability. Some talked enthusiastically about the 'spirit of Locarno'.

A minority of people were much more suspicious of the Locarno settlement. Behind his back, civil servants at the British Foreign Office made up a rhyme that expressed their view of the British Foreign Secretary:

*'Good Sir Austen at Locarno,
Fell into a heap of guano.'*

SOURCE D

Recent interpretations of Locarno have also been critical. The League of Nations' commitment to collective security was devalued by Locarno. For, if collective security was in fact reliable, Locarno was unnecessary. If Locarno was necessary, the League of Nations was, by definition, inadequate to ensure the security of even its principal founding members. Locarno, hailed in 1925 as turning the corner towards permanent peace, in fact marked the beginning of the end of the Versailles international order.
H. Kissinger, 1994

>> Activity

Look at the following information about the effect of the Locarno settlement on Germany and France. Explain in your own words whether you think the Locarno treaties made the world a safer place.

LOCARNO: THE IMPACT ON GERMANY

- > The main Locarno agreement said nothing about German frontiers in the east, and this encouraged German hopes to overturn this part of the 1919 settlement. Poland and Czechoslovakia were not allowed to take part in the main discussions and their representatives were invited to join only at the end in order to be told what the larger powers had decided.
- > Each state saw the treaty differently. For Germany Locarno was the beginning of change to the Versailles Treaty.
- > The Locarno settlement was a great triumph for the German Foreign Minister, Stresemann. After Locarno large amounts of American money were invested in Germany and this helped the Germans to improve their factories. Stresemann was not content with Locarno. He continued to ask for further concessions.

SOURCE E

Stresemann, the German Foreign Minister, expressed his real motives in a confidential letter written shortly before Locarno in September 1925.
In my view the foreign policy of Germany has for the short-term future three main objectives: First, a solution to the Rhine question favourable to Germany, and peace, without which Germany will not be able to regain its strength. Second, protection for the ten to twelve million Germans living under the foreign yoke. Third, the alteration of our eastern frontiers, so that we recover Danzig and the Polish Corridor. In the more distant future the reuniting of Austria with Germany.

French attitudes after Locarno

LOCARNO: THE IMPACT ON FRANCE

- > The power of France to intervene in Germany was weakened by Locarno. The section forbidding invasion stopped France from repeating the 1923 occupation of the Ruhr.
- > The French leaders continued to feel threatened and insecure after Locarno. They knew that sooner or later Allied troops would have to leave the Rhineland and that this would strengthen the German threat. This feeling of insecurity was expressed in the decision in 1927 to build the Maginot Line. Between 1929 and 1939 the French government spent a vast amount of money on the building of a huge line of fortifications along the border with Germany. This was the brainchild of a politician called André Maginot, and it was named after him.

SOURCE F

French pessimism was reflected in the building of the Maginot Line. It is also clear from this statement from a former French Prime Minister.

History eternally repeats itself. We have not finished with Germany. Any understanding with her is impossible, and England, whether she likes it or not, will be compelled to march with us at the moment of danger in order to defend herself.

Georges Clemenceau, 1928

SOURCE G

A modern historian has summed up French fears after Locarno.

The French position remained as brittle as ever. There was no firm entente with Britain. In 1928 the RAF drew up plans for a 'Locarno' war against France should she ever violate German territory. The Eastern alliances were a poor substitute. Germany, revived economically and secretly re-arming, had said nothing about her eastern frontier at Locarno. The French knew that when Germany was strong enough French security would once again be in the melting-pot.

R. Overy, *The Road to War*, 1989

SOURCE H



A French army recruitment poster shows troops stationed on the Maginot Line. The building of the Line was evidence of French insecurity.

>> Activity

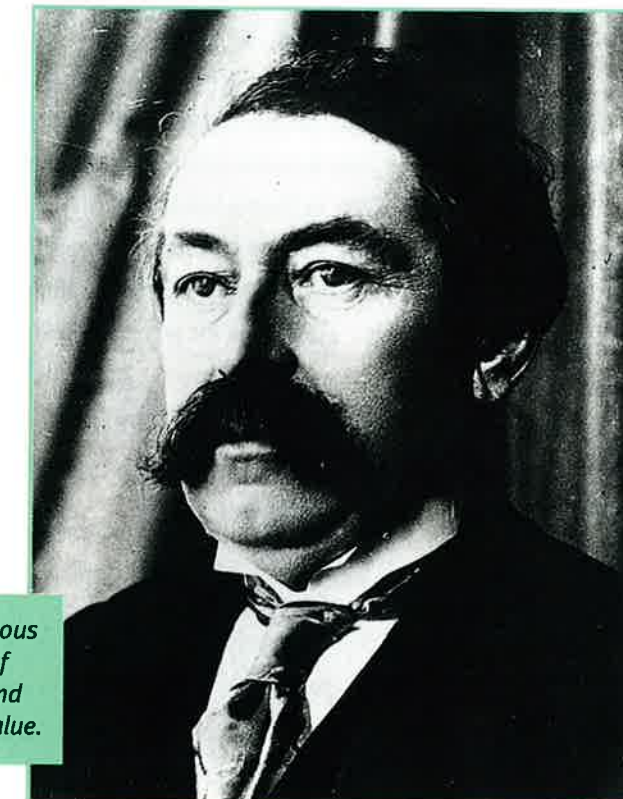
French anxiety after Locarno led to yet another international agreement: the Kellogg–Briand Pact of 1928. Look at the following information about the Pact and answer these questions:

- 1 What was the Kellogg–Briand Pact?
- 2 How did the Pact show French anxiety about the future?
- 3 Why was the Pact virtually worthless?

The Kellogg–Briand Pact

In April 1927 Briand suggested that France and the USA should sign a pact promising never to go war against each other. This proposed agreement was meaningless because there was absolutely no possibility of war between America and France. However, Briand saw it as a way of symbolising the friendship between the two countries. The American government could see little value in the pact. The American Secretary of State was called Frank Kellogg. He eventually suggested that instead of an American–French agreement, all countries should be invited to sign an agreement not to go to war. On 29 August 1928 government leaders of 15 powerful countries gathered together to sign the Pact of Paris. This soon became known as the Kellogg–Briand Pact. It said that each participating country would not use warfare in order to get what it wanted. In the months that followed most countries in the world agreed to the Kellogg–Briand Pact. The Pact was worthless as it put no real obligations or restrictions on countries. Japan and Italy both signed the Pact but before very long they used war to get what they wanted and the Kellogg–Briand Pact was shown to be completely irrelevant.

SOURCE I



Aristide Briand. He was anxious to strengthen the position of France but the Kellogg–Briand Pact was of little practical value.

SOURCE J

The so-called Kellogg–Briand Pact was signed on 27 August 1928.

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of international policy in their relations with one another. The settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts shall never be sought except by pacific means.

SOURCE K

Not everyone was impressed by the Pact. Stalin's comments about the Pact were dismissive.

They talk about pacifism. They speak about peace among European states. Briand and Austen Chamberlain are embracing each other. All this is nonsense. Every time that states make arrangements for new wars they sign treaties and call them treaties of peace.

Stalin, 1928