Count and democrat; Brockdorff-Rantzau as the Weimar Republic's first foreign minister

Marilyn Senn Moll
University of Nebraska at Omaha

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"COUNT AND DEMOCRAT"

BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU AS THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC'S FIRST FOREIGN MINISTER

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of History
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Omaha

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Marilyn Senn Moll
January 1967
Accepted for the faculty of the Graduate College of the University of Omaha, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts.

Chairman

Graduate Committee

Name  Department

Representative of the Graduate Faculty
ULRICH, GRAF VON BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU
1869 - 1928

This picture probably dates from the end of the First World War.

Source: *Outlook*, CXXII (May 7, 1919), 25.
This thesis grew out of Dr. A. Stanley Trickett's graduate history seminar at the University of Omaha, inquiring into the Paris Peace Conference of 1919. In the course of a study of Germany's initial reaction to the Treaty of Versailles I became interested in the German Peace Delegation, and especially Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, who, as the Weimar Republic's first Foreign Minister, was the Delegation's leader. My preliminary search for material unearthed very little that was easily accessible. Almost everything from contemporary English language sources and journals was written in a hate-the-Kaiser's-Germany vein, and the few items concerning the German Foreign Minister were, I discovered, usually out of context, inaccurate, or merely hearsay with little factual basis. Many writers who mention him tell only one vignette before dismissing the subject altogether: A portrait of his ancestor, Josias Rantzau, who was a Marshal of France, hung in the Galerie des Maréchaux at Versailles. Asked by a French journalist (some say it was a French officer) his opinion of the story that the Marshal had actually been the father of Louis XIV, the Count replied that indeed,

there is a tradition in our family to that effect dating back two hundred years. What comforts one
about it is that, if the tradition is based on fact, the Rantzaus are not illegitimate Bourbons, but the Bourbons bastard Rantzaus.¹

It is now possible to discuss the days of Versailles more objectively and dispassionately. This thesis is by no means intended as an apologia. It is an attempt, nearly fifty years later, to understand and interpret the German response when the Treaty was presented to the Delegation at Versailles, and the resulting repercussions among the Allied leaders. To do this I have used materials usually inaccessible or little known. This material I have tried to relate to documents, books, and memoirs which, although they are well known and definitive works on the subject, have not been used extensively to help shed light on this aspect of the Paris Peace Conference. My lifelong intense interest in the German language has been indispensable.

Professor James T. Shotwell, noted historian of the Peace Conference and its aftermath, has written that "... prudence as well as a sense of fair play provided the German negotiators with more support for a revision of the terms of the Treaty than they seem to have appreciated. This phase of Peace Conference history has never been explored ..."² Shotwell's observation can be applied to the Treaty writers


in Paris as well as the Germans. In this work I have attempted to approach the question from both sides, stressing the origins of the German Delegation and the Foreign Minister who led it—a history apparently little understood by the Allied and Associated Powers and by those who are now their descendants.

It is not unrealistic to ask the question: "Would not any Allied statesman, in Brockdorff-Rantzau's place, have tried for as favorable a deal as possible for Germany?"

My search for material turned up a book written by the British Lieutenant Colonel Stewart Roddie, who was posted for seven years in Germany as a member of the Disarmament Commission, and knew and worked with all the government officials and other dignitaries of the Weimar Republic. In a passage describing Reichspresident Ebert, Colonel Roddie relates the following story:

It was in the Holtzendorff house in the Victoria Strasse; the question of extradition of "War Criminals" was being discussed, and Noske, the Minister of Defence, put to me the embarrassing query, "Tell us what you English would have done if we Germans had won the war and demanded of you the surrender for trial as criminals of your King George, your Prince of Wales, your Field Marshal Haig, etc. Tell us—would you have let us have them?"

Then the President, who had been quietly listening, laid his hand on my arm and said, "Don't answer that question, Colonel, it's not a fair one—just take it for granted that we know." 3

There are many people who have helped me whom I would like to thank. My family has put up with more than two years of my complete preoccupation with this subject and consequent neglect of their needs at times. I would especially like to thank Dr. Trickett for his inspiration and guidance, and Miss Ella Jane Dougherty of the staff of the Gene Eppley Library at the University of Omaha for her tireless efforts to obtain obscure books for me, a task at which she was 99% successful. The University of Nebraska Library and the Omaha Public Library were also very helpful. I owe many thanks to Dr. Kurt Rosenbaum of West Virginia University, author of *Community of Fate: German-Soviet Diplomatic Relations 1922-1928*, who furnished information on Erich Brandenburg's unpublished manuscript biography of the Count and other important leads to valuable material. I am grateful to Dr. Alma Luckau Molin and Dr. George Bonnin for answering questions for me. I am indebted to Dr. Theo Christiansen of Schleswig, Germany, who provided a valuable article on the Brockdorff family history and other advice as to sources. He and Frau Christiansen were graciously hospitable to me during my few days in Schleswig while visiting Germany in 1964. I also thank Herr and Frau Christoph Sindt of Schleswig for their friendship and Gemütlichkeit. Much appreciation is due my typist, Mrs. Earl D. Wagner, who entered into this project with enthusiasm and great competence. The responsibility for errors and inaccuracies rests with me.

Bellevue, Nebraska.
November, 1966.
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INTRODUCTION

It was May, 1919. Germany had admitted military defeat in World War I over six months earlier. German representatives had signed the armistice terms dictated by Marshal Foch for the Allies. When the guns became silent on November 11, 1918, Germany surrendered great quantities of arms, military equipment, rolling stock, and her Allied prisoners of war, meeting Armistice deadlines as nearly as possible. The Allied and Associated Powers did not return their German war prisoners, and the Allies continued their blockade in the northern waters for several months.

When the Kaiser fled to Holland on November 9, 1918, the old order had already collapsed in Germany. Out of defeat, mutinies, workers' strikes, starvation, despair, and the threat of Bolshevism grew a German Republic. Hastily proclaimed, ill-supported, and with no precedent to guide it, the new Republic faced scorn and mistrust at home and abroad. It was rocked by party conflicts from within and menaced by Bolshevik violence from without. In order to convene safely, the members of its National Constituent Assembly met in Weimar instead of riot-torn Berlin, whence came the historical term "Weimar Republic." To this Government fell the multifarious task of picking up the pieces after the Empire's surcease: convening a National Assembly, writing a constitution, continuing the fight against Bol-
shevism, helping a starving, apathetic populace toward recovery, --and concluding peace. The first confrontation with the harsh peace terms of the Allied and Associated Powers fell to the Republic's Foreign Minister, Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau.

"The Conference of Paris," wrote Professor James T. Shotwell,

was a meeting of the enemies of the Central Powers which dictated treaties for each of the ex-enemy States and hardly listened at all to their protests against the conditions imposed upon them. . . . The leaders of liberal Germany had dared to hope that a peace based upon the Wilsonian program would offer the new German Republic an opportunity to co-operate to the full in building the structure of a world-community.¹

But this was not to be. French Premier Georges Clamenceau dominated the Conference proceedings. Regarding policy decisions, France's "Tiger," together with American President Woodrow Wilson, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, and Italian Premier Vittorio Orlando (although the first three greatly overshadowed Orlando) reigned supreme as the "Big Four." In the words of Lord Riddell, chief representative of the British press at the Conference, "No four kings or emperors could have conducted the conference on more autocratic lines."²

The war psychosis had not abated one bit. The dominant European chiefs of state were in Paris on the premise that they


would demand everything possible from Germany. In France, understandably, this feeling verged upon hysteria. Clemenceau was a "moderate" compared to the really extremist desire to dismember Germany politically, but he demanded the utmost in disarmament and reparations. To insure the acceptance by the others of the League of Nations Covenant, President Wilson altered his views to accommodate much that the French, British, and other national groups demanded. In this way, the idealistic Wilsonian Fourteen Point program of January, 1918, which Germany claimed to be the basis of the armistice and coming peace negotiations, was gradually eroded during four months of facing the realities of European nationalism, war-hysteria, and practical politics. The latitude of Wilson's swing of opinion can be appreciated by comparing the Allied ultimatum to Germany on June 22, 1919, demanding that the German Government accept unconditionally the unnegotiated Treaty of Versailles within twenty-four hours, or face the alternative of military invasion, with the words of Wilson's speech of January 22, 1917, seeking an end to the war through a negotiated "peace without victory":

Victory would mean peace forced upon the loser, a victor's terms imposed upon the vanquished. It would be accepted in humiliation, under duress, at an intolerable sacrifice, and would leave a sting, a resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand. Only a peace between equals can last, only a peace the very principle of which is equality and a common participation in a common benefit.3

As for Lloyd George, Lord Riddell has described his attitude on April 9, 1919:

To-day Lloyd George said that the Germans would have to pay to the uttermost farthing. He pushed aside economic difficulties and said that if the Germans decline to fulfill their obligations, we can compel them by an economic blockade.\(^4\)

When the German Peace Delegation arrived at Versailles, they were ostracized and treated contemptuously as the hateful Boche. The whole "spirit of Versailles" was revenge upon the militaristic Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm II; all the wrath, however, descended upon the incipient Republic instead of the tumbled Empire.

During a ceremony at the Trianon Palace Hotel on May 7, 1919, the peace treaty was presented to the German Delegation. Germany's Foreign Minister made a speech on behalf of the Republic. Considered a fair-minded, even eloquent appeal twenty and more years later, the Count's speech at the time had an incendiary effect upon the "Big Three." Leaving that historic meeting with Lord Riddell, President Wilson said to him,

The Germans are really a stupid people. They always do the wrong thing. They always did the wrong thing during the war. That is why I am here. They don't understand human nature. This is the most tactless speech I have ever heard. It will set the whole world against them.\(^5\)

The 80,000 word Treaty had strong critics among the Allies. Many Allied economic experts agreed with the American General Tasker H. Bliss, who had stated on March 25, 1919, "We cannot both cripple her and expect her to pay. We must

\(^4\)Riddell, p. 48. \(^5\)Ibid., p. 74.
offer terms which a responsible Government in Germany can expect
to carry out."6 On May 8, American Secretary of State Robert
Lansing remarked, "The impression made by it is one of disap­
pointment, of regret, and of depression. The terms of peace
appear immeasurably harsh and humiliating, while many of them
seem to me to be impossible of performance."7 Arthur Walworth,
one of Wilson's biographers, notes that the President said on
May 7: "If I were a German, I think I should never sign it."8

The new German Republic wanted peace and a chance for
a new beginning among the community of nations. Yet the man who
represented it at Versailles succeeded only in arousing the ire
of the "Big Three," who dictated peace terms so severe that even
prominent Allied dignitaries criticized them at the time. What
stood behind the appointment of Count Brockdorff-Rantzau as the
first Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic? Was he really,
as Lloyd George insisted, an "insolent Junker"? What brought
him to Versailles as chief plenipotentiary of the struggling
German Republic?

6Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement

7Robert Lansing, The Peace Negotiations, A Personal

8Arthur Walworth, Woodrow Wilson, Vol. II: World Pro­
CHAPTER I

"DER ROTE GRAF"

One of the most unusual and forceful personalities of modern German history was the man who became the first Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic. The overwhelming problems faced by Germany after the complete collapse of the old order called for strength and decision in the leaders of the new Republic. In Count Ulrich von Brockdorff-Rantzau the Majority Socialists found a man of experience, conviction, and authority, who, unlike many of his peers, was willing to work with them to build a democratic Germany.

Dr. Edgar Stern-Rubarth, author of the only published biography of the Count, has subtitled his study "Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten," because Brockdorff-Rantzau bridged the gap between the diplomacy of the German Empire and the Republic's desperate struggle for recognition.¹ In February, 1919, Brockdorff-Rantzau concluded his first foreign policy speech before the newly elected National Assembly in Weimar with the words: "I

¹Edgar Stern-Rubarth, Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau, Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing, 1929), p. 18. This phrase was used by Gustav Stresemann and Professor Otto Hoetzsch in their eulogies after the Count's death in September, 1928. There is also an unpublished biography by Professor Erich Brandenburg, which is based upon Brockdorff-Rantzau's private papers. The German Foreign Office prevented its publication in the early 1930's. This MS is available on microfilm as part of the Foreign Office Documents captured during World War II. It has been used as a major reference for this thesis.
hope to prove to you that a man can be both a Count and a convinced Democrat."\(^2\) His war-time history of active and successful cooperation with various radicals and with Danish and German trade unions, his friendship with the German Social Democratic leaders Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann, his ability to get along with all shades of liberal opinion, and his willingness to play a prominent part in the post-war republican experiment earned him the enmity of many members of his own class, of militarists, and of arch-conservatives generally. From this proceeded the epithet "der rote Graf" and the sarcastic phrase "le comte malgré lui."\(^3\)

The Red Count was an aristocrat and a German patriot. He was one of the few men of his class who realized early that the war could not be won and that far-reaching changes must be made if Germany was to survive as a united nation. In the words of Gustav Hilger, who was a member of his staff at the German Embassy in Moscow in the 1920's, Brockdorff-Rantzau:

combined a sharp sense of reality with fervent patriotism. He knew that the majority of his own social set would call him a traitor to his class for entering the "revolutionary" cabinet. But instead of deterring him, this attitude drew only his scorn and derision. These gentlemen were in his opinion doing the same thing they constantly attributed to the Socialists: they put the presumed interests of their class over those of the nation, whereas he had, with patri-


\(^3\) Stern-Rubarth, p. 18.
otic effort, put aside all instincts and predilections in placing himself at the disposal of the Council of Peoples Deputies.4

**Early Years**

On both sides, Brockdorff-Rantzau's family can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Family background is of great importance in understanding the personality and outlook of the Count. His father's family was distinguished in the service of the Kings of Denmark; three Rantzau's were Danish Field Marshals, and Josias Rantzau became a Marshal of France under Louis XIII.5 Among his mother's forebears, Cai Lorenz, as the first Count Brockdorff, was one of the first Danish feudal Lords.6

Ulrich Karl Christian and his twin brother, Ernst Ludwig Emil, were born in Schleswig on May 29, 1869. Their father, Count Hermann zu Rantzau, was district judge and Prussian assessor in Schleswig. When he died unexpectedly in 1872, Countess Juliana went to her father's estate in Holstein, Schloss Kletkamp, with her four sons, Friedrich was two years older than the twin brothers, and Christian, somewhat younger. Soon afterward, her uncle, Baron Ulrich von Brockdorff, adopted his namesake, the young Count Ulrich. He received the surname von Brockdorff-Rantzau, so that he might eventually inherit the uncle's estate in Schleswig, called Annettenhöh, where he had

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5Stern-Rubarth, p. 21.
been born. This accounts for the difference in surname from his twin brother, Count Ernst zu Rantzau. Identical in appearance, the two brothers enjoyed a very close relationship all their lives. Ernst died in 1930, two years after his brother.

Admiration for his great-uncle inclined the young Count Ulrich toward a diplomatic career from his earliest years. Baron Brockdorff, a cultivated man, had been the Danish King's Ambassador in Madrid, Paris, and Berlin, and had found it hard to accept Prussian rule in Schleswig-Holstein after 1864.8

Count Ulrich's education was a preparation for the diplomatic service, and he was a brilliant, scholarly young man with little inclination toward the "studentische Bummelei" then so prevalent. He completed the Gymnasium in Eutin in 1888, then studied at four Universities: Neuchâtel (where all work was in French and he acquired many French cultural ties), Freiburg, Berlin, and Leipzig, where he became Doctor of Jurisprudence. Having completed an outstanding student career at the age of twenty-two,9 he faced the problem of what he should do, for,

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8 Stern-Rubarth, pp. 32-33; Klatt, p. 16. Baron Brockdorff often spent the winter in France, and he had much to do with planning his nephew's education before his death in 1875.

9 Stern-Rubarth, pp. 34-35. Professor Friedburg of Leipzig had his scholarly dissertation published in a journal of canonical law.
"with every diploma in his pocket which was required or desirable for the diplomatic service" he was three years too young to enter it.\footnote{Ibid., p. 35. The age requirement was twenty-five.}

The Army provided an ideal solution for the young nobleman. Through his aunt, Countess Therese von Brockdorff who was the Kaiserin's Mistress of the Robes, he obtained a commission in the elite First Regiment of the Foot Guards. He enjoyed his\footnote{Ibid., p. 37.} Army years, becoming a Lieutenant in 1892. After two years he resigned and spent the six months prior to entering the diplomatic service practicing law near Schleswig with his brother Ernst.\footnote{Ibid., p. 35. The age requirement was twenty-five.}

**Beginning of Diplomatic Career**

In 1894 Brockdorff-Rantzau embarked upon his diplomatic career which was to span over thirty years. His first post was attaché in Brussels for two years. In 1897 he passed various further examinations and then went to St. Petersburg as a Legation Secretary, where he remained until 1901, forming strong friendships with German diplomats Prince Radolin and Baron Richard von Kuhlmann. The next eight years he spent in Vienna, where he became Counselor of Embassy in 1905. For a short time during the Vienna period he also served at The Hague as Counselor of Legation. In 1909 he received his first independent post, that of Consul-General in Budapest, and there he remained until 1912, when an important vacancy occurred for which he was
eligible, and most desirous of obtaining: that of German Minister in Copenhagen.\textsuperscript{12}

The Count was an extraordinary individual. Tall, slender, impeccably tailored, he was the \textit{grand seigneur} par excellence. Visibly, one's first impression was that of refinement. Paintings, photographs, and word descriptions all stress his sharp-cut, aristocratic features—dark hair, high forehead, deep-set eyes, carefully trimmed Guardsman's mustache, pale countenance, strong chin surmounting an ever present old-fashioned high white collar. He smoked cigarettes continually and greatly enjoyed fine wines and French cognac and champagne.

His mode of life was as distinctive as his appearance, even bizarre by normal standards. A lifelong bachelor, he had time and interest only for his career and intellectual pursuits; he was a connoisseur of art, a scholar of literature and history, and anything he wrote was polished to a high literary style. He completely reversed the hours kept by ordinary people. Except for essential diurnal appointments, he preferred to sleep until late in the day. In the evening he dined sparingly but elegantly, and habitually worked at his desk throughout the entire night.\textsuperscript{13} When necessary, he could drive himself relentlessly; during diplomatic and political crises he worked day and


night. Of himself, the Count once said that "... mein Lebens-
element /tst die Politik." All during his rather sequestered
life, his closest confidants were his mother, who died in 1923,
and his twin brother in Berlin.14

Reserved, but courteous to casual acquaintances, he most
enjoyed salon-type gatherings with old French cognac and his
few good friends. Of this, Professor Moritz J. Bonn observes,
"The nearer midnight, the brighter his light was shining. He
was a brilliant conversationalist as the hours went past, with
those he liked and trusted."15 Drawing on his long experience
in diplomatic circles, he was a trenchant and witty raconteur.
He was notorious for his ready wit, which took the form of
clever sarcasm "from which he spared no one, including him-
self."16 Clever at coining stinging epithets, he often lashed
out at those present without warning, and this tended to keep
others at a distance. He also loved classical allusions and
references to historical writings such as the Memoirs of Saint-
Simon. Wipert von Blücher, who, as a young member of the For-

14BMS, 1691H/1013/397 349. Living in Berlin, Graf
Ernst was recognized as Graf Ulrich's veritable alter ego and
as such was a vital link between Brockdorff-Rantzau and Berlin,
especially during the war years and later during his tenure as
Ambassador in Moscow from 1922 to 1928. Graf Ernst had married
Carmelita von Noer in 1894. Divorced in 1916, they had one son,
Graf Frederik-August zu Rantzau-Noer, who died in a Russian

15Moritz J. Bonn, Wandering Scholar (New York: The John

16Wipert von Blücher, Deutschlands Weg nach Rapallo (Wies-
baden: Limes Verlag, 1951), p. 43. See also "Brockdorff-Rantzau:
Man of the Hour in Germany," Current Opinion, LXVII (July, 1919),
p. 21, and Otto Hoetzsch, "Botschafter Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau,"
eign Office in the early days of the Republic, knew the Count
well, includes an excellent sketch in Deutschlands Weg nach
Rapallo:

When √Brockdorff-Rantzau√ was in Berlin he lived with
his twin brother in a house in the Viktoriastrasse, furn­
ished with cultivated taste and ornamented with elegant
antiques. Through Baron Lanqwerth I was, despite my youth,
brought into the group which met in the Viktoriastrasse.
It was an oval room in which the Foreign Minister received
guests with great pleasure and used to converse with them
as they sat in comfortable chairs along the walls. The
intellectual lightning bolts flew here and there and the
most striking remarks and sharpest points were always made
by the host. Even when a guest had found a fortunately
precise expression, the master of the house always had a
superior, more intensive answer. It was an intellectual
effort to take part in this exchange of thoughts, and an
aesthetic pleasure to listen to him.17

Personality Observations

Despite his charm and erudition, other aspects of his
personality proved to be serious drawbacks. He was high-strung,
nervous, finicky, and oversensitive to real or imagined slights.
Often quick to anger, he who was aptly described after his
death as "der letzte Ritter"18 was only too quick to throw down
the gauntlet when his dignity was affronted. Observations of
this nature show up in the ensuing quotations from those who
knew him well.

While Minister in Copenhagen, the Count enjoyed a warm
friendship with Maurice F. Egan, the American Minister there.
Through Egan's eyes, Brockdorff-Rantzau appears as a charming
intellectual, an aloof, very refined gentleman:

A more delightfully amusing, sophisticated, well-read man
of the world I have never met. He was one of the few Ger-

17Blücher, p. 43.   18Stern-Rubarth, p. 165.
mans who knew a good cocktail from a bad one, and whose
taste in champagne was impeccable. He was not generally
beloved by his "dear colleagues," although they never ex-
pressed their disapprobation in loud tones. . . . Socially
an aristocrat, he was in politics rather liberal. Tall,
graceful, he needed only to take a reasonable amount of
exercise to make him as handsome as he was distinguished.
One could talk with him of the coulisses de Rome as well
as of the intricacies of German party politics with great
pleasure.19

In a previous book, Egan predicted that the Count would later
have great influence in German politics, and expressed a rather
startling opinion: "Count Rantzau, if he lives, will be heard
of later; he is one of the well-balanced among diplomatists."
Continuing this train of thought, Egan added,

If he lives, he ought to go far, as he is plastic, and
sees the signs of the times. I found him delightful;
but he infuriated other people. One day, when he is ut-
terly tired of life, he will consciously exasperate
somebody to fury, in order to escape the trouble of com-
mitting suicide himself. I shall always miss him. He
is the kind of man whose society you covet on this earth,
because if all signs prove true, you are not likely to
meet him in Heaven—until late in Eternity!20

Count Johann von Bernstorff, cousin of Brockdorff-Rantz-
au and Ambassador to Washington from 1913-1917, offered a
brief but valid observation in his Memoirs:

Rantzau was very gifted and intelligent, but had
serious disabilities; his extreme suspiciousness, which
bordered on persecution mania, and his inability to
make even the briefest impromptu speech before a large
assembly. Added to which there was his personal sensi-
tiveness, which made him take every divergence of view

19 Maurice F. Egan, Recollections of a Happy Life (New
York: George H. Doran and Co., 1924), pp. 263-64.

20 Maurice F. Egan, Ten Years Near the German Frontier
as a personal matter. When he mentioned anyone, he never said: "He takes this or that view"; but "He is for me or against me." 21

Eugen Schiffer, Democrat and Vice Chancellor under Scheidemann, describes his first meeting with the Count at the end of 1918. He was, wrote Schiffer,

an extremely elegant man, dark eyes in a pale countenance, impeccably attired, with almost overly polite manners and courtly dexterity. . . . he belonged to the feudal diplomacy, and as the nephew of the Chief Lady in Waiting of the Kaiswomen he had stood especially close to the Court. But he definitely made no use of these advantages of birth. In our following conversation lasting far into the night, he reiterated that the position of the Party made no difference to him and that he was ready to serve any government that would allow him, within agreed-upon limits, a free hand in foreign policy. . . . He was sensitive and suspicious, of an easily aroused nature, a real bundle of nerves. 22

Professor Moritz J. Bonn, who became a trusted and valuable advisor to the German Delegation at Versailles, had some incisive observations regarding Brockdorff-Rantzau, whom he came to know very well. The Count was, wrote Bonn,

a liberal by temperament, not by conviction, as many of his more intelligent colleagues have been. Being an individualist of almost anarchistic proclivities, he disliked bureaucrats and soldiers. A courtier rather than a statesman, he was far better fitted to deal with persons than with problems. . . . He could work equally well with Communists and conservatives, pacifists and nationalists, provided they respected his sensitive ego. For he did not identify himself with a cause; he identified the cause with himself; everything with him was personal. His ambition was limitless—he would have liked to be German chancellor or even president of the Reich; he would not have minded the political color of the party that chose him. . . . He was an extremely

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interesting personality who needed but a small amount of common sense and a little less egotism to achieve actual greatness. He was a lonely man; few people trusted him.²³

Perhaps the best discussion of his personality and attitude by one who knew him well is given by Gustav Hilger, who wrote of him:

Rantzau was in no way preoccupied with "social justice" and paid no allegiance to political ideals like liberty and equality. The range of values that mattered to his own inner personality might have seemed to be primarily aesthetic, not social. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than the enjoyment of fine style, be it in a masterpiece of fine arts from his exquisite collection, a literary gem, or in personal conduct... The length to which he went in his sensitivity to style was indeed in the nature of an obsession; ... But Rantzau's arrogance was not simply the narrow ancestor-pride of the aristocrat who has nothing but noble forebears to boast of; his was the nervous, finicky arrogance of the aesthete who has absorbed the highest standards of his culture and abhors those unable to reach the same heights...

He advocated democratic reforms from the firm conviction that Germany could no more be governed in the old ways without inviting the most serious internal difficulties. Thus his vigorous espousal of social and democratic reforms stemmed from the desire to aid Germany's war effort by preventing internal convulsions. Moreover, sensing the coming defeat long before the majority of generals and politicians were ready to admit the possibility, Rantzau wanted to deprive the democratic enemies of Germany of the argument that Germany was a bastion of reaction.²⁴

**Relations with the Court**

As a former Imperial diplomat, his standing with the Kaiser is of interest and importance in regard to his later allegiance to the Republic. "Not being of old Prussian origin," said Professor Bonn of the Count, "he was not encumbered by the traditional loyalty that bound the Junker to the House of Hohen-

zollern, and he had not found it hard to throw in his lot with the Republic." Brockdorff-Rantzau was well acquainted at Court and he had known the Kaiser since 1891. According to Stern-Rubarth,

The Kaiser was always friendly and benevolent toward Brockdorff-Rantzau, and had his eye on his capabilities ever since asking Professor Schottmüller for the examination papers /Prüfungsarbeiten/ of the extraordinary young officer upon his joining the First Guard Regiment, the first Doctor of Jurisprudence and junior barrister who had entered the Prussian Army... Apparently, the young Count never took the Kaiser's lead in establishing a genial relationship; before the All-Highest his mien was always professional, intellectual, and dignified.

It is appropriate to relate here that Count Ernst was Chamberlain at the Imperial German Court for many years, eventually becoming Privy Councillor. The Kaiser's partial abdication on November 9, 1918, when he gave up the throne as German Kaiser, but refused to abdicate as King of Prussia, was a monstrous political gaffe. It was Graf Ernst, who, as delegate from the Council of People's Representatives, obtained Wilhelm's signature on the instrument of complete abdication, dated November 28, 1918, which began, "I herewith renounce for all time my right to the Crown of Prussia, and to the German Imperial Crown connected therewith." Both brothers wished to see the

25 Bonn, p. 229.  
26 Stern-Rubarth, pp. 44-45. 
ex-Kaiser adequately provided for. When the Council of People's Representatives (Majority Socialist forerunner of the Weimar Government) discussed what should be done with the former Kaiser's property,

Brockdorff-Rantzau suggested that it should neither be expropriated nor be handed back to be disposed of freely. Instead, the Kaiser's private property should be used by the German state to pay him and his family a life-long annuity that would enable them to live according to their status. Rantzau wanted to prevent the house of Hohenzollern from using their tremendous fortunes to the detriment of the republic.28

Former Imperial Chancellor Prince Bernhard von Bülow recorded in his Memoirs a conversation with Wilhelm II on June 27, 1909, when they discussed possible successors to Bülow as Chancellor, and wondered also who would be a good prospect for Foreign Secretary:

Bülow: Brockdorff-Rantzau is also talented.

Kaiser: I don't care for him. He's the nephew of Therese Brockdorff, my wife's Mistress of the Robes, and I don't like personal relationships between the Foreign Office and my people at Court.29

The Kaiser remembered Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, however, when three years later, he needed an exceptionally able diplomat and a writer of lucid and detailed dispatches in the sensitive post of German Minister in Copenhagen.

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28 Hilger, pp. 87-88.

CHAPTER II

THE VIEW FROM COPENHAGEN

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau was German Minister in Copenhagen from 1912 until the end of the First World War. He was very pleased with this assignment, for he considered the German-Scandinavian relationship of great diplomatic importance. Descended from Danish and German nobility, he was uniquely qualified for this position.

Since the turn of the century, several war scares had ruffled the serenity of what was otherwise a golden age for Europe, and nationalist ambitions continually built up dangerous pressures. With the inception of the Triple Entente in 1907, German and Austrian military chiefs became obsessed with the fear of encirclement, or Einkreisung. Glancing northward from Budapest, where, as German Consul-General he had been close to the explosive Balkan situation, the Count realized the potential importance of Scandinavia to Germany's security. As enemies, the northern countries would force Germany to keep permanent contingents of troops on the north coast, but as “friendly neu-

1Although seniority made him eligible for Sofia or Lisbon, he declined these posts, preferring to remain in Budapest until that in Copenhagen became available, where he believed he would “really be in a position to accomplish something useful.” BMS, 1689H/1012/396 726. The post in Copenhagen was considered, as "an old tradition of the Foreign Office," as preparatory to the Ambassadorship in St. Petersburg. Stern-Rubarth, p. 45.
trals" their proximity to shipping lanes would be useful to Germany and they could be a source of food and raw materials.² He was especially interested in the Danish-German relationship.

Denmark's "German Course"

The reign of King Christian X of Denmark had begun shortly before Brockdorff-Rantzau assumed his ministerial duties in Copenhagen. Under the Radical-Socialist ministry of Prime Minister Carl Zahle, Denmark continued the so-called "Tysker-Kurs" (German course) aimed at friendly relations with the mighty German Empire.³ They feared to do otherwise; despite protective treaties, no one had come to Denmark's aid in 1864 when Prussia took Schleswig-Holstein. Danish Conservatives still hoped to rectify this injustice some day, perhaps by joining Germany's adversaries if a European war broke out.⁴

²BMS, 1689H/1012/396 730-31.

³Christian X also favoured this course. BMS, 1689/1012/396 731, 786. According to a pre-World War II expose of Danish-German relations, the policy of not antagonizing Germany began in 1901, when a Liberal Government supplanted the Conservatives. See Joachim Joesten, Rats in the Larder; The Story of Nazi Influence in Denmark (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, pp. 223-26.

⁴Article V of the Treaty of Prague between Prussia and Austria provided that a plebiscite should decide whether predominantly Danish North Schleswig should be returned to Denmark. By a Danish-German Treaty of 1907, Denmark agreed to the post-1866 North Schleswig boundary without a plebiscite. Danish resistance continued, however, despite long-standing Prussian subjugation. See Ralph H. Lutz's extensive introduction to Hans Peter Hanssen, Diary of a Dying Empire, tr. Oscar Osburn Winther (Indiana University Press, 1955), pp. xix-xx, xvi-xvii.

Thus evolved the paradox of Danish politics vis-à-vis Germany. In Joesten's words: "While the Conservative and Right-Wing Liberals, though ideologically more in sympathy with the Kaiserreich's regime than with the Western democracies, refused to capitulate to the mailed fist, Social-Democrats and Radicals were all in favor of surrender. Joesten p. 235.
The Count, therefore, bent every effort to maintain the Danish democratic elements in power. He was on good terms with many Cabinet Ministers, especially Foreign Minister Eric von Scavenius, and, as the scion of Danish and German noble families, he was respected at the Danish Court. Brockdorff-Rantzau, himself a Schleswiger, urged that the German-Danish hostility in this northern part of Germany be played down in order to avoid giving encouragement to the Danish conservatives. "Again and again," wrote Erich Brandenburg, "he stressed that domestic politics must not be allowed to dominate foreign policy."5 This was one of his cardinal precepts, though it was often ignored in Berlin.

Outbreak of the First World War

War clouds gathered over Europe again in the summer of 1914, and this time they did not disperse. Brockdorff-Rantzau was attending the Kiel Regatta when news of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand was received. Like the other diplomatic representatives of Germany abroad, the Count received only scant information from the Imperial Government regarding the negotiations taking place between the governments involved. During the tense period following the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, he received no directions as to what he should do in case war broke out, except "to see that Denmark realized the seriousness of the situation."6 He was not even apprised by the Foreign Office of the German declaration of war against Rus-

5BMS, 1689H/1012/396 730-32.

sia. Brandenburg relates that Brockdorff-Rantzau received instructions to aid the homeward journey through Denmark of the Russian Ambassador to Berlin when the special train crossed over the Danish border, and from this "he had to conclude that the diplomatic relations between Germany and Russia were broken and that in all probability a state of war between the two countries already existed."  

Brockdorff-Rantzau's first duty, of course, was to insure Denmark's neutrality. On his own initiative he indicated that Germany had no wish to violate Danish neutrality, and obtained a statement from the Danish Government on August 3 that Denmark would not join with Germany's enemies. Two days later he was directed by his Government to request that Denmark mine certain of her territorial waters (the Big Belt and the Little Belt) herself, if she did not wish Germany to do so. This was a hard decision for Denmark to make. But once again, fear of German reprisal forced her to comply: if the Danes refused to mine the Belts themselves, then Germany would do it and station German troops on the various islands to guard the installations. It took all Count Brockdorff-Rantzau's skill and diplomatic

7BMS, 1689H/1012/396 734.
8BMS, 1689H/1012/396 734-35.
9A Danish Royal Proclamation of August 1 had declared absolute neutrality; furthermore, according to a 1912 neutrality agreement between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the Belts and Sound were to remain open to all vessels, merchantmen and warships, in war and peace. Joesten, p. 231. King Christian X wired his cousin, King George V of England, appealing for his understanding of Denmark's position. Ibid., p. 236.
adoritess to make the necessary demands upon Denmark regarding sea defenses and to restrain Germany's military and naval authorities from infringing on Danish neutrality during the next four years.  

Danish-German Economic Ties

From 1912 on, Brockdorff-Rantzau had strived for a closer economic relationship between the two countries, often with much difficulty.  

He successfully fostered friendly relations, which, when war came, developed into an economic arrangement vital to both sides. For wartime deliveries of coal to Denmark, Germany received essential foodstuffs. This Kohlenpolitik was necessary even if it hurt Germany; otherwise, Denmark would be forced to look again to England if the German coal supply failed, and Germany might find the friendly larder door closed.

Brockdorff-Rantzau appreciated every nuance of the delicate relationship between Denmark and the two warring powers, Germany and England. He sometimes made recommendations

King Christian X respected Brockdorff-Rantzau, and is reputed to have said after the war, "Denmark should really put up a monument to him." BMS, 1689H/1012/396 859.

He vigorously advocated, for example, the building of the Fehmarn Railroad line (Hamburg-Lübeck-Fehmarn Island-to-Copenhagen) which, cutting hours off the old Kiel-Korsør-Copenhagen route, would have greatly benefited businessmen. This earned him the ill will of German naval authorities who resented the by-passing of the important naval headquarters of Kiel. Brockdorff-Rantzau complained that "it was incomprehensible ... that they are building railroads in Asia to strengthen German political influence, and, where a similar possibility exists right at our doorstep they reject it." BMS, 1689H/1012/396 732-33.
which Berlin found difficult to accept and to which the German Admirals were especially opposed. Through 1916 he insisted on a realistic approach in view of Britain's naval superiority. In order to retain Denmark as a "friendly neutral" Germany simply had to tolerate some Danish shipments of grain to England, one of Denmark's essential markets. If the Danish economy collapsed, there would be no more food shipments to Germany. He reminded Berlin that Danish dependence on a commercial relationship with England had developed as a result of Germany's previous Schutzzollpolitik, and he now sought to direct Denmark's commercial orientation southward without upsetting her economy. Constantly, in conversations and reports, he reiterated his conviction that the nation which first injured Danish neutrality would become Denmark's enemy. Germany, he said, would be wiser to refrain from provocative acts and let England be the first to get tough with Denmark about neutrality violations. It was even better to offer to protect

12 According to Dr. Edvard Brandes, Finance Minister in the Zahle Cabinet, as much as two-thirds of Denmark's exported produce went to England and the other one-third to Germany. See Brandes, p. 33.

In a memorandum of April, 1917, Brockdorff-Rantzau noted: "If we deliver coal and iron to a greater extent, the feeling of being forced into economic dependence on England will disappear. Herr von Scavenius has mentioned that, in this case, in addition to other concessions, he would also be in a position to increase significantly the quota of horses." BMS, 1689H/1012/396 790.

13 BMS, 1689H/1012/396 792-33. Cf. Hanssen, p. xxv, which describes the expansion of Danish agricultural export trade to England in the latter 19th century, since "the only open market left was the British . . ."
Denmark from British coercion.14

The ultimate goal of Brockdorff-Rantzau's Danish policy was twofold. First, he wanted to avoid incurring the enmity of Sweden and Norway, which he felt would be the result of German military pressure on Denmark. He wrote to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg in April, 1917, "If we, for economic reasons, attack Denmark militarily, Denmark will cease to exist politically, and the hostility toward us of both the other Scandinavian lands is certain."15

His second objective was both shrewd and practical. German military pressure, he wrote in the same month, "would ruin our whole Scandinavian policy. We need Denmark as a neutral broker after the conclusion of peace, in order to reinstate relationships with the nations with whom we are now at war, and to rebuild our economic life."16 For this, a long-standing economic partnership between the two countries was essential.

14 BMS, 1689H/1012/396 766, 768, 784, 786, 836.


16 BMS, 1689H/1012/396 826, 862-63, 792, 93, 99.
**U-Boats and the Americans**

Six years in Copenhagen, the "whispering gallery of Europe," made Brockdorff-Rantzau much more aware of events and opinions in other countries than many German statesmen and military leaders at the time. He was among those Germans who warned against intensifying the submarine warfare when the military and naval commanders promised to subdue England within months if Germany unleashed the U-boats. The Count considered this a foolhardy measure because he was one of the few German diplomats in contact with representatives of neutral and Allied states during the whole war.

In addition to keeping Denmark a friendly neutral, Brockdorff-Rantzau considered it of greatest importance to remain on friendly terms with the Americans who were in Copenhagen. Even worse than Danish alignment with the Allies was the possibility of armed American intervention against Germany. The Count was one of the first Germans to realize the enormity—and then the probability of this. He cultivated the friendship of the American Minister in Copenhagen, and was considerate of American diplomats and travelers whenever requests were made of him.¹⁷

One of the most interesting and prescient accounts of diplomatic life in the Danish capital is *Ten Years Near the*

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¹⁷"He was always decent to Americans," wrote Maurice F. Egan, the American Minister to Denmark, of Brockdorff-Rantzau, "and he was shocked when he found that his laissez passer, which I obtained from him for the Hon. D. I. Murphy and his wife to pursue their journey to Holland, was treated as a 'scrap of paper.'" Egan, *Ten Years...,* pp. 306-08. Unfortunately, German military authorities and border guards usually paid no heed to these diplomatic niceties.
German Frontier, by Maurice Francis Egan, who was the American Minister to Denmark from 1907 to 1918. Respected at the Danish Court, where he became Dean of the diplomatic corps in Copenhagen about 1917 as the senior representative, Egan was well regarded by the other diplomats gathered in that enclave of neutrality so close to the scene of war. In this book he refers many times to Brockdorff-Rantzau as "my colleague across the street." Although Egan became more and more mistrustful of Germany's actions and intentions, he and the Count struck up a close friendship over the years. Propinquity undoubtedly played some part in it, yet it was not surprising; both were men of letters, good taste, and elegant manners, who delighted in refined conversation.

Despite the genuine friendship with the German Minister, Dr. Egan never lost sight of the menace of German militarism. His whole book was a warning against Germany's aggressive intentions. Well before the war broke out in 1914, Egan realized the danger of German influence over Denmark, which would lead, in the case of German occupation of Denmark, to German ownership of the Danish West Indies! Largely as a result of Egan's skillful handling, these outer Caribbean islands with strategic deep water harbors were purchased by the United States from Denmark "just in time"--December, 1916. They were renamed the Virgin Islands.

As late as 1916, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau continued to impress Americans in Copenhagen very favorably. "Count Rantzau,"
wrote Egan,

was desirous of keeping peace with the United States. I think that he regarded war with us as so dangerous as to be almost unthinkable. I found Count Rantzau a very clever man; he played his game fairly. It was a game, and he was a colleague worth any man's respect. He is one of the most cynical, brilliant, forcible diplomats in Europe, with Liberal tendencies in politics. 18

Several times in 1916, James W. Gerard (American Ambassador in Berlin since the end of 1913) passed through Copenhagen on the way to and from the United States. At least twice, Egan arranged luncheons for him and his wife, to which Brockdorff-Rantzau and others connected with the German Legation were also invited. Conversation was partly in French; although Gerard told Egan that he spoke little French, "he got on immensely well with Count Rantzau, who spoke no English." 19 Gerard, not noted for friendliness toward Germans, considered the Count "a most able diplomat" and set down his impressions after further meetings with him in Copenhagen toward the end of 1916:

In Copenhagen, too, both on the way out and in, we lunched with Count Rantzau-Brockdorff [sic], then German Minister there. Count Rantzau is skillful and wily, and not at all military in his instincts; and, I should say, far more inclined to arrive at a reasonable compromise than the average German diplomat. He is a charming International with none of the rough points and aggressive manners which characterise so many Prussian officials. 20

18Ibid., p. 270. 19Ibid., p. 282.

20James W. Gerard, My Four Years in Germany (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1917), p. 425. Regarding one of his trips back into Germany Gerard relates: "I remained a day in Copenhagen, in order to arrange for the transportation to Germany of the three tons of food which I had brought from New York. and, also, in order to lunch with Count Rantzau, the German Minister, a most able diplomat." Ibid., p. 352.
Herbert Bayard Swope, correspondent for the New York World who had spent several months in Germany, returned to New York with Gerard in August, 1916, via Copenhagen. Swope reported extensively on wartime conditions within Germany, and gave his opinion in the New York World that intensified submarine warfare was inevitable. Gerard had said as much in a somewhat indiscreet interview with Swope aboard ship. In his Pulitzer Prize winning book, Inside the German Empire, in the Third Year of the War, published in 1917, Swope also recorded that: "Count Rantzau, a few days after he had paid a visit to the Kaiser and the great general staff, told me frankly that he feared the plan for all-out U-boat war was rapidly becoming unavoidable." Swope considered Brockdorff-Rantzau "unusually able" and identified him as "the very intelligent German Minister to Denmark." 

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Count Bernstorff mentions Swope, along with William Bayard Hale, Karl von Wieheid, Cyril Brown, and Karl W. Ackerman, as American journalists who had helped to provide accurate and favourable information on Germany for the American public through 1916. Swope also pressed the theme of German hatred of Americans, but Bernstorff viewed this as an "election manoeuvre," offset by Swope's praise of German "efficiency" and organization on the home front. Count Johann Heinrich Bernstorff, My Three Years in America (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 338.

22Herbert Bayard Swope, Inside the German Empire, in the Third Year of the War (New York: The Century Co., 1917), pp. 88, 55, 77-78.

Before leaving Copenhagen, Swope wrote in a personal letter: "My dear Excellency:- My wife and I feel we can not leave Copenhagen without expressing to you the real pleasure we felt in meeting you. I congratulate Germany in being so ably represented at this important post, and I shall take pleasure in expressing this sentiment in Berlin and Washington. I
Dr. Egan's position of official neutrality had become more and more difficult after the *Lusitania* tragedy in May, 1915. He tells how, after hearing of Bernstorff's infamous advertisement (Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador in Washington, was a cousin of Brockdorff-Rantzau) warning Americans not to sail in British or Allied ships,

... I had said ... "The day after an American is killed without warning at sea, we will declare war!" It was undiplomatic, but I had said it to Count Rantzau, to Prince Wittgenstein, to Count Raben-Levetzau, to Prince Valdemar, to the Princes, to other persons, and, I think, at the Foreign Office.23

As already mentioned, Brockdorff-Rantzau did regard unrestricted U-boat warfare as a reckless move, to be avoided. A year before the February, 1917, decision making it official German policy, he had given his opinion, in answer to a secret dispatch from the Chancellor, that America would enter the war immediately if the U-boat war was intensified.24

German official circles believed that England, the most powerful and determined Allied nation in 1916, would only accept the idea of negotiations leading to a *status quo* peace if convinced that America would not join the Allies in the war.

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regret that our stay in Copenhagen should have been so brief as I should have liked our acquaintance to have ripened into friendship. Perhaps that opportunity will come, if not before, when you are sent as Ambassador to America. We would be fortunate in having a man of such broad understanding, wide sympathies, and attractive personality as the German representative—a worthy successor to Bernstorff who has done so well there.

..."Swope, to Brockdorff-Rantzau, August 15, 1916, "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3438/231 371-82. By June, 1917, Swope was "sweepingly characterizing all the subjects inside the Empire as 'those damned Germans.'" Kahn, pp. 183-84.


24BMS, 1689H/1012/396 752.
President Wilson seemed to want to keep out of the war, but his fundamental pro-English feeling was becoming apparent, and would certainly be sparked by another incident like the Lusitania or the Arabic, as Bernstorff constantly warned from Washington. Yet the German High Command evidently ascribed little importance to possible American intervention, and pressed harder for the unrestricted use of submarines. Egan describes Brockdorff-Rantzau's attitude at this time:

We were still "neutral," and the election was some months off. Count Rantzau saw the danger which the military party was courting. He was too discreet to make confidential remarks, which I would at once repeat to my Government; he knew, of course, that I would not repeat them to my colleagues, who never, however, asked what he said to me. He was equally tactful, but we saw that he was exceedingly nervous about the outcome of the U-boat aggression. It was worthwhile to know his attitude, for he represented much that was really important in Germany. He began to be more nervous, and many things he said, which I can not repeat, indicated that the military party was running amuck.

In Copenhagen, Egan held a magnifying glass upon the German situation. He saw that, despite the existence of opposition views and those who would conclude a reasonable peace, Germany was hopelessly dominated by the military. He felt

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25 Bernstorff, My Three Years..., p. 295. In their books on wartime Germany, Gerard, Egan, Swope, (and Bernstorff) all refer to the persistent belief in Germany that German-Americans, remaining loyal to Germany, would actually prevent an American declaration of war against Germany. Gerard and Egan did what they could to refute this notion, and Swope notes that Egan was aided by Brockdorff-Rantzau, "who finally came to this view and helped eradicate the mistaken one that had been held in Berlin." Swope, pp. 77-78.

Some things contributed to the notion. In a secret meeting of the Finance Committee, March 10, 1915, Secretary of State Heif erich mentioned that "... appreciable sums were subscribed to the second German war loan in Scandinavia, Switzerland, and America, especially by the Germans in the last-named country." Hanssen, p. 101.

26 Egan, Ten Years..., p. 306.
events would inevitably drag America into the conflict, especially if Russia collapsed. By the end of 1916 Egan realized that "we must enter the war eventually, yet the depth and breadth of German preparedness was horrifying; and we are so unready; we must gain time."  

Egan's frequent contact with the Count did not go unobserved and uncriticized. The British were increasingly worried; Egan relates that:

A messenger came to warn me—a messenger from one of my best English friends—that it would be well for me not to see so much of Count Rantzau. It was easy, my friend said, for me to be attracted by mere cleverness and to forget what England was fighting for. It had been reported that I had said that when Rantzau was Voltaire, he was frightfully diabolical; when he was Heine, he was delightfully diabolical; but when he was just Rantzau, he was the devil himself! This had reached the ears of some of my English friends, and they thought such companionship might lead me to take the war issues too lightly.  

For over two years Egan walked the tightrope of neutrality and worked toward the one contribution he could make toward his country's preparedness: the timely purchase of the Danish West Indies.

If they feared that Maurice Egan might be charmed over to the wrong side of the fence, the British representatives in Copenhagen recognized "Brock," as they called him, for what he was: the most influential and best supported diplomat in the

27 Ibid., p. 300. At the beginning of the war, Sir Henry Lowther (at that time British Minister in Copenhagen) had astonished Egan with the prophecy: "Our great weakness is Russia; if you do not come in and offset it, I fear greatly." Ibid., p. 311.

28 Ibid., pp. 299-300.
Danish capital as long as the radical government remained in power.29

**Peace Feelers through Denmark**

Politically and geographically, Denmark was in a unique position to offer mediation for peace. Married to Princess Alexandrine of Mecklinburg-Schwerin, King Christian X was also related to both the British and Russian ruling families. In the first two years of the war, the Danish King had offered Germany a tenuous means of contact with Russia or England. Two approaches to Russia in this manner failed.30

The English diplomats in Copenhagen were a good barometer of Britain's reactions toward peace feelers, and Brokdorff-Rantzau left no stone unturned in gathering such information. On December 12, 1916, Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg had made a speech in the Reichstag in favor of peace negotiations. Because this move seemed to flaunt the strong German military position, Lloyd George spoke out against the idea until Germany would guarantee reparation and restitution of invaded

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29On January 17, 1917, an article called "Denmark's Uncrowned King" appeared in *The Bystander*, an English language newspaper circulated among diplomatic circles in Copenhagen. Picked up in the British press also, it described "Brock's" inordinate influence over Danish affairs, which was credited to the existence of a strong German element in Denmark and the well-staffed and funded German Legation and spy system over which "Brock" ruled with an iron hand. BMS, 1689H/1012/396 874-76, "Nachlass B-R," 9101H/3439/H232 804-12.

30According to Birnbaum, p. 104, King Christian "...offered to make confidential approaches through Hans Niels Andersen, a Danish ship-owner with international contacts, in order to sound the feelings towards peace in official circles in Britain and Russia." Nothing came of either attempt, in 1914 and 1916. Rudolf Stadelmann, "Friedensversuche im ersten
England was officially unreceptive to the German offer, yet Brockdorff-Rantzau reported that peace feelers would not be altogether ignored by England at the end of 1916.

The year 1917 was the turning point for England as well as America. Germany's decision for all-out U-boat warfare plus the intensified raids on England by bombers and Zeppelins launched England on a "crusade" against Germany. As Prime Minister of the coalition government formed at the very end of 1916, David Lloyd George was the leader of Britain's determined war effort. Three months previously he had said

Jahre des Weltkrieges," Historische Zeitschrift, CLVI (1937), 516-18, gives a more detailed account of the 1914 approach to Russia through Copenhagen and describes Brockdorff-Rantzau's part in promoting it.

Brockdorff-Rantzau reported, after December 12, that he had heard that the British Minister in Copenhagen [Sir Ralph Paget] had said that any English government accepting the peace offer of the Central Powers would be hanged. BMS, 1689H/1012/396 915. Perhaps this was merely an English idiom!

See Karl E. Birnbaum, Peace Moves and U-Boat Warfare (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1958), p. 250n, which mentions a dispatch from Brockdorff-Rantzau to the Foreign Office on December 18, 1916, "suggesting a desire for peace on the part of the Entente." A report written by the Count in 1922 for a committee investigating various peace attempts mentions England's readiness to discuss peace at the very beginning of 1917. BMS, 1689H/1012/396 898-903. See also Link, pp. 177-84, 230-31.

For a good account of the air raids, see Dr. Douglas H. Robinson, "Zeppelins in the German Navy, 1914-1918," United States Naval Institute Proceedings, LXXXII (July, 1956), pp. 742-61.

In his 1922 report on peace attempts, Brockdorff-Rantzau said that in February, 1917, "It was revealed to me through an intermediary that the English negotiator who had arrived in Copenhagen refused to meet with me because he had nothing further to say to me." BMS, 1689H/1012/396 901.
that England would settle for nothing less than complete defeat of German militarism and the ruling classes in Germany—the impassioned declaration that became known as the "knock-out blow."\(^{34}\)

In January of 1918, King Christian considered the time ripe to approach England about ending the war before a new spring offensive began, and Danish Foreign Minister Scavenius informed Brockdorff-Rantzau that the King was willing to attempt mediation again. Chancellor Hertling, the Kaiser, and Field Marshal von Hindenburg discussed this offer and decided that Germany's position was too unfavorable for an acceptable settlement. Brockdorff-Rantzau urged modification of German demands in vain; London, however, had already declined the Danish King's confidential inquiry.\(^{35}\)

**Plans to "Revolutionize" Russia**

From the beginning of the war, the object of German diplomacy was to break up the Entente by concluding a separate peace with Russia or France. Germany expected to gain more in that way than from the results of a general peace conference. This policy in all its variations is examined by Karl E. Birnbaum in *Peace Moves and U-Boat Warfare*. Ever since the summer of 1915, Brockdorff-Rantzau had been interested in the project of provoking revolution in Russia, in

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\(^{34}\) See Link, *Campaigns, 1916-1917*, p. 176, for Lloyd George's "knock-out" interview with the American reporter Roy W. Howard, September 28, 1916. For a very good German study of Lloyd George's position of wartime leadership in Britain, see Erwin Hölzle, "Lloyd George im Weltkrieg," *Historische Zeitschrift*, CLVI (1937), 40-70.

\(^{35}\) BMS, 1689H/1012/396 902; Stern-Rubarth, pp. 54-57.
order to weaken the Entente.

During his years in Copenhagen, the Kohlenpolitik kept the Count in constant touch with Danish and German Social Democrats including Philipp Scheidemann and Friedrich Ebert, who became leaders of the early Weimar Republic. In this way he had met a certain Dr. Helphand (known as Parvus among revolutionaries), an ex-Russian belonging to the German Social Democratic Party. Helphand had many ideas and contacts that might exploit the revolutionary movement in Russia to Germany's advantage. Brockdorff-Rantzau advised the Chancellor to use any means available, including Helphand's scheme of shipping known revolutionaries to Russia—above all Lenin, who was then biding his time in Switzerland. In an extensive report to the Foreign Office on December 6, 1915, Brockdorff-Rantzau had warned that Germany's "existence as a great power is at stake—perhaps even more. . . . Victory, and as reward the first place in the world is ours, however, if we succeed in revolutionizing Russia at the expedient moment, thereby destroying the Coalition." At first Bethmann-Hollweg and the Foreign Office had hesitated. A recent study of Lenin's "shipment" through Germany refers to memoranda and secret dispatches from the Count to the Foreign Office in the first week of April, 1917, urging that Lenin be


37 Fritz Fischer, "Deutsche Kriegsziele, Revolutionierung und Separatfrieden im Osten 1914-1918," Historische Zeitschrift, CLXXXVIII (1959), 259-60, 301, treats this report extensively, noting that it does not appear in the Zeman collection of documents relating to Germany's part in creating the November revolution in Russia. See also Birnbaum, p. 18n.
sent to Russia without further delay. When General Ludendorff approved the idea, the trip was accomplished early that month.\textsuperscript{38} With America on the side of the Allies, the move had become imperative.

It remained for Germany to conclude peace with the Soviets after the November Revolution in 1917. Always with his eye on future German-Soviet relations, Brockdorff-Rantzau recommended lenient terms and no annexations. "The peace," he had said on April 1, "can be either a German-English one or a German-Russian one. I hold the latter prospect for the more probable."\textsuperscript{39} But the harsh terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March, 1918, were a complete refutation of the Count's long-term Russian policy.

\textbf{Peace and Reform Movements in Germany}

The cordial working relationship with Social Democrats of Denmark and Germany which developed during the war years profoundly influenced the Count's diplomatic career. Kaiser Wilhelm II is said to have referred to Brockdorff-Rantzau at this time as "the only sensible man among my diplomats--he has understood even how to deal with the Social Democrats!"\textsuperscript{40} Writing of it later on, the Count described being well received at an

\textsuperscript{38}Werner Hahlweg, "Lenins Reise durch Deutschland im April 1917," Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte, IV (October 1957), 312-22.

\textsuperscript{39}BMS, 1689H/1012/396 920-28; 1690H/1013/396 941.

\textsuperscript{40}Edward Hallett Carr, German-Soviet Relations between the Two World Wars, 1919-1939 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1951). p. 67; Stern-Rubarth, p. 60.
audience with the Kaiser in May, 1916. Wilhelm, he said, had evidenced the "liveliest interest" in the Danish negotiations. After 1917, the Kaiser's opinion changed abruptly. Brockdorff-Rantzau's memorandum continues, "Since I was suspected by the Kaiser, after the opening of the unrestricted submarine warfare, of being a defeatist, he received me very ungraciously in May, 1917 . . . ."41

Exactly as predicted, the resumption of unrestricted U-boat war early in 1917 had brought the United States into the war against Germany. The divergence of German military and civilian viewpoints was thrown into sharp relief with the passage of the Reichstag Peace Resolution of July 19, 1917, masterminded by the impetuous Catholic Center Party member Matthias Erzberger.42 Although it realigned the political parties, bringing together the Social Democrats, Centrists, and Progressives, General Ludendorff remained virtual dictator. Three Chancellors and three Foreign Secretaries were to fall in thirteen months, while the Supreme Command dangled the prospect of military success.

Before the Peace Resolution, the inexperienced Chancellor Georg Michaelis, Bethmann-Hollweg's successor, had cast about for a suitable man to replace Arthur Zimmermann who had resigned as Foreign Secretary. The choice narrowed to Baron Richard von

41 The Kaiser explained that after America's declaration of war he could have no further consideration for small neutral states. See Stern-Rubarth, p. 58, and BMS, 1689H/1012/396 803.

42 On Erzberger and the Peace Resolution, see Klaus Epstein, Matthias Erzberger and the Dilemma of German Democracy (Princeton University Press, 1959), pp. 182-213. Erzberger was a rash opportunist who, however, always had the best interests of his country at heart. He was to have profound influence on Germany's Versailles decision.
Kühlmann and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau. On July 18, 1917, the Count penned a memorandum in Copenhagen regarding the conditions under which he would accept the appointment.

The action was characteristic of the man; Brockdorff-Rantzau's suspicious nature and legal-trained mind never allowed him to accept any position of responsibility without first meticulously setting forth his concept of the job and the conditions under which he would undertake it. He wrote:

If I take over the office of Foreign Secretary, it will be my duty to work toward a peace which will be commensurate with the sacrifice which the German nation has made, and which will guarantee the future of the nation and her rightful place in the world.43

He then demanded to know the truth from the Supreme Command and the Navy about the military situation. A second memorandum (August 1) is very critical of the ascendancy of the military over the political leadership. Ludendorff's promises of victory were simply not materializing and the submarine campaign had failed so far to break England down. Facing a bleak fourth winter of war, he recommended a Wilson-like peace without victory:

If we are led on further by the military authorities, it only remains for us to perish in grandeur, in my opinion. As things now stand, it is the duty of the politicians to ask if the people would not, instead of this, prefer to live.

We must therefore strive for a peace of understanding. The present military situation offers a suitable basis to reach this goal. Nicht besiegt werden, heisst doch nicht siegen.44

43BMS, 1690H/1013/396 934.

44Ibid., 1690H/1013/396 939-40ff. On May 4, 1917, Brockdorff-Rantzau had expressed his opinion to General Ludendorff that Germany's allies, especially Austria-Hungary, were "at the end of their strength" and that the military situation was very unfavorable for Germany. BMS, 1690H/1013/396 948.
Nothing, he said, should be done without consulting the people's representatives, "who now have a strong voice." Not only that, but the Kaiser must take the initiative in setting up a parliamentary government.

To Michaelis, who paid little attention to the Peace Resolution, Brockdorff-Rantzau's views must have been too radical. He chose Richard von Kühlmann.

After almost a year in office Kühlmann, too, concluded that diplomatic action would be needed to end the war. General Ludendorff insisted that the Kaiser replace Kühlmann with Admiral von Hintze, then German Minister in Norway, whom the Supreme Command could control. A fifth grim winter of war loomed ahead, and Germany's allies were deserting one by one.

Count Hertling (Chancellor for a year after Michaelis's four months) resigned when the Hindenburg line broke on September 29, 1918, and the high office devolved upon the reluctant Prince Maximilian von Baden. A man of integrity, respected for his work toward the humane treatment of prisoners of war, Baden's task was to work with the Reichstag majority in putting through constitutional reforms. General Ludendorff, however, had even more urgent plans for Prince Max.

His first day in office Prince Max was astounded by Ludendorff's sudden demand for an armistice through the good offices of President Wilson. The new Chancellor hesitated, but the situation was desperate; Field Marshal von Hindenburg concurred, and Austria had already asked for peace. By October 3,

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the first German note, accepting Wilson's Fourteen Points as the basis of an armistice and future peace negotiations, was on its way to the President. 46

The following day, the Chancellor was occupied with forming his new government. He intended to break with the past by appointing men who were not associated with the policies which had pursued the war. "We must form a Government of men in whose case there is documentary proof that they strove for this peace of justice even at the moment of our greatest victories . . ." 47 He hoped to save Germany's colonies with one important choice. "The post of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had fortunately not been demanded for the parties. I hesitated between Solf and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, our Minister in Copenhagen. . . . I then decided finally for Solf." Dr. Wilhelm Solf had spoken out for "a peace of understanding," and as former Governor of Samoa and Colonial Secretary, Baden considered his appointment to be "a pointed assertion of our just claim to colonies." 48

46 Rudin's book Armistice 1918 explores in minute detail the reasons for Ludendorff's loss of nerve and his demand that Prince Max ask for an armistice immediately. Rudin effectively blasts the military's later "stab-in-the-back" charge against the Government. See Rudin, pp. 1-137.


48 Baden, II, 28. Prince Max noted happily that "The phrase 'A colony is a mission field,' had been coined by /Solf/ and was in his case no mere form of speech." Ibid.
It is doubtful if Prince Max could have prevailed upon Brockdorff-Rantzau to take the post at that moment. At the end of September, Ebert and Scheidemann had made a second appeal to him to come in as Foreign Secretary. The message, relayed to Copenhagen through his twin brother, Count Ernst zu Rantzau, was answered with a memorandum dated October 2. Aware of the military and naval animosity towards him as well as the "malicious opposition of the Pan-Germans and heavy industry, and the mistrust of the Conservatives" he considered the post of Foreign Secretary too devoid of authority to accomplish anything. Even as Chancellor he would not have the backing of the Supreme Command and the Monarch.49

Prince Max chose Dr. Solf for the Foreign Office, but he had other plans to utilize the talents of Brockdorff-Rantzau. He intended to name the Count as his own successor, should he resign as Chancellor. Meanwhile, the Count remained a valuable source of advice, especially in formulating the answers to Wilson's notes, and his location in a neutral capital was a diplomatic advantage.

Requisites for an Armistice

The drafting of Germany's reply to President Wilson's second note caused a last debate over submarine warfare. On October 19, Prince Max met with several German Ambassadors, in-

49 Brandenburg notes that Brockdorff-Rantzau was unwilling to serve under Hertling, who was unacceptable to the Social Democrats. At the time he wrote this memorandum, the Count did not know that Prince Max would be Chancellor and institute constitutional reforms. The distance from Copenhagen to Berlin made prompt communications difficult. See EMS, 1690H/1013/396 946, 949ff, and Stern-Rubarth, pp. 53-54.
eluding Brockdorff-Rantzau, who all concurred that U-boat warfare must be dropped or there could be no hope of an armistice. The sinking of the Leinster on October 11 had caused great repercussions in England. "Count Brockdorff-Rantzau," relates Prince Max,

spoke impressively of the fix in which we found ourselves today. He described the devastating effect it had had upon the German representatives abroad when one day they woke up and read that Germany had asked Wilson for an armistice. The first was the decisive step; now there was no alternative but to follow out the path we had once set foot upon. All this, according to Baden, convinced the Cabinet. Naval opposition was squelched and a third German note was off to Wilson on October 21.

The next bastion to tumble was the authority of the Supreme Command. When the third American note refused to treat with the "military masters and monarchical autocrats" of Germany, Baden insisted upon the dismissal of General Ludendorff as proof of the new Government's authority. The very next day a fourth German note asked for an armistice.

Constitutional and authoritative changes notwithstanding, Prince Max's regime was viewed with suspicion by the Allies from the very beginning. It was all too sudden—a "camouflage democracy," a "peace trap." President Wilson felt a moral obligation to end the slaughter as soon as possible. Although he moved

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cautiously regarding an armistice, Wilson had many critics at home and abroad. France, Britain, and many Americans wanted nothing less than the complete surrender of Imperial Germany. On October 7, the New York Times had trumpeted "No peace with the Hohenzollerns."\(^51\)

The Monarchy represented, therefore, a last stumbling block in the road to an armistice. Scheidemann and the Social Democrats were now demanding the Kaiser's abdication lest the war continue until Germany disintegrated. Already Bolshevist agitation was apparent in Berlin, and in Bavaria "there was serious talk about seceding from the Empire."\(^52\)

Still hoping for a constitutional Monarchy, Prince Max sought more information on how important the act of abdication would appear abroad. He sent a trusted adviser, Dr. Kurt Hahn (Head of the English Section of the Foreign News Service), to Copenhagen to meet with two American diplomats and with Count Brockdorff-Rantzau.\(^53\) Hahn returned with his anxiously awaited report on October 30, revealing that the Americans had stressed that Wilson needed grounds to defend his "peace of justice" against the "chauvinists of the Entente who are now at the helm in England and France." Ludendorff's dismissal would help, they

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\(^51\)Rudin, pp. 106-08. \(^52\)Scheidemann, II, 197-216.

\(^53\)Baden, II, 233-35. One of the Americans was Lithgow Osborne, Second Secretary of the American Legation in Copenhagen. See Rudin, pp. 226, 232. Osborne later went to Germany as a member of the Dresel Commission. See Chapter III, infra.
had intimated, but since "in the eyes of hundreds of thousands the Kaiser and Crown Prince are the embodiment of all that is hateful and... dangerous in Germany" only the elimination of the Hohenzollerns would furnish dramatic proof of change. One American had concluded the conversation with an outburst of emotion: "For God's sake, do something to make Wilson strong against the Entente militarists..." Count Brockdorff-Rantzau agreed that the German people would be in no position to resist dishonorable armistice conditions if the Kaiser remained.54

In his Erinnerungen, the late Dr. Theodor Heuss recalled a visit at the German Legation in Copenhagen in mid-1918. He told of a long conversation with Brockdorff-Rantzau:

He knew the war was lost and said it right out. He considered his essential task fulfilled; he told of Danish trade unions and the German coal agreement, which helped overcome the people's historic resentment. I recalled his complete lack of bias toward the workers' movements, not exactly in keeping with his noble status, when Ebert appointed him Foreign Minister..."55

Count Brockdorff-Rantzau did not hesitate to advocate the changes he considered inevitable. "He became more and more convinced that an attempt must be made, while there was still time, to conclude an acceptable peace, and that it was likewise necessary to revive the tottering situation in Germany with

54Baden, II, 233-34; Rudin, p. 232. Reluctant to take the step himself, Baden tried to get Brockdorff-Rantzau, among others, to take on the onerous duty of suggesting abdication to the Kaiser. The Count declined because of "the lack of constitutionality /for such a step/ implicit in his office /as Minister to Denmark/." Stern-Rubarth, p. 54.

inner reforms."  Here was an experienced diplomat of independent convictions and high standing who would cooperate even with a working man's republic for the sake of Germany's future. It did not take long for the Social Democrats to turn to him for help and support.

56 BMS, 1689H/1012/396 928.
CHAPTER III

BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU BECOMES FOREIGN MINISTER

Abdication and Armistice

In Germany, a bewildering race of events followed military defeat in the field and the appeal for an armistice. Significantly, Matthias Erzberger, a prominent Catholic Center Party leader and a civilian, was chosen as chief German representative to the coming armistice talks. Prince Maximilian von Baden, Chancellor during these last anxious days of October, 1918, informed Erzberger that Germany's desperate situation made an armistice imperative. The Chancellor also wanted Brockdorff-Rantzau to accompany Erzberger as Foreign Office representative at the armistice proceedings, but the distance from Copenhagen made this impossible.1

The first full week of November witnessed the spread of revolution and the downfall of the Hohenzollern Monarchy. Austria, the only other remnant of the Central Powers, capitulated on November 3. Disorder convulsed Germany; riots and sailors' mutinies spread from northern seaports to Berlin, and in the south the Independent Socialist leader Kurt Eisner deposed the old Wittelsbach Dynasty in Bavaria and declared a Bavarian Re-

1Upon Solf's advice, Count Alfred Oberndorff, the wartime Ambassador to Bulgaria, went instead. Epstein. p. 271.
public. By the sixth of November, with Erzberger on the way to
armistice talks, Prince Max realized that the immediate abdica-
tion of Wilhelm II was the only means of preventing a violent
revolution in Germany as well as proving to the Allies that Ger-
many was no longer dominated by the war regime. The Social
Democratic leaders Friedrich Ebert and Philipp Scheidemann, un-
der pressure from their party, were demanding the abdication of
the Kaiser and Crown Prince by November 8. Unable to obtain
any word from Wilhelm II or his military entourage at their head-
quarters in Spa, Baden declined at first to declare the abdica-
tion himself. In his eyes it would have been "nothing less than
a coup d'état." Yet he had failed to secure the Kaiser's volun-
tary abdication before the deadline set by the Social Democrats,
and they resigned from the government as they had warned. Un-
der the circumstances, Baden wished to resign as Chancellor,
and at first he intended "to recall Rantzau to Berlin by tele-
gram and send in his name to Spa as my successor."3

There was no time for Baden to carry out any such plan.
On November 9, the Kaiser fled to Holland, convinced at last
that the army would no longer support him. Prince Max had fi-
nally announced the abdication on the strength of a military
communiqué from Spa. Very soon after that, Philipp Scheidemann

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2Baden, II, 347. Until the last moment Baden hoped to
retain the monarchy by the device of an abdication coupled with
the Kaiser's naming of a Chancellor to carry on; under these
conditions he even thought a regency could be arranged. Ibid.,
pp. 351-57.

3Ibid., II, 335.
proclaimed the German Republic from a Reichstag balcony, lest the milling crowds in the streets desert Ebert and the Majority Socialists for Soviet-inspired Karl Liebknecht and the Spartacists. Prince Max then relinquished the Chancellorship to Friedrich Ebert. With Ebert and Scheidemann as leaders, a Council of People's Representatives, which included three Independent Socialists in a total of six members, hopefully retained authority on November 11. The war ended that day, after Matthias Erzberger had signed an armistice designed by the French to prevent any German renewal of hostilities.

Brockdorff-Rantzau Replaces Solf

Dr. Solf, who had signed the last three of the German notes to Wilson, was not to remain in office as Foreign Secretary after the CPR assumed its precarious political authority. Although a "good democrat," he believed that the Independent Socialists were incompatible with the Majority Socialists and on December 9, 1918, in a CPR meeting, he went so far as to accuse the prominent Independent Socialist Hugo Haase (one of the six


5At Compiègne, Marshal Foch (and Erzberger himself) wondered what government the German armistice delegates actually represented. Rudin, pp. 370-73; Epstein, pp. 279-80.

6Because of the possibility of a Chancellor crisis, Erzberger advised that subsequent notes (after the first) be signed by Foreign Secretary Dr. Solf instead of Prince Max. Matthias Erzberger, Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1920), p. 325.
CPR members) of collaboration with Russian Bolshevists. Solf's past utterances on colonies were also something of a liability. If the CPR was to hold out until the election of a National Constituent Assembly, it would be necessary to replace Dr. Solf with a man acceptable to Majority Socialists and Independents alike.

Although fatal in Solf's case, previous connection with the Imperial regime did not absolutely prevent a man from serving under the CPR. Erich Eyck, in A History of the Weimar Republic, explains that while the two Socialist parties retained political authority,

they quickly realized that they would have to look outside their parties for men to direct those offices which required professional competence. . . . They sought to solve this problem by excluding "bourgeois" ministers formally from the true cabinet, and making them instead responsible to the Council of People's Representatives. Furthermore, these ministers were given Social Democratic undersecretaries or assistants.8

Prior to Baden's appointment of Dr. Solf, Ebert and Scheidemann had unsuccessfully offered Brockdorff-Rantzau the post of Foreign Secretary. If he was prepared to accept the bid

7Zimmermann, p. 34. According to Zimmermann, Solf and General Groener both wanted immediate elections in order to end the revolution and the provisional CPR of Ebert and Scheidemann. On the other hand, the Independent Socialists wanted to get rid of Solf. Kurt Eisner (of the Bavarian Republic) and others accused him "of having burnt the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs relating to the responsibility of the Imperial regime for the outbreak of the war." See W.M. Knight-Patterson, Germany from Defeat to Conquest 1913-1933 (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1945), p. 231. Erzberger had called Solf "totally ignorant of political affairs." Epstein, p. 262.

now, in view of the drastically altered political situation and the fact of civilian leadership, the new Republic would benefit from his professional experience and known liberal outlook. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had previously declared himself ready to work toward rebuilding things if a collapse occurred. Clearly, the time had come.

The Count had already prepared the way with characteristic thoroughness, since Ebert and Scheidemann had been in contact with him before Solf's break with the Independents. In a letter to Scheidemann on December 9, Brockdorff-Rantzau set forth his main condition for accepting the post of Foreign Secretary: he must also participate in the solving of Germany's internal problems. The foremost problem, preserving the political unity of the Reich, made necessary the creation of a republican army to combat further inroads of Bolshevism. Toward the end of the letter is a paragraph of great interest, in view of the events which followed:

In regard to the duty which would ultimately rest with me, the concluding of peace, I should like here to touch upon a point which must not be overlooked. If the peace terms, which the enemy will dictate to us are such that they do not allow our people an existence compatible with human dignity, I must know if I would be empowered to refuse my signature, or if it would be the intention of the Government only to ratify the treaty under protest.

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9 BMS, 1690H/1013/396 949. At that time (October 2, 1918) he had spoken in terms of the Chancellorship, since he considered the post of Foreign Secretary completely ineffective.


11 Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 4-5.

12 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
Brockdorff-Rantzau's inevitable Promemoria followed the letter, dealing for the most part with political and economic matters. First and foremost, the world must be convinced of the stability of the new German Government if Germany hoped to pursue any sort of foreign policy. To this end the National Assembly must be called before February 16, and the authority of the Republic firmly established within Germany.\(^\text{13}\)

Of greatest importance was the restoration of Germany's economy and her credit abroad, and the encouragement of her own industries. Loans from abroad would be indispensable to the recovery of the German economy, and he considered America the best prospect for such credit if Germany took sensible steps to revive her economy.

A people that evidences no propensity for governing itself, which yesterday possessed the most authoritative government and today is no longer capable of erecting a new and modern national government, would be refused American or any other foreign credit. . . . I think that the question of foreign credit must be thoroughly and carefully examined by the best financial and economic authorities in the country, and inquiries made through neutral channels.\(^\text{14}\)

He ended his letter to Scheidemann with one last consideration. He would serve as Foreign Secretary if his health would permit. During the last few months in Copenhagen he had found it necessary to consult a doctor about heart trouble.\(^\text{15}\)

Hugo Haase at first balked at the idea of an aristocrat and former Imperial diplomat replacing Solf. Apparently, it was

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\(^{13}\)The Congress of Workers and Soldiers which had just met in Berlin (December 16-19, 1918) throwing its support to the Majority Socialists, had set a deadline of January 19 for elections to a National Assembly. See Eyck, I, 51, and BMS, 1690H/1013/396 964. By February 16, a third renewal of the Armistice would be necessary.

\(^{14}\)Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, p. 9.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 6.
documentary proof of Brockdorff-Rantzau's early condemnation of unrestricted submarine warfare which, in addition to Ebert and Scheidemann's obvious confidence in the Count, induced Haase to agree.\(^{16}\) The Count presented the CPR with a brief five point version of his essential conditions, demanding full authority in selecting personnel.\(^{17}\) Although, as Erich Brandenburg points out, the CPR did not like being presented with conditions, they agreed to Brockdorff-Rantzau's demands.\(^{18}\)

Brockdorff-Rantzau was duly appointed Foreign Secretary on December 20, 1918. Accepting both the physical and mental burdens of office, he declared from Copenhagen on the 24th:

"I have no illusions about the tremendous difficulties which await me in my new office. What gives me strength and confidence however, is my unshakeable faith in the German people and their future. My first and most important duty . . . is the conclusion of a just peace."\(^{19}\)

The "just peace," of course, rested upon President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and subsequent Wilsonian utterances on settling European affairs equitably. Germany had accepted the Fourteen Points in the first October note to Wilson; the final American note of November 5, said Brockdorff-Rantzau, indicated also the acceptance by the Allies of this basis for peace. with


\(^{17}\)Not only Solf had objected to Haase. Brockdorff-Rantzau mentioned in a secret memorandum "die Frage Haase." He feared Haase's alleged Soviet connections would jeopardize future German relations with the United States and the Entente. BMS, 1690H/1013/396 963.

\(^{18}\)BMS, 1690H/1013/396 962-66. Ebert and Haase signed the letter informing him he had been appointed and the conditions accepted.

\(^{19}\)Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente*, p. 13.
reservations about freedom of the seas and reparations. Since self-determination was mutually agreed to be "a fundamental right of all peoples" Brockdorff-Rantzau demanded it for Germany also. When he took office on January 2, 1919, he concluded a statement to the Wolff Telegraph Bureau with the words, "If the principle of 'The Balkans to the Balkan peoples' holds true, then it must also mean 'Germany to the Germans.'" He would refuse, he said, "a peace of oppression, of annihilation and enslavement."21

The change-over in the Foreign Office was very sudden and without much formality. According to Stern-Rubarth, Dr. Solf knew little of this decision of the CPR. When Brockdorff-Rantzau came down to Berlin and called on Solf, the latter thought it was his twin brother on an errand connected with the Kaiser in Holland. "The explanation," concludes Stern-Rubarth, "must therefore have been somewhat of a surprise."22

Upon taking office officially in January, the Count echoed the words of Prince Max at the outset of his unhappy Chancellorship: "Ich will versuchen zu retten, was zu retten ist."23 Karl Kautsky, the Socialist Foreign Office expert, declared that, of all the Ambassadors' reports he had examined, Brockdorff-

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20 Ibid., p. 13. See Preliminary History of the Armistice, pp. 143-44, for the text of the November 5th note.


22 Stern-Rubarth, p. 73. Accepting Solf's resignation on December 13, Ebert had requested Solf to carry on until a successor could be named. Ebert to Solf, December 13, 1918, "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3440/H233 353.

Rantzau's were the best. Ebert said simply, "Wir haben den besten von den alten Diplomaten zu unserm Aussenminister gemacht." However, by December 27, the three Independent Socialists had left the CPR, objecting to the use of Noske's troops to quell the Berlin riots. On the need for using such troops, Solf and Brockdorff-Rantzau had both been of the same opinion.

**Foreign Policy Outlook**

It is enlightening to study Brockdorff-Rantzau's assessment of the major Western powers and the enigma of Soviet Russia after the war's end. For Ebert and the Cabinet on January 21, he outlined briefly the possibilities for German foreign policy. Since the former enemies would doubtless give little consideration to international law and the moral claims of Germany, she must build her case upon the twin threats of imminent economic and political collapse. England and France insisted upon maintaining the blockade and forcing Germany to demobilize completely, and this left only one course open:

We must therefore seek to convince the enemies that the economic collapse and political weakness of Germany would be contrary to their own interests and that in truth we have common interests. The means for this is reference to the danger of Bolshevism.

"All our enemies," he continued, "have placed heavy claims against Germany for war damages." They must, then, be made to realize their own very literal stake in the prompt economic re-

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24 Blücher, p. 43.

25 Eyck, I, 51. The Independents Haase, Dittman, and Barth were replaced by Social Democrats Gustav Noske and Rudolf Wissell. BMS, 1690H/1013/396 970.
habilitation of the German Republic. In the same vein, it would be expedient for Germany and the western nations to come to an understanding on three points:

1. A common defensive effort to keep Bolshevism from encroaching on Germany's eastern border.

2. The granting of a reasonable and just peace leaving Germany economically and politically healthy (lebensfähig).

3. Agreement on the common desirability of the economic restoration of Russia.

Only the improvement of economic conditions in Russia could alleviate the dangers of terrorism and revolution; until then, Germany had to convince the western nations of the need for a middle European power strong enough to keep Bolshevism at bay. Meanwhile, after the strategic mistake of Brest-Litovsk, Brockdorff-Rantzau was determined that Germany should do nothing further to jeopardize future relations with Russia, in case the Allies proved intractable.

From the outset of his tenure as Foreign Office Chief, Brockdorff-Rantzau placed all hope for Germany in her relationship with the United States. England he believed to be given over entirely to a policy of annihilation (Vernichtung) of Germany, while Wilson's peace program held out a hope of justice. Moreover, signs pointed to the dominance of American economic might in the post-war world. If Germany offered American capital attractive possibilities, such economic ties would have

the further nuance of hindering future British domination of Europe. Indispensable though American capital might be, the Foreign Secretary hoped also that "the working classes of the enemy nations, recognizing in the new Germany a worthy partner in the struggle for the achievement of their aims, would advocate justice in their behalf." The effectiveness of war propaganda, however, made this extremely doubtful in the immediate future.

It was clear that the Allies disagreed among themselves on the handling of major problems connected with the peace. This situation could well be advantageous for Germany, but Brockdorff-Rantzau realized the danger of any overt German attempts to exploit it as the Peace Conference in Paris embarked

27General Groener had argued in the same Cabinet meeting for a stronger army to defend the eastern front against Poland. This would also make Germany "bündnisfähig" if, in the future, any one of the Allies needed a counterweight against the others. Brockdorff-Rantzau, from the beginning, refused to press for military requirements above what was absolutely necessary to quell the Bolshevik uprisings. In a secret memorandum to Groener on the same day he warned against the word "bündnisfähig" as "unbedingt zu vermeiden." A better word would be "leistensfähig," since Germany must cultivate America as an economic partner. The Count recognized Wilson's political weakness revealed by the recent elections to the Senate and feared that the Entente, no longer needing America in the war effort, might conduct an economic war against Germany after peace was signed. BMS, 1690H/1013/396 991, 397 040-050.

Groener also urged the Foreign Minister not to stress the right of self-determination so much, because it would encourage the German separatist movements. BMS, 1690H/1013/397 040.

28BMS, 1690H/1013/396 995.
upon heated and secret discussions destined to last well over four months. 

**Conflict with Erzberger**

By the time the elections for the National Assembly took place on January 19, the Spartacists had succumbed for the time being to Noske's army. The Armistice, renewed for the first time on January 17, provided a thirty day political breathing spell during which the Assembly met in Weimar, a city rich in German cultural tradition and safely removed from sporadic Bolshevist violence in Berlin. Out of 421 seats, strength rested with the Majority Socialists, the Catholic Center and the unexpectedly large number of members of the new Democratic Party.

Respected by all factions, Friedrich Ebert was elected President on the 11th of February. Philipp Scheidemann became Chancellor and selected his coalition Cabinet of seven Socialists, three Center members, and three Democrats plus Brockdorff-Rantzau as Foreign Minister without political affiliation, and the Center's Matthias Erzberger as *Staatssekretär* in charge of

**29** Brockdorff-Rantzau declined to follow up the possibility of establishing contact between President Wilson and Prince Max von Baden through the Geneva Red Cross, to arrange for the exchange of German prisoners of war. Baden outlined his plan for a rather high-handed approach to Wilson in a letter to the Count on January 2, 1919. Brockdorff-Rantzau feared that such an attempt would arouse Wilson's and the Entente's mistrust. BMS, 1690H/1013/396 990-397 002.

**30** Their most effective leaders, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, had been murdered on January 16, almost a week after the Spartacist riots in Berlin, including an attack on the Reichskanzlei, had been beaten down by Noske's *Freikorps*.
Armistice affairs.\textsuperscript{31}

It was the successive Armistice renewal negotiations that confirmed certain impressions about the coming Allied attitude toward Germany at the peace table. What happened when Erzberger met the implacable Foch at Trier in mid-January, mid-February, and mid-March did much to crystallize Brockdorff-Rantzau's attitude and determine his strategy in dealing with the Allies.

The Compiegne-Trier meetings were indicative in many ways of what was to come at Versailles. In his book Armistice 1918, Harry Rudin shows how France feared that the exchange of notes between Germany and President Wilson would prevent the military defeat of a Germany which now hid behind a "camouflage democracy" to plead for an armistice.\textsuperscript{32} French Premier Clemenceau had asked Marshal Foch to draft armistice conditions guaranteed to keep Germany from renewing the war later. No Americans were present at the initial armistice meetings of November 7-11, and Foch's terms were severe, his manner gruff.

Erzberger submitted countersuggestions and actually succeeded in getting some significant, though minor, changes made. He signed the still onerous terms of November 11, and tendered a statement that Germany would honestly try to fulfill the conditions although some of them might prove impossible. "The German Delegates," his declaration continued,

\ldots also wish to reemphasize their view that the consummation of this armistice must throw the German people into

\textsuperscript{31}Epstein, p. 288. The Foreign Office chief became Foreign Minister (Aussenminister) instead of Foreign Secretary. The old term, Staatsssekretär, now designated permanent undersecretaries in each Ministry. See Kurt Rosenbaum Community of Fate: German-Soviet Diplomatic Relations 1922-1928 (Syracuse University Press, 1964), p. 7.

\textsuperscript{32}Rudin, pp. 89-90.
anarchy and famine. They had a right to expect conditions which, while guaranteeing the full military security of our enemies, would at least end the suffering of non-combatant women and children.

The German people, who stood steadfast against a world of enemies for fifty months, will preserve their freedom and unity no matter how great the external pressure. A nation of seventy millions can suffer but it cannot die.33

At each Trier meeting Foch complained of Germany's failure to meet various deadlines and tightened up the terms. Erzberger was able to defend Germany's claim on Danzig, but Foch held all the trumps and always forced Erzberger to sign or see Germany invaded. At Compiegne the German Armistice Delegates had been confined to a large fenced area around the railroad spur,34 doubtless for their own safety; at Trier, they were "imprisoned" in a hotel.35 Klaus Epstein describes Erzberger's valiant efforts in Germany's behalf. Ignorant of the oppressive circumstances, many rightist Germans denounced his weakness.36

Brockdorff-Rantzau had also objected to Erzberger's management of armistice affairs, and their great feud was precipitated by the first renewal of the armistice. The Count had instructed Erzberger to ask for the return of German war pris-

33Epstein, p. 281. Note similarity of phraseology to Brockdorff-Rantzau's May 7th speech at Versailles. See Chapter V, infra.


36After signing the Armistice extension in February, Erzberger lashed back at one of his critics: "He forgot the inconvenient fact that we have unfortunately lost the war." See Epstein, p. 298. Erzberger was also aware that the Allies, if Germany refused to sign, would march into Germany and consider themselves free of further obligations under Wilson's note of November 5th. Ibid., p. 299.
oners since Germany had returned Allied prisoners, and for a relaxation of the blockade. If exorbitant demands were pressed by the Allies, Erzberger was to return home to consult his Government. Erzberger not only failed to alleviate the prisoner and blockade issues, but advocated handing over to the Entente the Soviet revolutionary Karl Radek, who had been imprisoned in Berlin. 37 "The new Foreign Minister," says Epstein, was horrified by such unorthodox diplomacy, which would degrade Germany in the eyes of the world, threaten future relations with Russia, and cause a domestic explosion on the part of the Independent Socialists. He also thought the matter should be handled by the Foreign Office rather than the Armistice Commission. 38

A more serious crisis developed when Erzberger accepted Foch's armistice extension terms on February 19th. Five days before, at Weimar, Brockdorff-Rantzau had delivered his principal address on foreign policy. The Foreign Minister now claimed that the concessions made by Erzberger, especially regarding Poland, were very much at odds with the tenets of his speech. 39

As Foreign Minister he needed solid support to contest excessive Allied demands. He had sent a note to the Armistice Commission at Trier a month before, saying Germany would fulfill the armistice requirements to the best of her ability, and re-

37 Epstein, p. 290; Helbig, pp. 15-18. On Brockdorff-Rantzau's instructions to Erzberger, see BMS, 1689H/1012/397 010.

38 Epstein, p. 290.

39 Epstein, p. 295, says: "Foch demanded ... that the German Freikorps forces in the East stop operations against the Poles on a demarcation line set by himself. Erzberger, as always confronted by the threat of an Allied invasion of Germany, was forced to accept Foch's terms." For a synopsis of Brockdorff-Rantzau's February 14 speech, see Chapter IV, infra.
commending a committee of experts to study the problem. When the Cabinet approved Erzberger's signature to the February terms in spite of Brockdorff-Rantzau's disapproval, he asked to resign. In a letter to Ebert he pointed out that the Allies were not in agreement about resuming the war. He demanded to take over the German Armistice Commission, ending the letter with a forceful paragraph:

... I see the impossibility of further positive work; I foresee further that the last bit of our prestige in foreign eyes will be lost after we give ourselves up, and that this confession will afford our enemies the opportunity of tightening the screw of extortion without limit (die Erpresserschraube ohne Ende anzuziehen). Our present concessions, in my opinion, mean only a postponement and no solution.\(^{40}\)

Both Ebert and Scheidemann urged him to stay in office, and he did. What induced him to remain is uncertain, since his methods were already challenged; perhaps, as Erich Brandenburg says, he realized that someone had to assume the duty of standing up for Germany's rights in the face of anything. And it was obvious that the masses on both sides wanted peace.\(^{41}\)

First Days in Weimar

Erich Brandenburg reveals that just before the Armistice renewal crisis, Brockdorff-Rantzau briefly considered joining a political party. Hitherto intentionally unaffiliated, he was considered in sympathy with the Social Democrats.\(^{42}\) Had he

\(^{40}\)BMS, 1690H/1013/397 026-30.

\(^{41}\)BMS, 1690H/1013/397 030-33. Brockdorff-Rantzau asked that Scheidemann sign the note authorizing Erzberger to sign the armistice terms, so that he, the Count, would not be responsible.

\(^{42}\)Scheidemann, II, 304, says: "We counted him as a Social Democrat, though he was not a member of the Social Democratic Party."
joined a party, however, it would have been the new Democratic Party. Brockdorff-Rantzau had always felt that in order for foreign policy to be consistent and effective, its leader should not be identified with a particular domestic political program, thereby risking his own downfall when his party no longer commanded a majority. Brandenburg includes the text of a letter to Democratic leaders, dated February 7, 1919, in which the Count, contemplating party membership, discussed a Foreign Minister's need to be independent of party struggles, and then added:

On the other hand, I realize that in such decisive times as these it is important for everyone to be articulate in supporting a cause. Therefore I shall join the German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei) whose entire program is closest to my own political convictions.

He absolved the party from collective responsibility for his leadership of foreign policy and likewise requested that he not be obliged to leave office if the party did not remain in the majority.43

This letter, Erich Brandenburg has concluded, was never sent, for the signed original as well as the draft copy remains in the files of Brockdorff-Rantzau's correspondence. But Fritz Max Cahén, who assisted Brockdorff-Rantzau at Versailles, and Erich Eyck, both assert that the Count did belong to the Party.44

His letter of February 7 proves Brockdorff-Rantzau's party inclination beyond any doubt, but it can be inferred that he did not formally join their ranks. In August of 1919, he

43BMS, 1690H/1013/397 034-35.
44Fritz Max Cahén, Der Weg nach Versailles (Boppard/Rhèin: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1963), p. 348; Eyck, I, 90.
wrote in a personal letter to his good friend and colleague at Versailles, Dr. Walter Simons:

Meanwhile I see that the possibility is not far off, when I can take a discreet part in affairs; I will not encumber myself with party politics. " (parteipolitisch will ich mich nicht belasten) 45

The following year, the Democrats unsuccessfully sought Brockdorff-Rantzau as their candidate for Reichspräsident if an election was to be held, but Ebert retained the post. Composed largely of republican theoreticians—Hugo Preuss, who wrote the Weimar Constitution was a member—the Democratic Party was an important part of the original Weimar coalition, but its influence declined steadily after the Treaty of Versailles. 46

On February 10, four days before his major foreign policy address, Brockdorff-Rantzau made a brief statement in the National Assembly, saying that he supported the provisional Constitution and Dr. Preuss's efforts in framing a more permanent document. In accord with President Wilson's philosophy, he added, "I am determined not to conclude any secret treaties." 47

45 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 259.

46 Founded in December, 1918, the Democrats combined old Progressives and National Liberals with intellectuals devoted to the establishment of a republic. Although it hoped to unite all liberals, Gustav Stresemann attracted many of its potential adherents by forming his German Peoples Party (Deutsche Volkspartei). Eyck, I, 60-61. Many prominent intellectuals among the Democrats were Jews; the rightists, as early as January, 1919, "attempted to discredit the Democratic Party as a red-tainted, unpatriotic Jewish creation." Lewis Herzman, D N V P Right Wing Opposition in the Weimar Republic, 1918-1924 (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 46. The racist slur against the Democrats is a major factor in Herzman's study.

CHAPTER IV

PEACE RECONNAISSANCE

Interviews and Press Conferences

From the beginning of 1919 the Allies and Germany each prepared for an eventual confrontation at the peace table, using whatever information they could obtain regarding each other's intentions and often building upon sheer conjecture. Colonel Arthur Conger, an intelligence officer on General Pershing's staff, went into Germany as a military observer and met with General Groener, Erzberger, and Brockdorff-Rantzau early in the year. As a link between German officials and President Wilson, Conger was to have some decisive effects on the German attitude at Versailles.\(^1\) Other Americans were members of fact-finding deputations; through the Gherardi and the Dresel Field Missions to Germany, the United States Commission to Negotiate Peace learned of Germany's internal and political situation from on-the-spot observers. The British and French undertook similar missions.

About twenty prominent men of the new German Government were interviewed by members of the Dresel Mission early in January. Brockdorff-Rantzau's interview took place on the third, the day after he formally came into office as Foreign Minister. In this colloquy, the Count stated his policy and outlook

\(^1\) On Conger's good educational background, see Epstein, pp. 305-06.
clearly. For the purpose of this thesis it is worth quoting the American version in full.²

Count Rantzau began the conversation by stating his aims. He said that his policy would be to sign any peace on the basis of the fourteen points of President Wilson, but that he would not accept conditions which made Germany the slave of the Entente. He said that he had accepted his office with reluctance. The German people could not be destroyed, nor would he sign any peace whatever but a peace which would grant Germany the possibility of continuing a decent existence.

He stated that he had always stood for President Wilson, and that at the time the offer for an armistice went to the President it was he who had particularly urged it, and he had thus taken upon himself a great responsibility before the people. He said that he had great faith in the President's honesty, and had great admiration for him. He said he appreciated the difficulties under which the President worked in Paris, and that he could understand the French and Belgian attitude. He said that he would not whine or beg, but that the coal and food situation was exceedingly serious, so serious indeed that it might result in Bolshevism. . . . Germany and America, he believed, had similar interests and were akin to one another, and could for the future of the world cooperate profitably.

In discussing the Peace Conference, he mentioned the question of Bernstorff being sent there, and expressed his doubts whether he would be acceptable.

Count Rantzau stated that he was optimistic for Germany, because he had not lost his faith in the German people, which had been deceived and misled, and which had followed a phantom to the edge of an abyss. Optimism, he believed, was the only possible basis for a constructive program, and he intended to draw a sharp line at the foot of the happenings of the war and to proceed to reconstruct.

Count Rantzau stated emphatically that a monarchical reaction was out of the question.

Berlin, January 3, 1919.

In the first three months of 1919 the Foreign Minister was also in touch with various British officers and investigat-

ing commissions. In the opening chapter of his study of Germany's Ostpolitik leading to the Rapallo agreement, Herbert Helbig discusses the fear of the Entente that the new German Government was really double-dealing in 1919. While supposedly in league with Soviet Russia, Germany was suspected of exaggerating the dangers of Bolshevism in order to win easier peace terms. In February and March Brockdorff-Rantzau spoke at different times with the British Generals Sir Richard Haking and Spencer Ewart regarding the Bolshevist menace. Quite forthrightly, General Haking said that the purpose of the British Commission, sent to investigate the activities of Karl Radek, was also to determine the authenticity of the German Government's fight against Bolshevism.3

Other British investigators were finding the situation in Germany critical; Prime Minister Lloyd George wrote:

I was receiving constant messages from our representatives in Germany as to the urgency of supplies reaching the hungry civilians if disaster were to be averted, and Mr. Hoover, who was in charge of food supplies, had reported difficulties and delays. In March I felt bound to call the attention of the Allied representatives once more to what was going on.4

Brockdorff-Rantzau held several press conferences with representatives of foreign papers and granted interviews to British and American newspaper correspondents. He discussed Germany's right to her colonies, his approval of the idea of a

3 Helbig, pp. 17-20.

League of Nations, the international negotiation of workers’ rights, the Fourteen Points as the basis of a just peace, the injustice of the proposed occupation of the Saar valley and the left bank of the Rhine, and the unreality of declaring Germany solely guilty of causing the war. In each interview he stressed that economic cooperation was the only road to post-war reconstruction. Germany recognized certain weighty financial obligations that were the legacy of the war, but she must possess the means to carry them out. The Fourteen Points, he declared, must apply to Germany as well as the other nations, including territorial questions. This of course left the matter of Anschluss open for the Germans in Austria to decide. In January 24, the Foreign Minister spoke to foreign newspaper correspondents in the same vein, saying:

The statesmen of today and tomorrow must have the intention of changing the spirit of 1914 which led to the death of millions. As long as thoughts of revenge live, there will be wars. As long as a nation’s territory is taken by force, people will take up arms in defense of freedom. As long as there are irredenta, statesmen will only be able to discuss things hesitantly and secretly.

5 Brockdorff-Rantzau met with Austrian Secretary of State Bauer in February to discuss terms under which Anschluss could take place at a later date if German Austria desired it. He did not want to antagonize the Allies with a fait accompli at this point. BMS, 1690/1013/397 051-54; Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 77–79.

6 Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 29-30. See also similar interviews, Ibid., passim. Helbig, p. 20, mentions Germany’s hope that interviews with foreign press representatives would help to convince the Entente countries that Germany’s very existence was at stake in the fight against Bolshevism. In December, 1918, a report from the Dresel Mission noted: "Persistent endeavors will be made to convert observers to the German view... In this connection, attention is called to the great undesirability of allowing the entry into
The Speech of February 14, 1919

Brockdorff-Rantzau was probably more successful in making his views known abroad through the newspaper interviews than in his "Count and Democrat" speech to the National Assembly on February 14, 1919, in which he stated his entire program and outlook for Germany in the post-war world. The speech was all but ignored outside of Germany. German foreign policy, he stated at the outset, had two goals: the ending of the war and the restoration of normal relations among nations. No longer a military power, Germany agreed with the Allies on the Fourteen Points, which should apply to her own situation as well as to other nations. Germany and Allied nations faced a moral obligation to disarm. The question of war guilt could only be decided by an impartial commission in which all nations had confidence.

That the peace should be concluded on an economic as well as a political basis was the underlying theme of his whole policy. In the interest of economic recovery, Germany should not be required to give up all her colonies and her merchant fleet. Germany recognized her duty to rebuild Belgium and northern France and was resigned to the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, if a plebiscite so decreed, but other territorial questions must be decided by the peoples involved. Poland's access to

Germany at present of American newspaper reporters, some of whom have already in several cases obtained interviews with German public men." FRUS, II, 12-13. On February 11, a Gherardi Commission report, referring to Bernstorff, said: "I am told he has been pressing 'inspired interviews'; that is, prepared and type-written answers to supposed questions by the United Press correspondent." FRUS, II, 13.
the sea could be guaranteed by internationalizing the Vistula River.

The speech fully endorsed the League of Nations idea, with the requisite that neutral nations should be members and that Germany be admitted after the peace was signed. Other than the Fourteenth Point, plans for such a League had not yet been unveiled. The Foreign Minister anticipated the League's need for a supra-national administrative authority, a general assembly (Bundesparlament), and some means of enforcing decisions. "Germany," he said,

\[\text{will}\] cooperate in every respect in establishing the League, even though the other nations would only admit us with deep misgivings and the League is primarily founded to stop Germany from continuing her warlike policy, which is now the farthest thing from our desires. We must overcome this distrust with proof of a sincere love for peace.

Brockdorff-Rantzau repudiated Germany's former "sword rattling" to get her way; the course was now "to convince the opponent that it is in his own interest to examine our views."

Led by the working class, the new German Government also included socialists and the middle class, and could now speak for the nation. As Foreign Minister he needed and valued the National Assembly's support, which his predecessors had lacked, and he hoped "to prove that a man could be a Count and at the same time a convinced Democrat." Having selected their leaders from the best talent available, the people could also correct their mistakes; he knew he would remain in his post only as long as the Assembly agreed with his policies. "We are defeated, but not dishonored," he concluded, and he swore to
defend the honor and dignity of the German people. 7

This speech, in English translation, duly appears in the Dresel report. It was aimed at the peacemakers in Paris as well as the Weimar National Assembly, but Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau were unattentive—they were either indisposed or not present in the French capital.

**German Preparation for Peace Negotiations**

Although they had little official knowledge of what was to come as a result of the deliberations of the Paris Peace Conference which had convened in January of 1919, the German Government made extensive preparations for its part in concluding peace. Dr. Alma Luckau, chronicler of the activities of the German Peace Delegation, describes the organization and work of the *Paxkonferenz*, which assembled expert opinion and documentary evidence on all anticipated questions of peace. Count Bernstorff, former German Ambassador in Washington and the only German statesman who knew President Wilson, Colonel House, and other prominent Americans personally, directed its work. By March,

7The entire speech is in Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente*, pp. 37–63. For an English translation, see *FRUS*, II, 16-26. A Gherardi Mission report noted: "The press comments on Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech indicate that it is thought to be very broadminded. Germany expects that her delegates will come to the Peace Conference, not as representatives of a defeated country, but as statesmen who expect to assist in the reconstruction of Europe. Wilson's 14 points are regarded as Germany's greatest safeguard." *FRUS*, XII, 15. The American Minister at the Hague (Garrett) reported he had heard "that Count Brockdorff-Rantzau in framing future policy considers it to be of first importance that he learn American opinion regarding his speech . . . ." *FRUS*, XII, 26-27.
however, the hopes for a negotiated peace began to fade.

As the Paxkonferenz prepared Germany's case, the problem of who would lead the peace delegation had to be decided. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau at first did not want this duty himself. He considered it better strategy if he, the Foreign Minister, remained in Berlin. Then, in case of a dictated peace with excessive demands, as the Armistice negotiations portended, the Delegation could delay its decision by having to communicate with Berlin for instructions. He would, if President Ebert desired, be present in Paris at the opening and conclusion of the proceedings.

Toward the end of March, however, Brockdorff-Rantzau was convinced that Germany must try for negotiations with the Allies. While the Paris Peace Conference continued throughout the first quarter of 1919, the critical food situation in Germany produced two significant results. On the one hand Spartacist violence broke out again in Berlin, where a general strike began in March, and Soviet republics cropped up in various parts of the country. The other event in March involved successful negotiations with the Allies over provisioning Germany through the

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8 Later on, at Versailles, the pressure of time did not permit extensive use of the tremendous amount of material assembled by Paxkonferenz experts for the German Delegation. Of the work of the Paxkonferenz Dr. Luckau observes: "The thoroughness of this preparatory work was as extraordinary as its futility was pitiful." Alma Luckau, The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), p. 31.

9 BMS, 1690E/1012/397 038-43. Bernstorff was felt to be unacceptable to the Allies. Although Brockdorff-Rantzau appeared in Weimar when necessary, he apparently stayed in Berlin most of the time, where the Foreign Office conducted its affairs.
summer. Talks in Spa had foundered early in the month when Germany asked such an assurance before handing over her entire merchant fleet to the Allies. On March 13th, however, Allied-German discussions resumed in Brussels, where agreement was reached on these points as well as the technical matters involved. This resulted in a partial lifting of the blockade, allowing the delivery of "200,000 tons of food into Germany in ten days."

But there was no basic change of attitude. Herbert Hoover, in charge of food shipments, met with continued Allied objections to further relaxation of the blockade, which was considered by France and Britain as a potent weapon to force German acceptance of the peace terms. 10

While encouraging, this was by no means an indication that the coming peace negotiations would follow the same pattern. Time appeared to be running out for Germany, however, and negotiation over technical matters was the only possibility of adjusting a dictated peace. At a Cabinet meeting on the 21st of March, Brockdorff-Rantzau presented a protocol on handling the problem of a peace which obviously would not conform to Wilson's principles. As he saw it, Germany had three alternatives:

1. Refuse such a treaty.
2. Present the Allies immediately with Germany's own treaty draft.
3. Study the Allied treaty, then offer counterproposals.

The third possibility, he said, would be the best; the delegates should be so well prepared that they could give their decisions on the spot.\footnote{BMS, 1690H/1013/397 059.} This the Paxkonferenz had already seen to.

It took the Cabinet two days to discuss fully the approach to the expected terms of peace. Having accepted the Fourteen Points and the Wilson-Lansing Note of November 5th, which left certain territorial questions untouched, Germany could argue convincingly for justice. In the Count's words, "Not covered in Wilson's Points are several important questions of peace for which we must propose solutions in the spirit of the Wilsonian program."\footnote{BMS, 1690H/1013/397 059-60.}

Regarding the reparations payments, he observed that other peace considerations affected Germany's future size and strength, but only this question involved her very existence. The Lansing Note and certain of Wilson's Fourteen Points could be interpreted as setting limits on what could be demanded. Closely bound up with this was the question of war guilt, for the Allies based their exorbitant reparations demands on the presupposition of Germany's sole guilt as aggressor. In November, 1918, Dr. Solf had sent a note to the Allies "proposing to turn over the examination of the causes of the world war to a neutral commission whose members should be given free access to the archives of all the Powers. The proposal was rejected by the
Allied Governments, who found that it was unnecessary to explore what was self-evident."13

Brockdorff-Rantzau revealed that England had very recently rejected a similar request from him, saying, "According to the opinion of the Allied Governments Germany's guilt for the war had long been indisputably established."14 Ebert and the Cabinet decided to refute the English assertion with another note and to request a neutral investigation once again. The German Delegates were not to give up the idea that the question of war guilt could only be decided in this manner.

At last the Cabinet meeting adjourned, having given its full support to the Count's proposals. They considered it "impossible to accept a peace going beyond the limits which he had characterized."15 Brandenburg points out here that the unity of the Cabinet behind Brockdorff-Rantzau's program was not unchallenged. General Groener, among his other criticisms, called for a much sharper opposition to the war guilt question, and Staatssekretär Erzberger had no scruples about approaching the peace question behind the Foreign Minister's back in any way he saw


14BMS, 1690H/1013/397 074; "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3443/H234 910. Brandenburg notes that President Ebert, who agreed that the Lansing note of November 5 was acceptable as a basis for peace negotiations, stated that if the Allies dictated a peace which went beyond Wilsonian principles, then Germany should submit a counterclaim to them.

15BMS, 1690H/1013/397 076.
fit. They had already clashed over the Armistice renewal.

Erzberger, one of the Catholic Center Party's most prominent and knowledgeable members, was looked upon by Ebert, Scheidemann, and the Count as an intriguer. Erzberger's recent biographer, Klaus Epstein, describes the antipathy between the aristocratic Brockdorff-Rantzau and the jovial Swabian--two men who were poles apart in every respect. "Rantzau," says Epstein, "resented Erzberger's restless, incautious, and meddling activity; Erzberger resented Rantzau's noblesse oblige attitude towards parliamentarians and his ill-concealed disdain for amateurs in diplomacy."16

Toward the end of March the Cabinet also debated whether or not to make public the Kautsky Documents dealing with the Empire's diplomacy before the outbreak of the war. Not yet knowing the content of this collection fully, the Ministers were divided in their opinion. Some, like Democrat Eugen Schiffer, feared they would actually help to prove Germany's war guilt. Brockdorff-Rantzau decided to withhold them for possible later use, since what awaited the Germans at the Peace Conference was yet unknown. On April 8, the Cabinet agreed that

16Epstein, p. 302. Erzberber complained to Scheidemann on April 26 that the German Peace Delegation had no diplomat with personal experience in France, England, Italy, Belgium or Japan. The Count naturally considered this an insult. He asked Erzberger, however, to accompany the Delegation to Versailles, hoping in this way to prevent Erzberger from undermining the Delegation's position in Weimar. Erzberger refused to go as a member; he would have preferred to lead the Delegation himself. See BMS, 1690H/1013/397 094, 100.
they should be held in reserve. Two days later, the Foreign
Minister delivered his second major address in Weimar, touching
on foreign policy and his program of reform at the Foreign
Office.\footnote{On war guilt and the Kautsky Documents, see BMS, 1690H/
1013/397 074, 76; and Fritz Dickmann, "Die Kriegsschuldfrage auf
der Friedenskonferenz von Paris 1919," Historische Zeitschrift,
CXCVII (1963), 64, 72-74. This recent German study of the war
guilt question criticizes Brockdorff-Rantzau for not publicizing
and utilizing the Kautsky Documents before and during the Peace
Conference. By revealing the actions of the Imperial regime,
Kautsky wanted "to avoid the identification of the new Germany
and its government, which had to conduct the peace negotiations,
with those who had caused the war/ even if it had only been
through their helpless incapability that the last diplomatic
threads had been cut in 1914."

For the April 10th speech, see Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokü-
mente, pp. 83-94.}

"Invitation" to Versailles

A week later came Clemenceau's note summoning qualified
German representatives to Versailles on April 25 to receive the
terms of peace. The word "receive" implied only a dictated
peace; Brockdorff-Rantzau's reply named three delegates "fully
empowered to receive draft text of preliminary peace negotia-
tions," who would be accompanied by four minor officials. To
this the Council of Four replied that they "would treat only
with plenipotentiaries."\footnote{Luckau, pp. 58-59, 210; Schiff, pp. 27-29. Lord Rid-
dell, pp. 54-55, records some interesting words of Lloyd George
regarding this exchange of notes. "L.G. said the result of the
message to the Germans might bring about the fall of the German
Government, and that we were at a critical period of the negotia-
tions. He thought the Germans' reply would show their disposi-
tion. If they agreed to send representatives, that would show
they were anxious for peace. If they declined to do so, it
would show they were indifferent." /On the next day, April 21,
Lloyd George revealed at dinner/ that 'The Germans have replied
saying they will send great personages. That is a regular climb-
down and very significant.'}
On April 20, Dresel reported an interview with Brockdorff-Rantzau. The Count, according to Dresel, averred that the formal invitation to Versailles had astonished him, and that he should only go if he were specifically directed by the government to start. As far as he could see, an ultimatum was intended and it was not clear why he should go to Paris to receive this. Passing to discussions of terms he said that conditions apparently proposed would reduce Germans to abject slavery... He would never sign any peace nor would the Ministry in his opinion agree to one which deprived Germany even temporarily of the Saar and upper Silesia and he was convinced that the German people would back this up.

His attitude was of great depression and he showed a remarkable irritation towards the French. He gave the impression of sincerity although I am not convinced he will not ultimately recede from his position. From the papers, a proclamation just issued by Ebert, and interviews with several well-informed persons, I have guarantees that the views of Rantzau meet with much support.19

Brockdorff-Rantzau replied to Clemenceau that Germany would send plenipotentiaries. He himself would lead the delegation, with the understanding that the draft treaty to be presented would be negotiated. He asked also that the German Delegation have "complete freedom of movement and full telephonic facilities for the purposes of communicating with their Government."20

19FRUS, XII, 83. The Count's memorandum of this interview is very detailed and bears out most of Dresel's observations. Several times he told Dresel emphatically that he would not sign a treaty ruinous or dishonorable to Germany, and that all information from Paris indicated that just such a treaty awaited Germany. "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3441/H234 180-93.

20Schiff, p. 30; Luckau, p. 210. When asked to comment on the leader of the German Peace Delegation in May, 1919, Maurice Egan, now returned to America, said: "Rantzau is intellect personified, and it will require not mere idealism but the most scrupulous knowledge of diplomatic tactics on the part of the Allies to deal with him." New York Times, May 4, 1919, IV, 1.
At the end of April, members of the Dresel Mission sent back conflicting reports together with some perspicacious advice. Ellis Loring Dresel and Lithgow Osborne disagreed on the nature of the new German Government. Osborne concluded in his report on April 30, 1919,

Personally I am inclined to believe that . . . a coalition Socialist government here is best for all concerned. The present Government, under the circumstances, is a thoroughly dishonest one. (Ellis disagrees here, and I probably have overstated the case. He agrees that the Government is weak, opportunistic, time-serving and employs idiotic measures. I suppose that there are sincere democrats in it, but no "feel" for democratic methods has been acquired, and couldn't be made use of if it had been.) It consists of tame pseudo-Socialists, still tamer pseudo-Democrats and of persons who pretend to base their democracy on Catholicism. (Imagine politics based on revealed religion in this day and age). The Government's instruments are the old "Beamtentum", and as regards democracy, no more need be said about them.

The Government's methods undoubtedly smack strangely of the old regime; it depends on military forces; there is still the attempt to "imponieren". "Imponieren" is the basis of foreign policy—see Rantzau's answer to the first "invitation" to Versailles. And that whole incident is regarded here as a "diplomatic victory" for Germany!!!

On May 3rd, a report from Dresel himself opined that:

It . . . seems probable that the somewhat uncompromising utterances of government officials and publicists need not be taken too seriously, and that the Government will sign in the end, especially if it can save its 'face' by being able to point to actual negotiations at Versailles.

Dresel likened the German appearance at Versailles to a "pilgrimage to Canossa" and included observations which might well have been useful:

I venture to suggest that whatever definite statements can be made indicating that at least a limited amount of discussion of terms will be permitted might have reassuring influence.

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21 FRUS, XII, 101. 22 FRUS, XII, 89. Italics mine.
I emphasized /In his April 19 interview with Brockdorff-Rantzau/ throughout the talk the belief that German economic rehabilitation will be in the interests of the whole world and that on the conclusion of peace our attitude will be only cooperation to this end. I also pointed out the ruinous consequences of summary rejection of peace. 23

The whole Dresel Mission, continued the report, was regarded in German official circles as "an advance courrier to mitigate the shock of the coming Treaty." 24

In view of the conditions which were to prevail at Versailles in May, the concluding information in Dresel's report fell on deaf ears.

I venture to draw attention to the sensitiveness of the government and of the delegates as to their probable treatment at Versailles. They evidently fear that they were likely looked on as Pariahs. In view of their excited and almost abnormal frame of mind I am convinced that as conciliatory an attitude as can be adopted towards them in non-essential matters may have important bearing on final result. Even insignificant concessions and the form in which distasteful demands are phrased will mean much to some of delegates. I believe therefore that latitude in such matters as material comforts, the widest liberty that can properly be afforded the delegates, occasions for informal intercourse, and ample opportunity to prepare and state their case, cannot fail to have a favorable effect.

My personal opinion, gathered from a large series of interviews, is that the present government will refuse to sign peace if the conditions are such as are stated in the press. 25

23 FRUS, XII, 83, 85. Dresel ended this report with a rather pathetic plea: "I shall endeavor to impress this as strongly as possible in future conversations and shall be grateful for any suggestions as to anything that can be said further along these lines."

24 FRUS, XII, 84. This is exactly how Brockdorff-Rantzau described it in his own report covering the April 19th Dresel interview: "I have the impression that /Dresel/ as well as Osborne are here on an official mission to work with all means to prepare the people and government for the acceptance of the peace." "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3441/H234 190.

25 FRUS, XII, 85-86.
Although he no longer believed that "Wilson would strain every nerve to prevent Germany's position among the peoples of this world from being reduced to nothing," Dresel's assurance of American realization of the importance of the economic rehabilitation of Germany in the post-war world fitted in with Brockdorff-Rantzau's concept of a just peace acceptable to both sides. The future rested upon the prompt restoration of commercial and economic ties and the participation of all western nations in the League of Nations.

On the way to Versailles, however, the Foreign Minister received news from the American Army Colonel Arthur Conger that confirmed every suspicion that the harshest of peace terms awaited Germany. There was little left of President Wilson's Fourteen Points after four months of the Paris Peace Conference.

26Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, p. 10.
CHAPTER V

CONFRONTATION AT VERSAILLES

A Last Interview with Conger

Two special trains carrying the leading members of the German Peace Delegation to Versailles left Berlin on the afternoon of April 28, 1919. During this journey the American Colonel Arthur Conger had a final interview with the German Foreign Minister. Conger, who had his headquarters at Trier, had sent a telegram requesting a meeting with Brockdorff-Rantzau en route, to which the Count agreed. The Colonel boarded the train at 2:15 A.M. on April 29, and the twenty minute discussion lasting from Essen to Duisburg, was of great significance. It was here that Brockdorff-Rantzau learned in some detail how far the Treaty terms fell short of the Fourteen Points and that President Wilson was allegedly unwilling and unable to make any changes in view of the French thirst for revanche and the demands of other nations at the Paris Peace Conference. Germany, now safely hors de combat, was simply to be shown the "dotted line."

According to the secret memorandum written that day by Brockdorff-Rantzau, Conger had three important and confidential disclosures to make. Since the traveling time between Essen and Duisburg would be short, he launched into a speech "almost
memorized verbatim. He began by revealing that direct telephone contact between Paris and Trier now existed, and added that arrangements could even be made whereby communications from Berlin could be transmitted to the American Delegates in Paris. Secondly, said the Colonel, it might be possible for the American military officer included among the French officers to be assigned as custodians, or guards, of the German Delegation in Versailles to establish contact with its leader.

But the most important revelations concerned the implacable position of the Allies regarding the peace terms. Conger implied that unity would prevail despite the trouble with the Italians, who had left the Conference. Then, according to Brockdorff-Rantzau's memorandum, Conger remarked that all the Treaty conditions were still not determined and that it was possible that the Germans would only receive a part of it to start with. Although President Wilson had done all in his power, it now appeared certain that no more modifications in the Treaty could be attained. The fifteen year French occupation of the Saar Basin, for example, was not even subject to further discussion. Put simply: President Wilson wished that the Germans would sign whatever terms were placed before them. By so doing,

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1EMS, 1691E/1013/397 108-12.

the Germans "would assure themselves of the sympathy of Wilson and the American people and possibly after ten or fifteen years modifications could be secured." ³

The Foreign Minister was not interested in possible changes a decade or more in the future. He considered the Saar occupation a "poorly veiled annexation." Germany was willing to make reparations to France and to supply her with coal as long as necessary, both of which would be impossible in the face of economic distress augmented by the loss of the vital Saar region. Brockdorff-Rantzau, who never really trusted Conger, stressed the imminent danger to the new-fledged Republic:

No government would be able to risk signing such a treaty. If the Entente wishes to render the present German government, which it has itself designated as qualified to negotiate, incapable of existing, that is their concern, and they will also be responsible if it leads to unavoidable chaos in Germany.⁴

When Colonel Conger reminded him of Germany's totally defenseless condition, which Marshal Foch was eager to exploit, Brockdorff-Rantzau countered with the Bolshevist threat:

We are indeed no longer capable of military resistance, but a nation of 70 million cannot be annihilated. If the Entente really enforces the plans that have just been revealed to me, then Bolshevism in Germany will be inevitable. It should be clear to our enemies that Bolshevism would not stop at the French border. By no means do I wish to use Bolshevism as a threat--I merely state the facts.⁵

³BMS, 1691H/1013/397 111.
⁴BMS, 1691H/1013/397 112. On mistrust of Conger, see Epstein, p. 306.
⁵BMS, 1691H/1013/397 112.
At Duisburg Conger had to leave. He said that he must report the course of the conversation immediately to President Wilson, to which Brockdorff-Rantzau emphatically agreed, repeating again that he could not sign a treaty that was not based upon the Fourteen Points. Conger's interview seemed an obvious attempt to sound out the German Delegation leader, who now suspected the worst. Colonel Conger had said in effect that Germany would be expected to sign the draft treaty without demur; the forthcoming meeting of ex-belligerents in Versailles was to be a mere formality and any intransigence on Germany's part would only arouse Allied and Associated wrath. What sort of reception awaited the Delegation at Versailles?

The "Spirit of Versailles"

The journey took on an ominous character soon after crossing the border of the as yet unbombarded Vaterland. Under French auspices, the Germans were subjected to an intentionally slow and bitterly enlightening trip through the war-devastated regions of Belgium and northern France. The trains chugged into Vaucresson, near Versailles, on the rainy evening of April 29, 1919.

Colonel Henry of the French Army, who acted as liaison officer during the seven weeks that the Germans actually spent at Versailles, met the leader of the German Delegation on behalf of the French Government. It was an icily formal greeting. Mo-

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6 Best described by Victor Schiff, pp. 45-57. Actually, their journey was planned by the French so that they would arrive in the evening. Luckau, p. 211.
tor vehicles then conveyed the entire group to the three hotels allotted to them in Versailles. Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and the most prominent Delegates occupied part of the Hôtel des Réservoirs, the secretarial staff was housed at the Hôtel Suisse, and members of the press were assigned to the Hôtel Vatel. A contingent having arrived two days previously, the German deputation now numbered about 180 persons, including communications technicians and printers.

French soldiers, although willing to do so, were forbidden to assist the Germans in carrying their luggage into their quarters and members of the Delegation soon found themselves completely isolated from any contact with the outside world, although they had access to newspapers and were in touch with their Government in Weimar. A part of the park at Versailles was reserved for them to walk about in, but after an "incident" or two, the town of Versailles was placed out of bounds. Only traffic among the three hotels, located near each other on both sides of the Rue des Réservoirs, was permitted. The French wished to preclude all contact between the Germans and the inhabitants of Versailles; French journalists faced the

7Noting that the cars had "little yellow pennants," Professor Bonn of the Delegation wrote: "The French had very tactfully chosen yellow for the German delegation; it denotes pestilence on board." Bonn, p. 226. Perhaps Brockdorff-Rantzau indulged in similar macabre humor at the Treaty presentation ceremony on May 7: his overcoat, bowler, suit, and gloves were all in funereal black.

threat of court martial if caught conversing with members of the German party. 9

Victor Schiff, a Socialist member of the German press corps, who knew France and the French language well, made a strong contention regarding the German quarantine: "There was, above all, the desire to keep those German Social Democrats who were known to be on our Delegation from meeting their socialist comrades in France." 10 The Allied fear that German Socialists would try to unite organized labor behind objections to an imposed, imperialistic peace was very real.

"Only photographs," observed General Hans von Seeckt in a letter to his wife on April 30, "seem to be freely allowed." 11 Photographers' flashes had dazzled the arriving delegates the previous evening, and the results of these now appeared in the local newspapers. The world learned of the Germans mainly through the pictures and comments of the French newspapers, which sneered at "the very pale Count Brockdorff-Rantzau" only as "the ex-ambassador of Wilhelm II," and misrepresented other Germans. 12 Unable to make any reply to the French press, the

9 Ibid.; Schiff, pp. 55-56. The charges would be "communicating with the enemy."


11 Rabenau, p. 163.

12 Ibid., Schiff, p. 58. Brockdorff-Rantzau was particularly angry about the hate campaign which the Paris Temps carried on against him. See Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente und Gedanken um Versailles (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1925), p. 135. This is borne out in Noble, Chapter X.
Germans could only wait for word from the leaders of the Peace Conference. On May 1, the quarantine was intensified by the construction of wooden palisades around the German compound, ostensibly to protect them from the Boche-hating French.13

That day also, the diplomatic exchange of credentials took place in the Trianon Palace Hotel, which had been Allied Headquarters during the war. As plenipotentiary of the German Government, Brockdorff-Rantzau did not wish to attend this brief meeting himself; Clemenceau would not be present and the Count felt that lesser persons could well attend to this chore. M. Jules Cambon, Head of the Allied Credentials Committee, made it known that Brockdorff-Rantzau was expected to be there, since all those to be present (Cambon for France, Henry White for the United States, Lord Hardinge for Great Britain, and Keishiro Matsui for Japan) were themselves plenipotentiaries.

The Count relented. At the meeting he exchanged greetings with Cambon, who had been French Ambassador in Berlin for seven years before the war. Brockdorff-Rantzau, however, delegated the actual job of examining the credentials to his fellow delegate, Reichsjustizminister Landsberg. Both nervous tension and excessive regard for punctilio can account for this.14 The Allies worried that Germany would ask for the Italian creden-


14 Henry White, according to his biographer, was shocked by the agitation of Brockdorff-Rantzau, who seemed on the point of collapse. His face was chalky, his knees shook uncontrollably, and his hands trembled. A few curt and formal sentences
tials (Orlando had left the Conference after the disagreement over Fiume), but the Germans accepted the Allied credentials after pointing out certain facts and discrepancies. 15

Except for the diplomatic exchange of credentials, the Germans received no instructions or communications from the Allies for seven days following their arrival. The lowering "spirit of Versailles" was palpably apparent. 16 Having been summoned to appear quickly in Versailles, the German Delegates were now treated as persons under house arrest and simply ignored while the Paris Conference still struggled over main points of the treaty. During these days of waiting while the Council of Three deliberated behind closed doors, the German Foreign Minister held discussions with his colleagues. He were exchanged, documents passed from hand to hand, the two groups bowed stiffly to one another, and the Germans retired. . . . White thought there was pathos in the humiliation of a once-great Empire, but Cambon said, coldly, that "he was glad to report the Germans seemed to be in just such a frame of mind as they should be." Allan Nevins, Henry White: Thirty Years of American Diplomacy (New York: Harper and Bros., 1930), p. 443. See also SMS, 1691H/1013/397 117; Novak, pp. 209-11; Lord Hankey, pp. 138-39.

Cambon was the only French dignitary whom Brockdorff-Rantzau singled out later for courteous bearing. Dokumente und Gedanken, p. 203.


Many writers have described this hostile atmosphere vividly, one of the best being Victor Schiff, who makes a great effort to be impartial and notes many small incidents whose cumulative effect was to have tremendous influence on the Germans. The "spirit of Versailles" is admirably captured by Hermann Lutz, who uses the phrase often in his book German-French Unity: Basis for European Peace (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1957), pp. 30-88.
sought the group's backing of his policy and assured them individually of his own support and confidence.  

All, that is, but one group: the few military officers who were among them. The Count ostentatiously ignored General von Seeckt and Commodore Heinrich when greeting Delegates soon after the arrival in Versailles. Seeckt was a peace commissioner but not one of the Delegates. He and Heinrich, the Naval representative, feared correctly that they would not be asked to participate in any of the top level discussions among the Delegates. Seeckt and Brockdorff-Rantzau did hold amicable discussions together while awaiting the pleasure of the Allies to be made known, but the Count's flat refusal to stress German military requirements quickly alienated Seeckt.  

17 See Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech of welcome to the Delegates at the Hôtel des Réservoirs, April 30, 1919, BMS, 1691H/1013/397 115-16. At first, during conferences, everyone feared that the rooms were "bugged" with hidden microphones. Schiff, pp. 31-33, 79-80. "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3443/H335 258. Cahén, pp. 227, 312, says that the Germans "listened in" on the Soviets at Brest-Litovsk.  

18 Rabenau, pp. 158, 165. The cool relationship between Brockdorff-Rantzau and General von Seeckt, which apparently began at this time, developed into a feud which lasted into the 1920's. when Seeckt objected to the Count as Ambassador to Soviet Russia in 1922. At Versailles, Seeckt at first wanted to press for a German Army of 300,000 men (Rabenau, p. 159.) He later settled on 200,000, but Brockdorff-Rantzau refused to ask for an increase over the 100,000 allowed by the Treaty. In 1918 Seeckt had insisted "Deutschland muss bündnisfähig sein. Man ist aber nicht bündnisfähig, wenn man waffenlos ist." Brockdorff-Rantzau's program called for Germany to lead the way in universal disarmament; he also spoke out against the re-forming of pre-war type coalitions. Seeckt accused him of offering up Germany's national honor by refusing to negotiate from a position of military strength. See Rabenau, pp. 175-80; Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 81-82; Walter Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff 1657-1945, tr. Brian Battershaw (New York: Praeger, 1953), p. 216.  

19 For example, Seeckt wrote in a letter to his wife on May 4, "Yesterday I sat a long time with Brockdorff-Rantzau and
Presentation of the Treaty

Since no further communications from the Allies were forthcoming, the Count wrote a letter to Clemenceau on May 4, saying that certain Ministers, needed by their government in Weimar, would be obliged to leave late on May 5 unless the Allies had definite plans. This ploy got results. Colonel Henry, the French liaison officer, informed Brockdorff-Rantzau that the peace conditions would be handed to the Germans at a ceremony in the Trianon Palace Hotel on Wednesday afternoon, May 7, at three o'clock. After perusing the agenda for the approaching session, the Germans realized that they would have no part in oral negotiations and that only fifteen days were to be allotted to them for the preparation of their written comments in French and English.20 This, together with the tone of Conger's message, appeared to leave Germany without any voice in negotiations. Great attention, therefore, was given to a speech drafted for the Foreign Minister if he were permitted to have the floor. In fact, there were two alternative speeches; one was a short statement, and the other, very long and detailed.

Premier Clemenceau's attitude as presiding official was to

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20Luckau, pp. 61-63; Novak, pp. 211-12. May 7 was also the fourth anniversary of the sinking of the Lusitania.
determine the nature of the German reply.21

Descriptions of the fateful meeting on May 7 are plentiful, but Lord Riddell's is one of the best. Riddell, acting as "an official link between the Paris Conference and the British Press,"22 strives for accuracy by paying careful attention to the smallest details, and he evokes the mood of the hour-long proceedings very well.

The large, elegant room was arranged very carefully, with long tables forming a rectangle. Chairs on one side for the six German delegates plenipotentiary (Brockdorff-Rantzau, Landsberg, Leinert, Melchior, Schücking, and Giesberts) faced those at the head table across the void, where Premier Clemenceau, sitting with President Wilson and Mr. Lansing on one side of him and Prime Minister Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law on the other, would preside. Premier Orlando was not present.

21Dr. Luckau says that at least ten drafts of Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech were made. She includes three of them, in addition to the one actually delivered, in her documentary volume, noting that it is impossible to tell who wrote them. The text of the shorter speech, to be given if Clemenceau's attitude toward a defenseless Germany was "reasonable," appears in Luckau and Novak as follows: "The fortune of war has gone against us, and we are ready to accept the conditions for which the preliminary negotiations have furnished the basis. We are prepared to go to the very limit of what is possible, but that limit is set by the dignity and the vital needs of the German people. We shall examine the document handed to us with good will and in the hope that the result of our interview may be subscribed to by all of us." Luckau, p. 65; Novak, pp. 7, 217-19; Schiff, pp. 69-70.

22Riddell, p. ix. Without an official pass, the New York World's Herbert Bayard Swope, who had met and liked Brockdorff-Rantzau in 1916 (see Chapter II supra), blustered his way into the building and obtained a good seat in the room where the ceremony was held. Kahn, pp. 226-28. Apparently he had long forgotten Copenhagen, and the Count was just another "damned German." See Chapter II, supra, p. 29n.
Gradually the room filled as those entitled to be there began to take their places. Photographers had a field day as the participants arrived at the building. Colonel Henry indicated that the Germans were present, whereupon a French official announced: "Messieurs les délégués allemands!" and the six men filed into the room with their two interpreters. "After a moment's hesitation," noted Lord Riddell, "everyone stood up." In acknowledgement, Brockdorff-Rantzau bowed ceremoniously to the head table before the Germans took their seats.

Clemenceau opened the session promptly at three o'clock, and his terse speech set the stage all too well for the drama that followed. The powerful personality of the French Premier had all along been the driving force of the Paris Peace Conference. President Wilson had won his point on the League Covenant as an integral part of the Treaty, but the raison d'être of the draft treaty, to strip Germany of the means to regenerate military power for all time to come, was the result of Clemenceau's

23 Lord Riddell commented that outside "the whir of the cinema cameras was almost equal to that of a small aeroplane." Riddell, p. 70. Inside the building, the curious stood on tables and chairs placed along the walls, and the Germans were continuously photographed as they walked by. BMS, 1691H/1013/397 118.

24 Luckau, p. 65, notes that the five members of the Foreign Office were also present: Dr. Simons, von Haniel, von Stockhannern, von Lersner, and Rödiger.

25 Riddell, p. 71, Literary Digest History, X, 308. Erich Brandenburg notes that Brockdorff-Rantzau bowed to Clemenceau (BMS, 1691H/1013/397 118), as does Lord Hankey (p. 152). Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement (3 vols.; Doubleday, Page and Co., 1922), II, 501, says: "The leader, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, tall, thin, black-clad, aristocratic appearing, seemed to everyone who saw him under great strain. His face was pale, and his bow to the head of the table where stood Clemenceau, was awkwardly formal."
relentless chairmanship. Twice now in his seventy-eight years he had seen Germany invade France—in 1871 they had taken Alsace-Lorraine and demanded a large indemnity. Throughout his career in politics Clemenceau regarded German militarism with horror and apprehension. Germany had been defeated this time, but only after four dreary years of warfare such as civilized man had never endured. A trail of utter devastation in Belgium and northern France remained in mute testimony to the horrors that had been; the drain of national treasure and the staggering casualty rate portended a long period of recovery, if indeed recovery from such carnage was ever possible.

There were those who would reduce Germany to a mere shadow of her former self by making the Rhineland regions independent of her. Groups pressing for the most debilitating demands included Marshal Foch, Aristide Briand, Louis Barthou, and President Poincaré. "The Tiger" was influenced sufficiently by Wilson and Lloyd George to keep such agitation at bay, but he insisted on the uttermost demands for reparations, was adamantly opposed to Germany's immediate admittance to the League, and compromised on a fifteen year occupation of the left bank of the Rhine although his original recommendation had been thirty years.

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The key to Clemenceau's idea of dealing with the Germans lay in his attitude. Lloyd George tells how, during discussions of the disarmament provisions of the Treaty, Clemenceau had expounded on how to negotiate from a position of strength:

... The Germans must, of course, be spoken to with moderation and equity, but also with firmness and decision. The degree of pressure to be exerted would be made to fit each case as it arose. But the Germans must not be told: 'Go on, do as you like. Perhaps we shall someday threaten to break off relations, but just now we will not be firm.'

... If a German thought that the one having the mastery showed any signs of hesitation, or failed to look him straight in the eye, he would concede nothing.27

On May 7, the time to exhibit the proper attitude had come. The entire gathering knew what a stupendous moment of triumph and revenge this was for the French Premier. He felt himself the personal avenger of Bismarck at Versailles in 1871. "Gentlemen, Plenipotentiaries of the German Empire," he began

This is neither the time nor the place for superfluous words. You have before you the accredited plenipotentiaries of the great and lesser Powers, both Allied and Associated, that for four years have carried on without respite the merciless war which has been imposed upon them. The time has now come for a heavy reckoning of accounts. You have asked for peace. We are prepared to offer you peace.

To make known to you something else that is in my mind, I must of necessity add that this second Peace of Versailles which is now to be the subject of our discussions has been too dearly bought by the nations who are represented here for us not to be unanimously resolved to use all the means in our power to obtain every satisfaction that is due us.

There will be no verbal discussion, and observations must be submitted in writing. The plenipotentiaries of

Germany will be given fifteen days in which to put into French and English their written observations on the entire treaty.

While Clemenceau's speech was being interpreted first into English and then into German, M. Dutasta, Chief Secretary of the Peace Conference, entered the quadrangle and placed a thick copy of the Treaty before the Count, who arose slightly to make a "stiff little bow," and placed the large document to one side with his black gloves on top of it. Clemenceau asked, after the translation, if anyone wished to speak, and Brockdorff-Rantzau raised his hand "after the manner of a schoolboy." The whole German Delegation realized that this might be the only time the Allies would consent to hear a German representative. Clemenceau might be unassailable, but Wilson and Lloyd George would perhaps take certain facts to heart.

Perceptibly nervous, according to most witnesses of the scene, the Count donned his horn-rimmed reading glasses. Selecting the lengthy and carefully prepared German reply, Brockdorff-Rantzau proceeded to read it aloud without rising from his chair. This action, construed by nearly everyone as intentional disrespect, became notorious as the typical insolence of the Hun. It was also the culmination of the psychological ef-

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28 Luckau, pp. 223-24. Novak, in an emotional description of this tableau, asserts that Clemenceau seemed to depart from his previously determined words, as the significance of the occasion overwhelmed him, and that he returned to his text after a few sentences rasped out in an unmistakable passion of hate. See Novak, pp. 216-17.

29 Riddell, p. 72; Literary Digest History, X, 309.

30 Luckau, p. 63.
fects of the "spirit of Versailles" upon the German Delegation and its leader.

Reading the speech, the Foreign Minister acknowledged Germany's military defeat and affirmed the sincere intentions of his Government to rebuild and make good the damages to Belgium and northern France, but repudiated the idea that the sole guilt for the war rested upon Germany. In Allied ears, one of the most rankling phrases was the following:

The hundreds of thousands of non-combatants who have perished since the eleventh of November by reason of the blockade were killed with cold deliberation after our adversaries had conquered and victory had been assured to them. Think of that when you speak of guilt and punishment.

Germany, said the Count, could not sign a treaty which would condemn her to economic ruin and thereby prevent the payment of substantial reparations, which she felt bound to undertake. He made a rational appeal for committees of experts from both sides to study the problem of reparations required from Germany and how she might best meet a substantial amount without going bankrupt.

The League of Nations now represented the world's hope in place of power politics and coalitions which had always led to war in the past. He ended with a plea for international good-will within the framework of the League:

Gentlemen: The sublime thought to be derived from the most terrible disaster in the history of the world is the League of Nations. The greatest progress in the development of mankind has been pronounced, and will make its way. Only if the gates of the League of Nations are thrown open to all who are of good will can the aim be attained, and only then the dead of this war will not have died in vain.
The German nation is sincerely prepared to reconcile itself with its severe lot if the agreed-upon basis of the peace is not undermined. A peace which cannot be defended before the world in the name of justice would always generate new resistance to it. No one would be in a position to sign it with a clear conscience, since it would be unfulfillable. No one could assume the risks which would be contingent upon signing.

We shall examine the document presented with good will and with the hope that the final result of our meeting can be signed by all of us.31

The "Big Three" fidgeted uncomfortably and whispered to one another. Clemenceau was angered; Lloyd George and Wilson were visibly uneasy at the references to the blockade, the sophistry implicit in the German war-guilt theory, the abandonment of the Fourteen Points, and the need for an all-inclusive League of Nations. Clemenceau asked if anyone else wished to speak, and then abruptly adjourned the session. The Germans left the room first.32

Going down the steps outside, Brockdorff-Rantzau lighted a cigarette and stood silently, waiting for his staff and their transportation. The cigarette "caused a sensation" as an arrogant gesture; actually, the Count was a super-sensi-

31 The complete speech can be found in Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 113-18, and, in English translation, in Luckau, pp. 220-23. Lord Riddell, p. 73, noted that "The length and tone of the Count's speech were obviously a surprise to the Allied delegates." Lord Hankey, pp. 154-55, says that "the intrinsic merits of the speech were spoiled . . . by his failure to stand up . . . and by his harsh and almost menacing intonation, by the loss of coherence due to the delivery and interpretation in sections . . . ."

32 According to the Literary Digest History, "After the meeting the German delegates were the first to leave the Trianon. Before they appeared at the outer door, the military guard of the palace had been withdrawn so as to avoid any semblance of military honors." X, 316.
tive, high-strung individual, now very much overwrought, and he was a heavy smoker.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Analysis of the Speech of May 7, 1919}

Overlooking the discourtesy of not rising, the speech has subsequently been characterized as "a powerful and dignified expression of Germany's intentions."\textsuperscript{34} Writing in 1927, British historian George P. Gooch put forth the following opinion:

The Foreign Minister's declaration and the tone in which it was delivered appeared to certain members of his audience to breathe a spirit of lowering defiance. But it merely reiterated the principles of his first address to the National Assembly \textit{at Weimar, February 14, 1919} and if re-read to-day it will appear to most judges skillfully adapted to avoid the pitfalls of truculent self-righteousness and insincere contrition.\textsuperscript{35}

In 1940, Professor Gooch referred to Brockdorff-Rantzau as "an able and liberal-minded man" and continued that "no German diplomat could have presented the demand of the new Germany for fair play with greater argumentative skill."\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{33}On the behavior of the "Big Three" during the speech, see Riddell, p. 73, and Dr. Simon's letter on May 10, in Luckau, p. 119, which also describes the Germans leaving the assembly. Novak, p. 225, describes the scene on the steps.


\textsuperscript{35}George P. Gooch, \textit{Germany} (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1927), pp. 215-16. Professor Gooch also notes that "No attention, however, was paid to the \textit{Weimar, February 14} speech at Paris, where the victors were confident of their power to enforce whatever terms they cared to impose." \textit{Ibid.}, p. 213. Actually, Wilson and Lloyd George were both absent from Paris at that time, and Clemenceau was shot on February 19. See above, Chapter IV.


In 1938 even Lloyd George conceded "This appearance of arrogance was not reflected in the speech itself, which, although it con-
Why, then, did the Foreign Minister deliver a well-framed speech in such a discourteous manner? Several circumstances, most of them generally unrecognized at the time, help to explain this indisputable breach of etiquette. Those who saw him noted the Count's "exceedingly broken, nervous physical condition." Lord Riddell describes him upon entering the great hall:

Brockdorff-Rantzau looked ill, drawn and nervous. He walks with a slight limp. His complexion is yellowish, and there are black rings under his eyes which are sunk deep in his head. When he was taking off his coat, I noticed that his face was covered with beads of perspiration.38

Two Americans, General Tasker H. Bliss, and the Ambassador to Britain, Henry White, considered the Foreign Minister too overcome with nerves to stand up in front of the assembly, and the Englishman Harold Nicolson records a like view.39 In accord with Wilson and Clemenceau, Lloyd George fumed: "Those insolent Germans made me very angry yesterday. I don't know when I have obtained a protest, was characterized rather by dignity than defiance." Lloyd George, The Truth ..., I, 677.

37Lutz, p. 41.

38Riddell, p. 71. Lord Hankey had hastily observed in his diary on May 7 that "Brockdorff-Rantzau was a sinister-looking rascal, a typical junker. His speech was a strange mixture of cringing and insolence." Quoting this diary passage in his book, he continues the story: "But when my private secretary Sylvester, who had typed the translations of the speeches, showed me an advance copy I was not sure that my judgement was not too hasty, ..." Lord Hankey, p. 155. Hankey's opinion in 1963 was that the speech "was in fact by no means a bad one, when read in its entirety later." Ibid., p. 154.

been so angry. Their conduct showed that the old German is still there. Your Brockdorff-Rantzau will ruin Germany's chances of reconstruction. Nineteen years later, however, he devoted the better part of two pages in *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* to offering an elaborate excuse for Brockdorff-Rantzau's "boorishness," attributing it to nervousness and stage fright.

There is no doubt that the previous six months had undermined the Foreign Minister's health. Photographs taken before and after 1919 show this clearly. The war years in Copenhagen had been a continual nervous strain. Aware of heart trouble in the latter half of 1918, he had made his acceptance of the Foreign Office contingent upon health considerations as well as his political and diplomatic program. The heart condition was apparently a minor problem immediately after the war. But in the latter 1920's Brockdorff-Rantzau was plagued with attacks of angina pectoris.

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40 Riddell, p. 76.

41 Lloyd George, *The Truth*, I, 676-77. Still other opinions were subsequently aired. Stephen Bonsal, French diplomat and linguist, said: "I lean to the opinion that Brockdorff-Rantzau was both ill and drunk. For weeks we have heard of the enormous quantities of cognac he consumes daily and but a glance at his deadly white face, his sunken chest, his hollow shoulders reveals what must have been his physical condition for a long time past." Stephen Bonsal, *Suitors and Suppliants: The Little Nations at Versailles* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1945), pp. 270-71. Bonsal also quotes Balfour as saying: "Beasts they were and beasts they are. How in the world can we contrive to live in the same world with them?" Ibid.

42 Compare photographs in Novak and Stern-Rubarth.

The first months of the Republic had been a time of terror. Brockdorff-Rantzau had withstood gunfire and bombardment with Ebert and Scheidemann when the Reichschancellery was besieged by Spartacists, and Government officials in Berlin were never safe from Bolshevist brigands. From January, 1919, office hours in the Wilhelmstrasse began at 8 or 10 A.M. and the Foreign Minister often stayed on until five or even seven o'clock the next morning. He dealt personally with mountains of correspondence, attended lengthy Cabinet meetings, met with the Paxkonferenz, worked out plans for Foreign Office reforms, gave interviews and press conferences, and endlessly speculated upon the Allied demands awaiting Germany at the peace table and what the German response should be. He strove to reconcile the divergent political viewpoints, for he believed that a German Government without solid backing would stand no chance against exorbitant Allied terms. The week at Versailles preceding May 7 had been full of frantic preparations for the coming ordeal foreshadowed by the last meeting with Colonel Conger. The long conferences, perusal of the anti-German French newspapers to which reply was impossible, and waiting under the most psychologically frustrating circumstances had taken its toll of everyone.

44 Stern-Rubarth, pp. 70-95; Blücher, pp. 42-45. Gustav Noske, Von Kiel bis Kapp (Berlin: Verlag für Politik und Wirtschaft, 1920), although he makes no mention of Brockdorff-Rantzau, gives a vivid description of these days.

45 Stern-Rubarth, p. 74.
Brockdorff-Rantzau was not a good orator. He always read his meticulously prepared speeches and was naturally reticent in front of a large heterogeneous group. In small gatherings his acquaintances marvelled at the brilliance and often pedantic literacy of his conversation and his acumen in personal debate. But he was no rabble rouser, and his aristocratic bearing and forbidding reserve could never evoke much feeling of rapport with an audience. He was a lawyer, a writer, a scholar, a diplomat in the old tradition, and a man of liberal political opinions, yet he lacked completely the means to communicate and inspire. Although he believed that Germany's future would best be served by the Republic, the Allies could see him only as the stereotyped Junker—the unrepentant and unchanged face of the old régime.

The speech he read on May 7 was much longer than Clemenceau's and contained points that he felt must be mentioned openly. His later excuse that it was easier to read this long document sitting down was probably true. Another factor also enters the picture. Clemenceau's comparatively short speech had been translated in its entirety, first into English and then into German, after the Premier had finished speaking. Those accounts long enough to give such details all note that

46Brockdorff-Rantzau, Memoirs, p. 254. Eyck, I, 90, refers to the Count's "... keen mind and sense of style, thanks to which his communications were penetrating and emphatic. On the other hand he lacked, as do so many diplomats, the gift of extemporaneous speaking. Faced with any large audience, he could only cling nervously to his prepared manuscript and plunge ahead."

47Gooch, Recent Revelations, p. 99; Schiff, p. 69
Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech, given in German, was translated sentence by sentence, first into French and then into English. The Count himself chose this singular method of delivery.\textsuperscript{48} Not only did it render standing to speak impractical; it prolonged the time needed to deliver the speech and destroyed its continuity.

The main reason, however, for the studied discourtesy is given by Dr. Simons and the Count himself. Simons tells that the Count asked him, on the way to the Trianon Palace Hotel, whether or not he should rise to speak; Simons recommended that he should. As a lawyer, Brockdorff-Rantzau felt otherwise, because, as Simons related in a letter to his wife on May 10,

In a diagram of the hall of the session which appeared in the French newspapers, the German table had already been designated as "banc des accusés." The Count therefore had heard, in spirit, the words, "the prisoner will stand up," and it was for that reason he kept his seat.\textsuperscript{49}

In 1925, an embittered Brockdorff-Rantzau vehemently denied any attack of nerves and wrote his own explanation, which corroborated that of Dr. Simons:

\textsuperscript{48}Riddell, p. 72; \textit{FRUS}, III, 417. Writing in 1963, Lord Hankey recalls these details clearly, and relates that there was only one copy of the speech, which had to be passed from the speaker to both interpreters and back again. Lord Hankey also includes the information that the Allies, knowing that Brockdorff-Rantzau spoke fluent French, had discussed "whether, when the Treaty was handed over to the Germans, he should be permitted to speak in German or should have to speak in French or English." See Lord Hankey, pp. 153-55, 139. The Count did not know English.

\textsuperscript{49}Luckau, p. 119. In an interview for the \textit{Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung} on May 10, the Count had only a cryptic reference to this action: "If I remained seated, while Clemenceau stood, it had its well considered reasons." Brockdorff-Rantzau, \textit{Dokumente}, p. 120.
They certainly hoped to gloat over our downfall. If many were disappointed ..., I regret that I must point out that my duty demanded that I disappoint them this time. Even today I can see the French newspapers before me with the plan of the great meeting hall, in which the place assigned to us was designated with large letters as the "bench of the accused."

... I felt myself to be a peace negotiator, as the representative of a power, defeated after dreadful struggles and tremendous efforts, but still great, and I did not consider myself as an accused man who must rise before his judges.50

Although he always denied it, a state of nerves cannot be ruled out; indeed, as Professor Bonn has written, Brockdorff-Rantzau "did not want the Allied statesmen to see [him] tremble before them."51 And he would not for one moment appear as the prisoner in the dock. In a press conference at the end of May, the Count likened Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau to Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanthus, the mythological three judges of the dead in Hades.52


51Bonn, p. 230. Eyck, I, 93-94, holds that a combination of all these factors, physical and emotional, is responsible for the Count's remaining seated, and that Brockdorff-Rantzau, knowing he "would suffer a violent attack of stage-fright," used the "Defendant arise:" explanation as "an excuse which concealed his real reason."

52Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, p. 151; Stern-Rubarth, p. 15.
CHAPTER VI

"JÜMME DE KOPP BABEN"

Reactions of the "Big Three"

The morning after the presentation of the Treaty to the Germans found Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Wilson deep in serious discussion. The fear that Germany's signature to the Treaty would not be easily obtained permeated the session. Angered over his indiscretion and bitter tone of voice, they nevertheless remembered Brockdorff-Rantzau's plea for committees of experts to study the questions of war guilt, European restoration, and, above all, to prepare a financially workable reparations program. They called for a translation of the Count's speech on that very point, then discussed it a bit further:

Lloyd George suggested that this did not constitute a definite proposal which need be replied to.

Clemenceau agreed that it would be better to take no notice.

President Wilson agreed and suggested that one possible interpretation of the phrase was that if the Germans signed the Treaty they would want the assistance of the Allied and Associated Powers in carrying it out.

(It was agreed: -- that no reply should be made to this statement in Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech.)

At another meeting on the following afternoon, the Council of Three remained convinced that the Junkers, personified

\footnote{FRUS, V, 510-12.}

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by Brockdorff-Rantzau, still dominated Germany. Lloyd George, although he regretted the blockade, urged the occupation of Berlin if the Germans refused to sign. As he put it,

It would be the outward and visible sign of smashing the Junkers. They would never be convinced otherwise.

President Wilson said the hope rested on the remainder of Germany ridding themselves of the Junkers. Apart from Brockdorff-Rantzau, the other German delegates had looked reasonable men.

Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that none the less they had allowed the Junker to take the lead. They could not free themselves from the sense of servitude to the Junkers.

President Wilson thought that Mr. Lloyd George's theory was correct that the insolent parts of Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech had been his own and the reasonable parts supplied by the other delegates.²

They then summoned Marshal Foch to ascertain whether or not sufficient military units were still available to impress Germany and invade her if necessary.

Mr. Lloyd George suggested that it might be an advantage to have some demonstration at an early stage. The Germans were now making up their minds. Possibly they thought that the Allied and Associated Powers would not march.

M. Clemenceau said that that was exactly what the Germans were saying. They believed the French Army incapable of marching and that the United States Army was going home.

Mr. Lloyd George said that it might be too late ten days hence and he thought some action ought to be taken to show that the Allied and Associated Powers had made their minds up. He would like a demonstration made within a day or two. The most impressive form of demonstration would be to bring the cavalry to the front.

Marshal Foch said that his cavalry were too few for a great demonstration, but he proposed himself to make

²FRUS, V, 527-28.
an immediate visit to the Commander-in-Chief of the various armies in such a way that while apparently secret, it would be known to everyone and all Germany would be puzzling to know what he was up to.

President Wilson suggested a secret journey with careful leakage.

Marshal Foch said that this was what he intended.\(^3\)

**Impact of the Treaty**

Meanwhile, the German Delegation worked feverishly, making the most of their two weeks to learn the contents of the voluminous Treaty and prepare their written comments in the prescribed manner.\(^4\) The first job was to translate from French into German the very few copies of the 80,000 word document

\(^3\) *FRUS*, V, 539; Riddell, pp. 77-78.

\(^4\) Brockdorff-Rantzau commented on the initial German reaction in an interview for the *Hamburger Fremdenblatt* on May 21: "On May 7, the Delegation considered whether there would be any kind of negotiation over this Peace, or whether the quick and unqualified refusal of it would not be preferable in spite of all the hazards that might arise from that. We did not choose this path, . . . which might have corresponded most of all to the state of mind in Germany, but we made use of the right granted us to formulate our objections and bring them to the attention of the Allied and Associated Powers within the length of time provided." Unable to complete their commentary in 14 days, the Germans asked for an additional week, which was granted. "We could not," continued the Count, "go away remaining silent on certain aspects, as intolerable as they might seem to us, in the hope that there would be an opportunity to discuss them after the conclusion of the Peace; or hoping that, in practice, their actual carrying out would not be interpreted so severely as the text of the Peace Treaty indicated. . . . We wish to sign only a peace which we can actually observe. We abhor any double-dealing, any deception, any mental reservation. As honorable people we wish to fulfill those obligations accepted by us." Brockdorff-Rantzau *Dokumente*, pp. 129-30.
that were available to them.\(^5\) Translation posed many serious problems due to the vagueness of the French text in some places. Of great significance was the interpretation of Article 231, the "war-guilt clause," for the Treaty's reparations and punitive clauses rested upon it.\(^6\) The previous notes from Dr. Solf and Brockdorff-Rantzau requesting neutral investigation of the causes of the war had been curtly rejected by the Allies with the observation that German guilt was already accepted as fact.

Outside the innermost councils, others at the Peace Conference knew as little of the details of the Treaty as the Germans. The document in its entirety was unknown to nations small and large on the Allied side.\(^7\) Utmost secrecy had characterized the entire Peace Conference, and a summary of the Treaty terms

\(^5\)Victor Schiff tells how they were obliged to tear the May 7 copy and a few others into sections in order to expedite the all-night labors of the translators before the various committees were able to study the treaty as a whole. Schiff, p. 74; Novak, p. 226.

\(^6\)The ambiguity of Article 231 resulted in the war guilt issue. Did Germany's "responsibility" for "aggression" involve only legal liability or moral guilt for the whole war? The genesis of Article 231 and the resulting interpretations are carefully examined in R.C. Binkley, "The 'Guilt' Clause in the Versailles Treaty," *Current History*, XXX, (May 1929), pp. 294-300.

\(^7\)Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1921), pp. 239-40. Colonel House said: "The Germans are giving us an example of open diplomacy. They print the Treaty as soon as it is given them, and we are getting in Paris the German edition. It is being sold in Germany and Holland and nearby countries at a ridiculously low price, something like fifty cents a copy. Nevertheless, be it remembered, the United States Senate has never seen the Treaty as a whole." Edward M. House, *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Arranged as a Narrative by Charles Seymour* (4 vols.; Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1926-1928), IV, 472. Hereafter cited as *House Papers*.
had been distributed only hours before the meeting of May 7. In contrast to the Wilsonian principle of "open covenants, openly arrived at," secrecy had served as a smoke screen for the disagreements and old-time diplomacy of the framers of the Treaty.®

Victor Schiff, who was also one of the Secretaries of the Delegation, refers to the next episode at Versailles as the "war of notes."® When the translators had finished, the committees of German experts went to work on their written commentary. On May 9, their opening volley in the note-war pointed out the incongruity of the Treaty with the Fourteen Points and concluded inauspiciously: "The draft of the treaty contains demands which no nation could endure; moreover, our experts hold that many of them could not possibly be carried out."® The next note encompassed a German Plan for a League of Nations Covenant, observing,

At this time the German delegation desires to point out the contradiction which lies in the fact that Germany

®On April 5, Lord Riddell asked: "Will the peace terms be published before they are discussed with the Germans?" Replied Lloyd George: "No, certainly not! They will be handed to the Germans when they come to Versailles. If the terms were published beforehand, the position of the German Government would be made impossible. The terms might lead to revolution. We shall be very strict about any infraction of this arrangement, and shall punish any paper that publishes the terms before we make them public."

Clemenceau did not even allow Marshal Foch to see the terms before the Germans were summoned late in April. See Riddell, pp. 46, 61.

®Schiff, p. 84. General Seeckt, ready to leave on the 8th of May, referred sarcastically to the forthcoming "Papierkrieg." Rabenau, p. 172.

® Luckau, p. 225.
is asked to sign the covenant of the League of Nations as an integral part of the treaty, although she is not among the governments which have been invited to join the League. The German delegation wishes to know under what conditions an invitation to become a member of the League would be extended.\textsuperscript{11}

The bid for entry into the League comprised the first written German observation, because, explained Brockdorff-Rantzau to the Deutsche Allgmeine Zeitung, the League came first in the Treaty and everything else was contingent upon it. To the Europa Press Bureau he gave a complete statement:

\begin{quote}
We ourselves know that the new Germany has broken with the principles and practices which are the cause of the distrust of our enemies. But it must be made clear that until now we have had no opportunity to offer proof of this on the level of international negotiations. Therefore we cannot ask at the outset that our assurances of the inward and outward revolutions [in Germany]\textsuperscript{7} be blindly accepted by our adversaries. We can and must demand that the Entente grant us the opportunity to demonstrate, through our actions a compelling proof of the new political convictions of the new Germany. Not through words alone, but above all through deeds, must we offer something . . . better in place of the \textit{politique} that was formerly followed by the representatives of the previous Germany at the Hague peace conferences and also during the war.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

A complete discussion of the Treaty provisions and the German counterproposals is beyond the scope of this thesis. In her comprehensive book, \textit{The German Delegation at the Paris Peace Conference}, Dr. Alma Luckau has admirably covered this subject. Denied oral communication with the Allies, Germany's Delegation was determined to place her views before the world arbiters. The criticisms leveled at the Treaty by the Foreign Minister

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\textsuperscript{11}Ibid.\
\textsuperscript{12}Brockdorff-Rantzau, \textit{Dokumente}, pp. 120, 122-23. The German stand on the League was No. 10 of eleven subjects covered in the "Instructions Given to the German Plenipotentiaries of Peace" formulated in April, 1919. See Luckau, pp. 199-209.\
\end{flushright}
and his experts came under several general headings. In addition to Germany's exclusion from the League of Nations, other areas of the Treaty considered vulnerable by the German experts involved labor legislation, disarmament, self-determination of peoples in disputed areas, repatriation of prisoners, economic strictures, reparations, and the "points of honor." This last category included extradition of the Kaiser and other "war criminals" for trial, and the infamous Article 231.

Brockdorff-Rantzau considered the war guilt assertion a legal device whereby the Allies could stave off a peace settlement indefinitely, to Germany's material disadvantage. On May 13 he requested, by note, the report of the Allied Commission on the Responsibility for the War, which Clemenceau refused to divulge. The "Tiger's" note to Brockdorff-Rantzau said that such reports were "documents of an internal character which cannot be transmitted to you." German guilt, added Clemenceau, went back to the Lansing Note of November 5, 1918, according to which Germany, by accepting it, admitted responsibility for all "aggression."

Brockdorff-Rantzau countered with a blast at the methods of the Peace Conference. In a note to Clemenceau he wrote that Germany had never "assumed the responsibility for the origin of the war," and therefore Germany could not:

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13Dickmann, p. 83.
14Luckau, pp. 242, 254; Binkley, p. 300n.
consent to be put off with the remark that the data on the question of responsibility collected by the Allied and Associated Governments through a special Commission are documents of an internal nature of these Governments. This, a question of life and death for the German nation, must be discussed in all publicity; methods of secret diplomacy are here out of place.\textsuperscript{15}

The economic sphere was equally important, for it was here that the Count and his highly competent team continually affirmed Germany's intentions of meeting reparations obligations to the greatest feasible extent, provided the economic capacity to do so was not denied her. While stripping Germany of colonies, territory, and natural resources, the Treaty demanded Germany's unconditional assent to as yet unspecified reparations payments: a "blank check." German experts held that the result would be internal chaos and economic collapse endangering all Europe. Brockdorff-Rantzau expressed his feelings to his fellow Delegates in a bitter précis of the French text of the Treaty, wherein countless clauses began with "Germany renounces . . ." Snarled the Count: "\textit{Das dicke Buch war ganz überflüssig. Es wäre einfacher gewesen, man hätte erklärt: L'Allemagne renonce à son existence.}''\textsuperscript{16} Later, in a press interview, he expressed his opinion for the benefit of the outside world: The economic conditions of the Treaty represented a "new kind of Einkreisungspolitik" on the part of the Allies, which would only generate new and dangerous pressures in Germany, comparable to the pre-war militarism.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15}Luckau, pp. 271-72. \textsuperscript{16}Novak, p. 228; Rabenau, p. 169. \textsuperscript{17}Brockdorff-Rantzau, \textit{Dokumente}, pp. 146-49.
Efforts toward German Unity

To present his case to the Allies, Brockdorff-Rantzau needed the confidence and support of his Government at home. Judging from the plenary session of the National Assembly in Berlin on May 12, the Delegation in Versailles retained strong backing. The Treaty was immediately denounced by every group in the National Assembly, led by Ebert and Scheidemann. Demonstrations of mourning and defiance were seen all over Germany.¹⁸

But even as the Foreign Minister conferred with the Cabinet at Spa on May 18, regarding the financial and economic proposals to be made by the German Delegation, the fabric of resistance was weakening. That very weekend Matthias Erzberger, who still considered Colonel Conger the best link with Wilson, met with Conger and a Major Henrotin whom he had asked to come to Berlin. Count Bernstorff was also present at this meeting and held fast to the official stand that the Treaty could not be signed as it stood. Erzberger met the two Americans alone the following morning; without Bernstorff, who had irritated them, he indicated that Germany could not postpone the peace and that he could be instrumental in bringing about an agreement based on three face-saving proposals. The Americans convinced Erzberger that the Allies were ready to march in and occupy Germany.¹⁹

¹⁸Luckau, pp. 94-100. Opposition to the Treaty, however, was based upon diverse reasons, as Dr. Luckau points out.

¹⁹Epstein, pp. 305-07; Zimmermann, p. 63.
A second meeting between the Foreign Minister and government representatives at Spa occurred on May 22. Both Scheidemann and Erzberger were there. It was the last attempt to reach a compromise before the German counterproposals were submitted. Brockdorff-Rantzau’s personal antipathy toward Erzberger is well known, but the group managed to come to an understanding. Erzberger's ideas had some influence on the final form of the counterproposals, and the Delegation agreed to refer the decision for or against signing to the Cabinet.  

Although other disruptive forces were at work, Erzberger more than anyone revealed the disintegration of solidarity in the German stand. Brockdorff-Rantzau had thought it an advantage to have the Delegation called to Versailles, since this might enable them to present an appearance of greater unity, and the home front would be less demoralized without the victors in Berlin. But the Allies and neutrals were soon well aware that Erzberger or someone else could be found to sign.

The Counterproposals Fail

On May 29, which was also Brockdorff-Rantzau's fiftieth birthday, the Germans submitted their counterproposals to the Allies, who had granted a week's extension to the original fifteen days. An accompanying cover letter (Mantelnote) expressed good faith and presented an outline of a specific German repara-

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20 Luckau, p. 103.

tions plan going "to the extreme limits of what is possible." Again, pleas were entered for a neutral investigation of war-guilt and for the inclusion of Germany in the League. The concluding paragraph faced facts, yet appealed to reason:

"Germany must sign the treaty that has been presented to her and must carry out its conditions. Even in her misfortune, right is too sacred to her for her to stoop to accept conditions that she can not promise to fulfill. Previous treaties based on "the right of might" caused and prolonged the world war. The lofty aims which our enemies have been the first to give to their way of conducting a war, require a treaty in a different spirit. Only the collaboration of all nations . . . can create a durable peace. We are under no illusions as to the depth of the hatred and bitterness which are the fruits of this war; and nevertheless the forces working for harmony in humanity are to-day stronger than ever. The historic task of the Peace Conference at Versailles is to bring about this harmony."

The letter bore Brockdorff-Rantzau's signature, but had been prepared by Dr. Guttmann of the Frankfurter Zeitung.

The German counterproposals were voluminous and time did not permit their translation from German into French and English, although the Mantelnote was correctly submitted in those lan-

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22 Luckau, p. 304.
23 Ibid., pp. 305-06; Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 144-45.
24 "The suggestion that this responsible task should be entrusted to a newspaperman, and not to a delegate or an expert, originated with Commissioner General Simons, who believed that Guttmann's style might be more adapted to appeal to public opinion than a concise and legal formulation." Luckau, pp. 85, 126.
guages. They consisted of "General Remarks" followed by
eleven sections enumerating Germany's acceptance of obligations
and her requests for revisions of the Treaty.

Most noteworthy among the Counterproposals were Section
I (on the League), proposing immediate and complete disarmament
of Germany in return for League membership, and Section IV (on
Reparations), which defined financial commitments to be under­taken by Germany:

Germany is ready, within four weeks after the rati­

cification of peace, to issue government bonds for 20,000,-
000,000 gold marks, payable not later than May 1, 1926,
in instalments to be stipulated by the Allied and Asso­
ciated Powers, and for the remainder of the total indem­

nity to draw up the required deeds in the same manner
and to pay them in yearly instalments without interest,
beginning May 1, 1927, with the understanding that the
total compensation shall on no account exceed the sum of
100,000,000,000 gold marks.

Their labors concluded for a while, the German Delegates
wondered whether the Allies would break off negotiations. The
Count and Dr. Simons discussed every contingency of signing or
not signing, should the Allies refuse to consider changes: both
also realized that their policy of reasoned protest could now
easily be overruled in Weimar. The ultimate goal of the Dele­
gation had always been oral negotiations leading to an agreement

25 Dr. Simons began a letter on May 30, "Yesterday and
the day before we gave the enemy more than 300 pages, folio size,
to swallow; and if they do not throw it back at once, it will
take them some time to digest it." Luckau, p. 122. Harold Nic­
olson noted in his diary on June 1st, "A foul day, owing chiefly
to my having to spend the whole morning and afternoon translating
German Notes which descend upon us like leaves in Vallombrosa. .

26 Luckau, pp. 353, 382. Germany also asked to retain her
colonies and large merchant ships. In this thesis the term "mil­
liard" will be used instead of the American term "billion."
on economic clauses and the alleviation of conditions detrimental, in their opinion, to the fulfillment of obligations.\textsuperscript{27}

Brockdorff-Rantzau chided the German press for speaking only in terms of accepting or rejecting the Treaty. "Our task," he wrote in a memorandum, "is not purely negative." He granted that Germany must sign peace terms meeting certain requirements of the Allies, but maintained also that a reasonable agreement had to be reached whereby Germany would not be reduced to nothingness or slavery. "It has not come to oral negotiations," he continued, "but I have not given up the hope that the other side will yet find itself ready for that."\textsuperscript{28} To a German reporter on June 6, he said:

Oral negotiations are not taking place, neither openly nor secretly. The fence, behind which they are protecting us, is not only a courtesy, but a symbol. I can almost believe that they fear the power of my discourse /Beredsamkeit/. We must therefore wait until it pleases the enemy to allow us to receive their written answer.\textsuperscript{29}

Discussion of Treaty obligations, where appropriate, with the Germans was no longer without strong advocates on the Allied side. On May 10, the Germans had requested 'direct conversations," regarding repatriation of prisoners of war, but the Allies at the time refused this until Germany signed the

\textsuperscript{27}In a letter home on June 10, Dr. Simons reveals how eighteen days passed while the Delegation awaited the Allied response to the counterproposals: "We are deep in preparations for the face-to-face negotiations with the Allies, which, however, for the time being, are not going to take place." Luckau, p. 131.


\textsuperscript{29}Brockdorff-Rantzau, \textit{Dokumente}, p. 168.
Treaty. Although the Germans had contacts who could provide some indication of the state of mind of the Council of Three, they had always overrated Wilson's influence on Clemenceau and this misconception prevailed even after the submittal of the counterproposals. The discussions of Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau from May 21 through June 9, as recorded by David Hunter Miller, reveal the desire, not shared by Clemenceau, to meet with the German representatives.

"On May 21," noted Hunter Miller, "President Wilson advocated that the economic and financial experts of the Allied and Associated Powers discuss questions of detail with the German experts." Clemenceau disapproved, but Lloyd George agreed that "a few small concessions would give them excuse to sign." Meetings of the "Big Three" were held during the first week of June, while the German counterproposals were being studied. The three heads of state disliked the "no interest" feature of the German offer of 100 milliard gold marks. However, Lloyd George and Wilson strongly advocated the naming of a definite reparations sum: in Wilson's words, "The object of the figure was to get the Germans to agree." A meeting on June 9 was

31 Dr. Simons mentions news from such a source in a letter of June 1, 1919. Luckau, p. 129.
32 David Hunter Miller, My Diary at the Conference of Paris (20 vols.; Privately printed, 1928), XII, 276-77.
33 Ibid., p. 279. Cf. FRUS, VI, 147-60, where the Council of Three, on June 3, discussed the idea of giving Germany three months to submit another financial proposal after signing the Treaty. At this meeting, "President Wilson pointed out that, if the German proposal could be accepted, half the objections would disappear."
devoted to reparations schemes. M. Loucheur, the French financial expert, had said that "the Germans would not accept as high a figure as would have to be fixed." The discussion then foundered on the number of months needed to name, in Lloyd George's words, "a figure which would satisfy public opinion either in Allied or enemy countries." Considering the incredibility of such a figure, Hunter Miller's record of Wilson's next remarks is highly interesting:

President Wilson said that personally he was satisfied with the reparations arrangements of the Treaty, provided it was properly explained to the Germans, but the important thing was to induce the Germans to make peace quickly and if the concession of naming a definite sum, even arbitrarily, would reassure the Germans the concession was worth making. It was also important to leave the Germans sufficient assets to start their trade again and to bear the burden of reparations; "he could not ask the United States bankers to give credit if Germany had no assets."

A glance at the minutes of a meeting of the Council of Three two days previously shows how Clemenceau had squelched the idea of oral negotiations on the financial clauses with the compelling argument that: "The object of the Germans in asking for conversations was to divide the Allies. They would say that a M. Loucheur said one thing, Lord Cunliffe another, and Mr. Keynes a third."

Contrary to Clemenceau, both Wilson and Lloyd George favored Germany's early admission into the League; Wilson was prepared to give a "general assurance" of this to Germany as

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34 Miller, My Diary, XIX, 279, 280.
36 FRUS, VI, 236.
soon as the Allies were convinced that the changes in her govern-
ment were "sincere." British and American Delegates and eco-
nomic experts deplored the harshness of the Treaty in strong
words. Colonel House voiced his disapproval, much to Wilson's
distress. On June 5, Herbert Hoover sent President Wilson an
extensive memorandum, saying he was convinced:

that (a) the demands made are greater than the economic
surplus; (b) that the regime and controls are such as
endanger the stable democracy in Germany; and (c) that
the Germans will never sign the Treaty in its present
form. The present Government in Germany is the only
alternative to either Reactionary or Communistic Govern-
ment, and if it fails we have political debacle in any
event. . . .

Harold Nicolson, of the British contingent, observed in a let-
ter on June 8, "the real crime is the reparation and indemnity
chapter, which is immoral and senseless."39

Early in June Lloyd George (in a "perfect funk" according
to Wilson40) feared the possibility of Germany's not signing
and the terrible implications of this. On the third of June he

37 Ibid., pp. 157-58.

38 Herbert Hoover, The Memoirs of Herbert Hoover, Vol. I,
Years of Adventure 1874-1920 (3 vols.: New York: The Macmillan
Co., 1952), pp. 464-65. Hoover, humanitarian and realist, had
begun his memorandum with this sentence: "In any discussion of
the draft treaty, I think it must be accepted as a premise that
real justice can never be meted out, for no adequate punishment
of German crimes is conceivable or even encompassed in the pres-
ent draft treaty."

39 Nicolson, p. 359.

40 Bailey, p. 292. According to Bailey, Wilson was an-
ergized because Lloyd George pressed for concessions on France's
part instead of giving up any advantages accruing to Britain
from the Treaty.
had suddenly offered the startling thought that "if Brockdorff-Rantzau would not sign, he would probably be replaced by someone else, whose signature might be of little account." 41

As the month of June began, Woodrow Wilson suffered from the effects of his illnesses and the physical strain of six months of arduous discussions. Other business demanded the attention of the Council of Three at the same time the German case was considered; committees agonized over an Austrian treaty, while simultaneously the German counterproposals were translated and replies framed, bit by bit. Wilson declared his disinclination to change the achievements represented by the German Treaty, finally formulated after disagreements which had persisted until the literal eve of presentation. June third was the day he had made his often-quoted statement:

that the time to consider all these questions was when we were writing the treaty, and it makes me a little tired for people to come and say now that they are afraid the Germans won't sign, and their fear is based upon things that they insisted upon at the time of the writing of the treaty; that makes me very sick. . . . These people that overrode our judgment and wrote things into the Treaty that are now the stumbling-blocks, are falling all over themselves to remove these stumbling-blocks. . . .

Though we did not keep them from putting irrational things in the Treaty, we got very serious modifications out of them. If we had written the Treaty the way they wanted it, the Germans would have gone home the minute they read it. 42

41 FRUS, VI, p. 159. Italics mine.

Years later, Lloyd George attributed Wilson's adamant stand to an earlier cause: "The effect of Brockdorff-Rantzau's speech on May 7 on President Wilson's mind was to close it with a snap."43

A letter from André Tardieu to Colonel House on June tenth finally put an impossible situation into words:

For more than five months the heads of Governments and their experts have studied the terms of Peace to be imposed on Germany. They have reached an agreement and they have communicated to the Germans a text which, if it does not yet bind Count Brockdorff—in any case unquestionably binds the Allies.

Could the Allies suppose that this text would be satisfactory to Germany? Of course not. However, they adopted it. Germany protests, as it was certain she would. Immediately a modification of the text is undertaken. I say this is a confession of weakness and a confession of lack of seriousness, for which all the Allied Governments will pay dearly in terms of public opinion! Is it an impossible Treaty? Is it an unjust Treaty? Count Brockdorff believes it is. If we change it, we admit that we think as he does. What a condemnation of the work we have done during the past sixteen weeks!44

The Council of Three had found it impossible to agree to accept any of the major German counterproposals. Now they had to inform the German Delegation of this, and demand that Germany accept the Treaty virtually as it was on May 7. Weary with work and argument, the "Big Three" again checked with Marshal Foch on the availability of an invasion force, should it be necessary. Wilson offered to get American troops back if he could request a specific number.45

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43 Lloyd George, The Truth, I, 676.

44 House Papers, IV, 476-77.

45 FRUS, VI, 501-09, 523, 543-52. The seven day ultimatum eventually given Germany stemmed from the fact that the Armistice would expire on June 23. Lord Hankey, pp. 174-75.
On June 13, with Clemenceau's vigorous approval, Lloyd George "advocated a renewal of the blockade in the event of the Germans refusing to sign as if this were known in Germany beforehand, it would have a great effect." President Wilson preferred a military occupation; with arguments strangely akin to those of the German Foreign Minister he said that "he did not believe in starving women and children," and that "the imposition of the blockade would shock the sense of mankind." He added that "starvation would only bring about Bolshevism and chaos." It was decided that day that ostentatious preparations for the re-imposition of the blockade should be made, for in the opinion of Lloyd George,

the mere noise of preparing a blockade would do more to make the Germans sign than the military occupation. There were important elements in the population such as the rich industries and the wealthier classes of Berlin who would probably welcome an occupation as a means of ensuring order. The mere threat of a blockade, however, would terrify the whole population.46

The final reply of the Allies reached the German Delegation on June 16, reiterating Germany's war guilt. The "revised" Treaty contained minor changes hand written in red ink: a plebiscite granted in upper Silesia, and the Saar mines were to be returned after fifteen years, if a plebiscite so decreed. Other than this and a previous promise to admit Germany to the International Labor Organization before her undetermined entry into the League of Nations, no other changes were made.47

46FRUS, VI, 371-72.

47Luckau, pp. 89-90; Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, p. 171; Novak, pp. 261-62. In a letter to Clemenceau dated June 20, Brockdorff-Rantzau pointed out that there were several
many had five days to sign or the Allies would invade. The Delegates now had to consult their Government before a final decision was made, and two extra days were granted in view of the distance from Weimar. That evening, the German Delegation left Versailles in a shower of stones thrown by the local populace.48

Defeat in Weimar

Aboard the train, they drafted a memorandum to be presented to the National Assembly, recommending the rejection of the Treaty as it stood. The unanimous opinion of the Delegation was against signing—the "revisions" were inconsequential. Nothing altered the spirit of the Treaty or alleviated any of the economic pressures and humiliating conditions. The Delegation held that the Allies neglected to consider that the greatest burden would fall upon the working class, whose rights were ignored. Germany's entrance into the League depended upon her "good conduct" in regard to the Treaty, but that document's impossible demands provided the Allies with the means of excluding Germany from the League as long as they wished. It would be better to refuse to sign a Treaty which, in the

48Stern-Rubarth, p. 106; Riddell, p. 92; Novak, p. 263. A lady secretary was hit on the head and permanently disabled. See Schiff, pp. 125-26, and New York Times, June 18, 1919, p. 1, which has the following triple headline: "GERMANS INSIST THEY WILL NOT SIGN; PARIS INCLINED TO BELIEVE THEY WILL; VERSAILLES MOB STONFS DELEGATES."
considered opinion of the Delegation and their experts, was intolerable, unfulfillable, unjust, and dishonest, than to accept the impossible and then be held accountable for it.\textsuperscript{49}

By this time, violence and unrest gripped the city of Weimar. The very night before the Delegation arrived from Versailles, an attempt had been made to storm the Weimar Schloss and murder President Ebert and all the other Ministers.\textsuperscript{50} On the morning of June 18, a car carrying Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dr. Simons, and others, made its way from the Weimar station to the Schloss. An armed soldier stood on either side of the automobile, since the possibility of assassination or a Putsch was very much feared by those in Weimar.\textsuperscript{51} The Foreign Minister soon presented the Delegation's unanimously approved report to the Cabinet.

For two days that body sat in almost continuous session, arguing over the alternatives of signing, not signing or signing without accepting Articles 227-231, which was Erzberger's inspiration.\textsuperscript{52} The final Cabinet vote was so close that

\textsuperscript{49}Brockdorff-Rantzau, \textit{Dokumente}, pp. 171-82; Schiff, pp. 139-40.

\textsuperscript{50}Erzberger, pp. 375-76; Noske, p. 169f.

\textsuperscript{51}BMS, 1690H/1013/397 240.


Brockdorff-Rantzau would have nothing to do with the Erzberger plan. It had no prospect of success, as it attempted to cut out Article 231, which was a cornerstone upon which the Treaty demands were based.
Ebert said the decision must be referred to the National Assembly. Chancellor Scheidemann's Cabinet resigned on the 19th, without the Foreign Minister having a last chance to present his case to the National Assembly. His carefully prepared but undelivered speech held that the Allies would try to exact every farthing if Germany signed and that they would condemn her as a peace breaker if, as was certain, she could not fulfil every condition to their satisfaction. The written speech ended with an appeal to the German people for one last sacrifice of the Great War—at stake now was peace and their own freedom:

Will the enemy governments really dare to commit the crime of shamefully humiliating and oppressing the German people, because they have refused to meet with our representatives in honest oral negotiations concerning the restoration of the war damages? Will they commit the madness of requiring new and unpredictable military burdens of their own people in order to extort from the German people more than the great offer made to them of their own free will? Well, in that case these peoples will not support their governments' demands to the bitter end; then the time will come, when it will be possible for peoples to speak to peoples and to establish the workers' association without which the new Europe cannot arise.

The peroration alluded to the fateful hour in which Germany's duty involved not only the German people, but all Europe. It was now a question of:

a world-mission which the German people is called upon to fulfil, but which it can only fulfil if it does not give itself up. The German people fights no longer for the laurels of war, but for the victory of peaceful democratic ideals in the world.  

53Stern-Rubarth, pp. 113-17. The text of this speech, found among his papers after his death in 1928, was not made public until then. Brockdorff-Rantzau believed, and Dr. Simons
With this last opportunity to appeal for unity lost, the fall of Scheidemann's Cabinet, and support crumbling away as each hour passed, Brockdorff-Rantzau submitted his resignation to Ebert on June 20th.

President Ebert wanted the Count to reconsider his resignation. A messenger came on the afternoon of the 20th to ask Brockdorff-Rantzau to present his views once more, this time to a meeting of the Minister-Presidents and representatives from the various parts of Germany. This the Count did, and his own memorandum covering the events of that turbulent day includes his last appeal to refuse the Treaty as it stood:

The Entente would not survive this extra stress (Belastungsprobe) and would break up. I believe that after two or at most three months we could come to oral negotiations leading to truly acceptable conditions. To strengthen my position I read an expose of the situation and state of mind in the enemy countries. In closing I read a telegram from the Minister, Adolf Müller, in Bern, which ended with the words, "We would, by accepting the Treaty, not only make ourselves disliked abroad, but contemptible." I closed saying that the prospect of being disliked did not dismay me, in any case we were already disliked. The limit of my attitude was our honor, which I had already stressed in my first policy speech, and I will not overstep these bounds under any circumstances. I have already submitted my resignation, but I am ready to carry on further in this office if the gentlemen here will agree with my

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agreed, that he and the Delegation members were prevented by the maneuvering of the political parties from appearing before the National Assembly's apparently brief meeting. BMS, 1690H/1013/397 226, 249.

Brockdorff-Rantzau thought that Germany should have laid up supplies of coal and food after the Armistice and during the weeks gained by the Peace Delegation in Versailles, in order to be better able to wait out the hard times which would follow a refusal to sign. He thought a treaty imposed by actual force would provide Germany with a more potent legal basis for later rectification. See BMS, 1690H/1013/397 248, 250.
judgment and declare for refusal [of the Treaty].
I do not need to add that I intend to give myself
over entirely to the support of this position (mit
meiner ganzen Person für die Durchführung einzutreten).
I appeal strongly to you gentlemen, in this fateful
hour for the Reich and the German people, to follow
me and not deny me your confidence.54

In their policy of refusing to sign and holding out
for a few months, Brockdorff-Rantzau and the Peace Delegation
reckoned that disagreements among the Allies and the general
longing for peace would lead ultimately to an acceptable nego-
tiated settlement. Months of bitter hardship might be in
store for Germany until more just terms were evolved, but
signing now meant the economic destruction of the country and
enslavement of the people. Matthias Erzberger called this
policy a "gambler's throw" (Vabanquespiel) and feared political
dissolution of the country as its result. He urged signature
to any terms in preference to the horrors of military invasion.55

54 BMS, 1690H/1013/397 202-03.
55 Stern-Rubarth, p. 107; Novak, p. 267. Still another
alternative to signing or not signing was the extreme solution
proposed by Walther Rathenau. Writing for Zukunft on May 31,
he said that if the Allies made no concessions, Count Brockdorff-
Rantzau, as plenipotentiary, should hand over to the Allied
Governments the decree of dissolution of the German National
Assembly together with the resignations of President Ebert and
the Cabinet, thus forcing the Allies to take over the sovereignty
and government of Germany and the responsibility for her 60,000,-
000 people. See Harry Graf Kessler, Walther Rathenau, Sein
283; Eric C. Kollmann, "Walther Rathenau and German Foreign
Policy," Journal of Modern History, XXIV (1952), 133. Other
prominent German scholars, Max Weber and Hans Delbrück, shared
this view. See FRUS, XII, 127. Weber and Delbrück, together
with Count Max Montgelas and Alfred Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, com-
prised the German committee to investigate the causes of the
war's outbreak. Dr. Simons also expressed a similar thought in
a letter on May 20, 1919: "Perhaps the one thing left is to put
Germany wholly in the hands of the League of Nations and let the
War weariness, hunger, and chaos all sustained Erzberger's acceptance plea. There were those who were glad to see a Foreign Minister who put dignity and ethics above politics, but as the hours ticked away, most of those who hesitated were swayed by Erzberger's dire predictions. For more than a day, Germany had no Cabinet and no Foreign Minister. In agreement with their Chief, the members of the Peace Delegation and Dr. Simons had resigned also.56

Brockdorff-Rantzau's letter of resignation as Foreign Minister is noteworthy, in view of Germany's ultimate acceptance of the Treaty. "The foreign policy which I have led," he wrote to Ebert on June 20, could only depend on intellectual weapons. Through military defeat, political revolution, and the economic demands of the armistice, Germany was eliminated as a material power factor. Despite this, I believe I can say that it was possible for me to raise her political credit abroad.

The discussions in Weimar made it obvious, continued the Count, in view of the suffering of the people, that solid backing for his policy no longer existed. "For the present," he said, "I must turn back at the threshold of success." He explained his view to Ebert that an official of state did not ordinarily have the right to refuse his cooperation whenever circumstances forced a change in policy, but in the case of a Foreign Minister it was different. Should he go along with such a rever-

League extract from Germany, economically, as much as they care to be responsible for." See Luckau, p. 122.

56 Luckau, p. 109.
sal, after publicly denouncing it, he "would endanger the dignity and credit of the Reich." Germany's world-mission was now to stand for democracy and social justice in the place of the capitalistic and imperialistic designs of the present peace document. "If Germany accepts the peace conditions," he concluded,

the political result of this enormous sacrifice should be the easing of tensions, . . . the withdrawal of enemy troops, and the preparation of the way for real peace negotiations. This would be endangered, and perhaps entirely in vain, if the new conditions had to be accepted by the same man as Foreign Minister who had opposed them so sharply.57

Brockdorff-Rantzau traveled almost immediately from Weimar to Berlin, where he put affairs at the Foreign Office in order after his resignation. On the third of July he left Berlin and retired to Annettenhöhn, his unpretentious estate in Schleswig. He had hoped that the days of "a scrap of paper" were over. In Germany's name, he would sign "neither our death sentence nor the abnegation of our national honor,"58 and in the German Delegation's opinion the Treaty of Versailles demanded Germany's public admission of war guilt and extorted terms ruinous to her existence. To the Allies he was the insolent Hun; to many Germans the Count remained a symbol of dignity. Over the doorway of Annettenhöhn, the Brockdorff coat of arms surmounts the plattdeutsch motto: "Jüömer de Kopp baben" --"Never bow your head."59

57 Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 183-86.
CHAPTER VII

AFTER THE TREATY: 1919-1922

German Acceptance of the Treaty

After the resignation on June 20, 1919, of the Scheidemann Cabinet in which Brockdorff-Rantzau had been Foreign Minister, only three days remained for the German Government to reorganize and make its decision on the Treaty. Weimar was like "a madhouse" during those days. In the National Assembly furor mounted as the choice was weighed; it was soon only a matter of hours before "the enemy would march," and political conviction gave way before the tumult. Opposing the Treaty, President Ebert had wished to resign also, but after party colleagues convinced him that his presence meant continuity instead of complete chaos, he remained in office as the Weimar Government's polestar.

A new Cabinet, with former Minister of Labor Gustav Bauer as Chancellor, tried to accept the Treaty without the "points of honor," Articles 227-231, which was the formula devised by Erzberger and accepted by the Republic's military leaders. It did not work. The Paris Peace Conference shot

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1 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 240; Erzberger, Erlebnisse, pp. 382-83.
2 Luckau, p. 108; Schiff, pp. 140-41.
3 Luckau, pp. 110-11. Cahén, p. 331, says Erzberger claimed that Conger assured him the Allies would accept this. On
back a reply refusing anything but unconditional acceptance of the complete Treaty within the next twenty-four hours. The possibility of German military resistance having been ruled out of the question on June 19, the Bauer Government could do nothing but yield.  

The actual affixing of signatures to the Treaty on Germany's behalf was done by two members of the Bauer Cabinet, who traveled to Versailles for that unhappy duty. Representing the German Republic at the famous ceremony in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles on June 28, 1919, were Social Democrat Hermann Müller, who was now the new Foreign Minister, and Catholic Centrist Dr. Johannes Bell.

In Paris, Colonel House had noted on June 23 that Germany's "signified intention of sending only one unimportant and unknown representative here to sign is indicative of temper and unreliability . . ." But five days later, House wrote of the Hall of Mirrors ceremony:

When the Germans had signed and the great Allied Powers had done so, the cannons began to boom. I had a feeling of sympathy for the Germans who sat there quite stoically. It was not unlike what was done in olden times, when the conqueror dragged the conquered at his chariot wheels. To my mind it is out of keeping with the new era which we profess an ardent desire to

June 3, Erzberger had said vividly: "Suppose someone tied my arms and placed a loaded pistol against my chest, and asked me to sign a paper obligating me to climb to the moon within 48 hours. As a thinking man I would sign to save my life, but would say openly that the demand simply could not be fulfilled." Epstein, p. 318.

With but two hours to spare, the Bauer Government telegraphed to Clemenceau: "Yielding to overpowering might, the German Republic accepts the peace treaty imposed by the Allied and Associated governments. But in so doing in no wise abandons its conviction that these conditions of peace represent an injustice without example." Luckau, p. 112.
promote. I wish it could have been more simple and that there might have been an element of chivalry, which was wholly lacking. The affair was elaborately staged and made as humiliating as it well could be.\(^5\)

In her memoirs twenty years later, President Wilson's widow recalled some frivolous, but interesting, impressions of that tense scene:

Then fell a silence, broken at length by the sound of footsteps as the German signatories were conducted to their place. . . . They seemed embarrassed and ill at ease, and were uniformly stolid, uninteresting-looking men. I could not help feeling had I been sending men, I would have selected more impressive-looking ones. They reminded me of prisoners before the bar of justice.\(^6\)

Germany was the first nation to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. In the National Assembly on July 9, 1919, the action passed by a vote of 208 to 115, with 99 deputies abstaining.\(^7\) The same day, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, at his desk at Annettenhöh, wrote:

The whole work of the German Peace Delegation was directed toward improving the draft Treaty and then to sign it. . . . But now that the representatives of Germany . . . have signed the Peace, and ratification is imminent, now we must not allow the suspicion to arise that

\(^5\)House Papers, IV, 484, 487. House's first observation was probably influenced by the scuttling of the German fleet, interned at Scapa Flow, on June 21st.

\(^6\)Edith Bolling Wilson, My Memoir (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1939), p. 269. After the ceremony, Müller suffered a nervous collapse in his hotel room. See Schiff, p. 171.

\(^7\)Literary Digest History of the World War, X, 350. This was done even before the National Assembly ratified the German Constitution on July 31, 1919.
Germany signed the Peace in order to sabotage it later through secret dealings. Where it is unfulfillable must be proved to the other side.

Now that the Treaty was an obligation accepted by the Republic, he advocated a new post-Versailles rationale for Germany. As the embodiment of resistance to the Treaty, he felt that he must remain in the background. His version of Erfüllungspolitik was intended to demonstrate the economic impossibility of the treaty conditions, leading eventually to more realistic negotiations. But his original stand against the Treaty had rested upon what he thought was much firmer ground. Had the Treaty been imposed upon Germany by the Allies with actual military force, the judicial case for ultimate revision of the harshest and most humiliating terms would have been much stronger than under the existing circumstances whereby Germany had accepted the Treaty under the mere threat of force.9

While still in Versailles at the end of May, the Count had made a portentious statement to the press at the end of the same interview in which he characterized the new economic "Einkreisungspolitik" against Germany, as revealed in the Treaty:

Among the economic experts of our opponents, the socializing of economic life ought to be compared with the now destroyed Prussian militarism. . . . a danger to world peace could develop if a nationalistic socialism were to replace a nationalistic


9BMS, 1691H/1013/397 250.
capitalism; if nationalism, organized down to the finest detail, were to manifest itself as a weapon, as an army.

Each force generates a counter-force. . . .

He carried this argument further by prognosticating that aggressive nationalistic socialism in Germany would represent a threat to the capitalist structure of England and the United States. Yet the threat of latent militarism in a national socialist society "organized down to the last detail" is here the salient thought.

Brockdorff-Rantzau's Retirement

The German Republic's whole struggle for existence after November, 1918, together with the humiliations and frustrations of Versailles and the mental travail under pressure of time, had worn down the Count's health and strained his nerves to the limit. From the standpoint of his own health and personal affairs, both of which he had necessarily neglected for many months, he needed a period of recovery at Annettehöh. The first weeks at home were difficult; he brooded over past events and Germany's uncertain future, and suffered from insomnia at this time. Letters and expressions of congratulation and approval arrived daily, but in August he wrote to Dr. Simons that:

... here in solitude I am often overcome with very bitter moods, especially since the departure of my brother, whose efforts to distract me were

10 Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 148-49. See Chapter VI, p. 113, supra.
touching. The thought, to have been so near to success and have to give way to stupidity and viliness gnaws at me more than I care to admit.\textsuperscript{11}

He continued to lead a secluded life, writing articles, but he kept in touch with important events and persons in German politics by occasional visits to Berlin where he would stay at his twin brother's house in the \textit{Viktoriastasse}.

The Republic wished to avail itself of Brockdorff-Rantzau's service and authority after Versailles. The relationship between him and President Ebert continued to be one of mutual respect and confidence. Ebert soon offered the Count the post of Ambassador in Vienna, but he declined it. He later refused similar positions in Rome and Madrid.\textsuperscript{12} After the frightening rightist-military Kapp \textit{Putsch} in March, 1920, Ebert asked Brockdorff-Rantzau to become Foreign Minister again, which Ebert thought would strengthen the government's flagging domestic authority. Turning this offer down, the Count explained he knew the results of feelers in London about his taking that office again. Lord Hardinge of the British Foreign Office had told the German Ambassador in London, Dr. Friedrich Sthamer, that it would be regarded as an "unfriendly" act. The Count also knew "that the French would move Heaven and Hell to obstruct my appointment."\textsuperscript{13}


\textsuperscript{12}BMS, 1691H/1013/397 264; Stern-Rubarth, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{13}BMS, 1691H/1013/397 267, 269. Earlier that month Brockdorff-Rantzau had declined the same offer because he considered the Bauer Cabinet "transitional."
After the adoption of the Republic's new Constitution, the possibility of a presidential election arose in January, 1920, since Ebert had been elected by the National Assembly, not the people. The Democrats sought Brockdorff-Rantzau as their candidate, but he declined, although he appreciated this honor. "The Social Democrats will want to put up their own candidate doubtlessly," he said, and he did not want to run against Ebert.\footnote{BMS, 1691H/1013/397 274.}

No election was held; the National Assembly decided that Ebert should complete the five year presidential term. Brockdorff-Rantzau retained only his position as Chairman of the Red Cross Central Committee and the welfare positions related to it, which he had taken on as Foreign Minister. This, however, could always be a clever means of engaging in politically "unofficial" missions, if such occasions arose.\footnote{BMS, 1691H/1013/397 263, 307. Rosenbaum, p. 20, discusses a talk between Brockdorff-Rantzau and Ebert on April 25, 1921, when the Count said he "would be willing to go to Moscow, as a prominent member of the Red Cross, to ascertain whether it was possible to resume relations."}

Brockdorff-Rantzau had written a memorandum on his meeting with Ebert right after his resignation as Foreign Minister in 1919. Ebert had praised his stand in Versailles, saying it "would later be fully appreciated by history." The Count then took his leave, explaining, according to his memorandum, "that I did not have the intention of withdrawing from political life and was ready, whenever the Reichspräsident believed he had a mission for me, to place myself at his disposal." Yet he had been reluctant to accept any of the posts.
offered in the next year and a half. In March, 1920, the Count explained to Ebert his current views on re-entering political life. A difficult job, he said, would never deter him: this he had proved in December, 1918. But now, he added, "I have decided, after the part I played at Versailles, which was tragic but at least not insignificant, to accept only a post in which I would be inwardly convinced that I could accomplish something positive."16

At Annettenhöh the Count wrote a defense of his Versailles policy, and the resulting volume, Dokumente, appeared in two editions, in 1920 and 1922. As the name implies, the work is a chronological presentation of documents, interviews, and statements from the time of his appointment as Foreign Minister to the fall of Scheidemann's Cabinet and his own resignation. The commentary extends into the years immediately following. "Documents," he concluded, "should speak for themselves. The less they require commentary, the more convincing they are. . . . Readers cannot deny that my policy was consistent."17

In the summer of 1920 and the first two months of 1921 numerous conferences took place attempting to implement the various clauses of the Treaty and solve the many problems plaguing Europe after the war. So far, an acceptable reparations

\[\text{BMS, 1691H/1013/397 267, 397, 333-339; Rosenbaum, p. 15.}\]

\[\text{Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, p. 187. The second edition had the same title, and a third edition, Dokumente und Gedanken um Versailles, with much additional commentary by the Count, appeared in 1925.}\]
figure eluded statesmen and experts, while bitterness on all sides increased. A meeting in Paris in February, 1921, eventually placed Germany's debt at 226 milliard gold marks. All the old arguments against the German Delegation's offer of 100 milliard gold marks in 1919 were brought up again.

From Annettenhöh emanated more trenchant remarks during the 1921 Paris Conference. The 100 milliard offer at Versailles, wrote the Count, had been attacked at the same time as an attempt to cloud the issue by mixing (verquickung) the questions of reparations, economic clauses, and the determination of German borders all together. On February 12, 1921, he wrote bitterly of the opportunity which had been missed in May and June of 1919:

At that time the German Peace Delegation in Versailles actually represented the honest desire of more than three-fourths of the German people for voluntary reparation and disarmament. The Allies had the best opportunity to come to an honest understanding with the German republican parties. They willfully scorned this possibility. They preferred the Versailles Treaty and this drove great masses of the German people into the arms of the extremist parties. Today it will be very much harder to win the millions, who have defected to nationalism or communism, over to a policy of voluntary sacrifice and a sincere desire for understanding.18

The entire article of February 12 is a classic example of Brockdorff-Rantzau's sarcasm and penetrating commentary.

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18 Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente und Gedanken, p. 134; Stern-Rubarth, pp. 121-22.
Germany was invited to send delegates to a conference in London at the beginning of March, 1921, in order that the Paris plan might be put into effect. There the Count's friend and associate at Versailles, Dr. Walter Simons, who had been German Foreign Minister for almost a year, protested Germany's inability to pay the 226 milliard decided upon in Paris. Details given in newspaper accounts suggest that it was almost Versailles all over again. The German Delegation encountered hostility upon arriving in London, and Dr. Simons delivered an ill-received speech on the first of March, offering to pay a total of 50 milliard. Indeed, the London Morning Post averred that "Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, in his insolence and arrogance at Versailles, did much to stiffen the Allied waverers, but Dr. Simons in London has outdone even that supercilious and unbending protegé of Potsdam." Blaming Germany for the war, France and Britain refused to consider the German case.

19 The New York Times, March 1, p. 1, related how the railway porters refused to carry the Germans' luggage, and how "at the Savoy hotel the Germans met with equal coldness from the servants and generally their reception was formal."


20 As reported in the New York Times, March 3, 1921, p. 2. See also Eyck, I, 177. Dr. Simons actually offered only thirty milliard, maintaining that twenty milliard had already been paid in kind. This was extremely irritating to the statesmen of the former Allied nations. Ibid., pp. 174-75.

Lloyd George's reaction was reminiscent of Wilson on May 7, 1919. After Dr. Simons's speech he said to Lord Riddell: "What a people they are! They always do the wrong thing! Their proposals are absurd. They have done their best to alienate the sympathies of those who were in favour of moderation. We are not going to be jack-booted by the Germans!" Riddell, p. 282. Cf. Introduction, p. 4, supra.
or modify their demands. Dr. Simons left London with the familiar words of May and June, 1919: "There is only one way to arrange our difficulties--by conference." 21

Since Germany had failed to accept the Paris sum by the March 7th deadline, France marched troops into Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort the following day. In April, Dr. Simons appealed to the new President of the United States, Warren G. Harding, to be an impartial mediator on the reparations question, but Harding agreed only to transmit information regarding any new German proposals. At the beginning of May the President rejected the revised German figures as insufficient, leaving no doubt that America would not oppose the Allies on the question of reparations. 22 Meanwhile Germany was experiencing early indications of the economic distress which led to inflation and the downward plunge of the mark in 1922 and 1923.

The aftermath of the London Conference was a reparations figure of 132 milliard gold marks, served upon Germany as a second ultimatum on May 6, with no economic restrictions removed. Germany was given six days to accept it or the Ruhr would be occupied. Once again, as at Weimar in 1919, a new Government had to be formed for the purpose of acceding to the Allied demands.


22 Erich Eyck, I, pp. 172-79, presents a good assessment of the pressures on Simons from all sides and concludes that "the Allies assembled at the London Conference regarded Simons in a much less favorable light than his ethics and his politics deserved."
On the occasion of President Harding's inauguration during the course of the conference in London, Brockdorff-Rantzau pondered over what the future held for Germany and wrote his impressions:

"I don't believe in miracles in politics. But I believe in justice and understanding... No reasonable person in Germany expects that the new President will pursue a policy that is not in the interest of the United States. But the interests of America embrace the entire world. The United States has a world-mission; it is called upon, after having decided the outcome of the war, to give the world peace again. ... Mr. Harding has indeed not presented fourteen points to the world as did Mr. Wilson. We do not know what he intends, but we have faith that he will uphold what he has promised. Justice and understanding implies a program worthy of the leader of the mightiest nation, and I am sure, that the realization of these two points will bring greater blessings than fourteen points that were not carried out."

The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles by the United States Senate in March, 1920, and the election of Harding, who seemed to be Woodrow Wilson's antithesis, indicated that America's post-war desire was to disentangle herself from the web of Europe's problems. This suggested the possibility of changes in the German-American relationship and might even have been an opportunity promising enough to induce Brockdorff-Rantzau to come out of retirement. At the beginning of 1921, he was alleged to be among the candidates being considered for

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23 Brockdorff-Rantzau, *Dokumente und Gedanken*, p. 201. Harding gave his inaugural address on March 4, 1921. In his commentary, Brockdorff-Rantzau refers to the two points "Recht und Vernunft." Harding's speech includes both terms (rendered here as "justice and understanding") singly throughout the speech. See U.S., Senate, 67th Cong., Special Sess., S.D. 1, 1921, pp. 4-6, passim.
the future post of German Ambassador in Washington, D.C. But the very real question of his acceptability in Washington never arose, because his interests and energy were directed strongly eastward after the events of early 1921.

The Road to Moscow

Because of Germany's location between East and West, the German relationship with Russia had always been one of the Count's primary considerations. He was a follower of the old-time Bismarckian tradition of insuring Russian friendship. All during the first half of 1919, Brockdorff-Rantzau had sought to keep a way open to the East while working toward a peace settle-

24 New York Times, February 17, 1921, p. 5. This article said in part, "Brockdorff-Rantzau visited Berlin recently, it is stated, for the express purpose of urging his own candidacy. He is believed to have the support of the Centrists and Democrats, and possibly eventually that of the Socialists, and may be regarded as having the best chance, unless, for reasons not yet apparent some outsider should be appointed." Other candidates mentioned were: von Haniel, Dr. Albert, Admiral von Hintze, and Maximilian Harden.

After a separate Treaty between the United States and Germany in August, 1921, restored diplomatic relations, the post of German Ambassador in Washington was given in May, 1922, to Otto Ludwig Wiedfeldt, "a board member of the Krupp works." Holborn, "Diplomats," p. 153. Wiedfeldt had also been Chairman of the Economics Commission of the German Delegation at Versailles. Luckau, pp. 60, 190, 192.

Brockdorff-Rantzau's lack of English would certainly have been a major obstacle if there was any truth in the allegation that he was on the list of candidates. Bernstorff, in My Three Years in America, pp. 18-19, observed that "The English language exercises more absolute power in the United States than even in England itself...it would never occur to any diplomat in Washington to transact his business in any other language than English..."
ment with the western powers. He feared a premature commitment to either the western powers or Soviet Russia after the war's end. Germany, he wrote, needed to defend herself against Bolshevism, "an overpowerful Russia," and Poland. Realizing the dangers inherent in the now explosive Polish question, he recommended in a policy memorandum the establishment of "neighborly relationships" and the "creation of an economic field of activity, without revealing whether both of these program points concern Russia or the eastern countries in general."

The Count had hoped that the very real Bolshevist threat to Germany could be used to advantage since the Allies had a vested interest in making peace with a non-Bolshevik Germany if they expected to collect extensive reparations. But the negotiated settlement for which he strove never materialized. The Versailles terms, plus the London ultimatums, con-

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25 Before the war ended, Brockdorff-Rantzau urged that Germany conclude a peace with Russia "that would leave no bitterness on either side," instead of harsh demands such as those of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. "Nachlass B-R," 9101H/3439/H232 315; BMS, 1689H/1012/396 927 and 1690H/1013/396 941. See also Chapter II, p. 37, supra.


27 See undated memorandum by Brockdorff-Rantzau, "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3443/H235 177. Herbert Helbig, p. 21, says this memorandum was written sometime before May 7, 1919. It ends with a paragraph which bears this out: "It must be recognized that the general lines which Germany must follow in order to reach these goals are difficult to outline, because of the indistinctness of the relationships in the East, and in view of our own uncertain situation, and finally because of the vacillating decisions on the side of the Entente."
vinced Brockdorff-Rantzau that the only way to combat the Vernichtungswillen and what he termed "Erpresserpolitik" of the Entente powers would be to establish better relations with Soviet Russia. Opinion was divided, but certain members of the Foreign Office, and General von Seeckt, also thought this might be mutually advantageous.

The Allies were not unmindful of the Russian problem, either. International conferences continued with the purpose of establishing the bases of European peace. After the Washington Disarmament Conference at the end of 1921, the European powers discussed the world's financial problems at Cannes, France, in 1922, and then met again in Genoa, Italy, in April. The Genoa Conference, which German representatives also attended, sought to resolve the economic questions and the ticklish problem of relations with Soviet Russia, represented there by the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Georgi V. Chicherin.

The Germans feared that the French would work toward a rapprochement with Russia by offering her the Russian share of German reparations under Article 116 of the Treaty of Versailles. On the other hand, the Russians had long sought official German recognition of the Soviet regime to forestall any danger of Germany's participation in counter-revolutionary

28 BMS, 169/1013/397 291-97; Byck, I, 169-70, 204-07; Rosenbaum, pp. 11-21. Brockdorff-Rantzau thought in terms of economic and commercial ties, not military collaboration or an alliance.

movements. Less than a week after the Genoa Conference opened, Soviet Russia and Germany carried the results of discussions earlier in the year to fruition. Represented by their Foreign Ministers, Chicherin and Walter Rathenau, the two countries signed a treaty at nearby Rapallo, mutually renouncing war damages and officially restoring diplomatic relations.

Needless to say, the former western Allies became alarmed at the Rapallo event. Brockdorff-Rantzau was disturbed also, because of the flagrantly "illoyal" appearance it gave Germany in western eyes. He had long favored a German-Soviet rapprochement, but not in this open and brazen manner. The proper time for it in his opinion had been missed--right after the London ultimatums. Brandenburg described the Genoa Conference as "the first time that Germany appeared at an international meeting as an equal participant. At all previous conferences, she was treated as the accused, the defaulting debtor." Talking with Ebert a month after Rapallo, Brockdorff-Rantzau put it much more succinctly. In a rather telegraphic memorandum of this meeting on May 10, he wrote of the Rapallo Treaty:

Will not criticize, do not know what I myself would have done. Believe in any case, I would not have allowed myself to depart from a line of action once taken. Appears to me, no politique was evolved in

30 Eyck, I, 204-05.
31 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 317-21; Rosenbaum, pp. 19, 26, 30.
32 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 317.
Genoa, rather, things were handled rashly. It is clear that Erfüllungs men like Rathenau and Chancellor Wirth brought the whole so-called trust of us by the Entente into question because of the Rapallo Treaty. We were actually invited for the first time on an equal basis and behaved ourselves like a "man who spits on the carpet."  

Although Brockdorff-Rantzau referred many times to the Treaty of Rapallo as a liability, or "burden" for Germany, he revealed to Ebert that "despite this, the Rapallo Treaty can signify a turning point in our policy, and we must take our stand, when it is ratified, upon the slippery ground of given facts." Now that Rapallo was a fait accompli, the possibility of "accomplishing something positive" had materialized. The Count wanted to be offered the post of first German Ambassador to Soviet Russia, believing he could manage and maintain such a delicate relationship to Germany's advantage. President Ebert, whose confidence in Brockdorff-Rantzau never waned, supported his candidacy for Ambassador in Moscow, although others, such as Chancellor Joseph Wirth and General von Seeckt, vigorously opposed it at first. The whole story of the battle over Brockdorff-Rantzau's appointment is brilliantly portrayed by Dr. Rosenbaum.  

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34 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 321, 332, 353, 392, 398.  
35 General von Seeckt feared that Brockdorff-Rantzau would not countenance secret military collaboration between Germany and Soviet Russia. Wirth had hesitated because of rumors about the Count’s eccentric habits—nocturnal working hours, extreme nervousness, cognac drinking, and the unfounded rumor that he was a morphine addict. See BMS, 1691H/1013/397 386, and Rosenbaum, Chapter I, "From Brest-Litovsk to Rapallo," pp. 26-48.
On their part, the Soviets actually preferred to deal with "conservative professional diplomats" instead of a Social Democratic representative of Germany. Indeed, they were not averse to welcoming "a member of the high nobility." Brockdorff-Rantzau served in this capacity from autumn of 1922 until his death six years later. "I believe," he had said previously, "that the disaster of Versailles can be corrected from Moscow." His experience and tactics in Copenhagen offer many parallels with his later policies in Moscow.


37 Stern-Rubarth, p. 123.
CHAPTER VIII

RETROSPECT: BROCKDORFF-RANTZAU AT VERSAILLES

The Allied Attitude

After a war of unprecedented size and involvement, one would expect an unprecedented peace. A peace, however, based wholly and amicably upon political and economic precepts such as President Wilson's Fourteen Points embodied, would indeed have been an innovation in the history of international relations. Instead, the "Book" presented to the German Delegation at Versailles on May 7, 1919, was a harsh document of 440 Articles—the result of war-engendered hatred and four months of disagreement among the Allied and Associated Powers, finally molded into tangible form by the arduous toil of the various drafting committees.

The chief representatives at the Peace Conference were admittedly in Paris to punish Germany; in the words of Professor Shotwell, "It was fear of political opposition back home which more than any other influence prevented the statesmen in Paris from recasting, in part at least, the terms of the Treaty." ¹ Other writers speak of Europe's dread of facing the

¹James T. Shotwell, What Germany Forgot (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940), pp. 84-85. Clemenceau's government fell in 1920 because he had not engineered a harsher treaty or succeeded in obtaining sufficient guarantees against future German aggression.
post-war economic problems without American help. It was largely due to this apprehension that the League Covenant was made an integral part of the Treaty as Wilson insisted, while Wilson eventually agreed to certain demands of the others, devoutly hoping that the millenium promised by the concept of the League of Nations would offer an ultimate means of solution for present and future international problems.2

The finished text of the Treaty, kept strictly secret until just a few hours before its presentation to the Germans, prompted outspoken criticism from prominent American and British Delegates in Paris, among them Herbert Hoover, General Tasker H. Bliss, Robert Lansing, Colonel House, Bernard Baruch, John Foster Dulles, John Maynard Keynes, General Jan Christian Smuts, and Harold Nicolson. Hoover's story of a preoccupied stroll at dawn on May 7th is often mentioned in memoirs and histories of the Peace Conference. Meditating unhappily about the final form of the Treaty, a copy of which he had just received and read, Hoover met Smuts and Keynes, both equally depressed and worried. "We agreed," wrote Hoover, "that it was terrible and we would do what we could among our own nationals to make the danger clear."3

2In Woodrow Wilson and the Lost Peace, p. 180, Thomas A. Bailey has characterized Clemenceau's agreement to the League Covenant as a part of the Treaty of Versailles as an attempt to "humor a rich uncle."

3Hoover, Memoirs, I, 461-62. In his Diary, Lord Riddell quotes Lloyd George's Secretary, Philip Kerr, who said on June 3, 1919: "It is most desirable that the Press should not comment upon the attitude of the British Delegation in reference to German concessions." The next day Kerr told Riddell
How did the Treaty of Versailles become the rigid document upon which Wilson's mind "closed with a snap"? Many historians and diarists reveal that the concept of a "preliminary treaty" to be negotiated instead of imposed, existed as the Peace Conference convened, and Wilson himself still considered this in mid-March. Harold Nicolson of the British Delegation has described the process of "drift" from a preliminary to a final text. He wrote that "subconsciously we thought in terms of a 'Conference' of Allies, followed by a 'Congress' of all belligerents and neutrals." As the technical clauses in each article of the Treaty were laboriously drafted, "the conception of a Preliminary Treaty merged gradually into the conception of one final Treaty covering the whole."4

Many agreed at the time that Paris, the capital of justified war hatred, was not the place for the Peace Conference to be held. Germany's first thought in September, 1918, was that President Wilson should "call a peace conference at Washington, at the same time asking for an immediate cessation of hostilities."5 Other possible locations included Brussels, Lausanne, The Hague, and Geneva.6

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5Preliminary History of the Armistice, p. 6. This appears in a dispatch from Foreign Secretary von Hintze to the Foreign Office, September 29, 1918.

6Nicolson, pp. 76-77. Nicolson writes that Wilson unaccountably ruled out Geneva as "saturated with every poisonous element and open to every hostile influence."
The press, as the only means of penetrating the secrecy and censorship of the Conference, trafficked in hearsay and conjecture, when nothing more reliable could be found. As the Conference continued and bitter arguments developed, almost no one was spared vilification. Wrote Harold Nicolson as early as February 11th: "A dreadful attack on Wilson yesterday in the 'Figaro.' I hear he is furious and threatens to transfer the Conference to Geneva. It would be a good thing if he did." Lloyd George and Clemenceau did not escape severe criticism, either. And when the French newspapers turned their fire on Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and the German Delegation there were no restraints. There was no fear of contradictory material, for the Germans could make no public reply in the press. Little truthful information regarding the German Delegation was available, and had there been more, it would doubtless have been ignored or slanted to suit the overwhelming anti-German attitude fostered by the most influential sector of the French press.

The German Republic fared no better than its Peace Delegation at the hands of the French. The British and American Governments had received, from their Ministers in Holland, Denmark, and Switzerland and their missions into Germany at

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the close of the war, frequent advice to accept and encourage
the leaders of the Republic in view of the collapse of the
Empire and the desperate internal conditions within Germany.
But the French politicians and press scorned the whole idea
of German "democracy"—it was a bluff, a subterfuge, a shameless fraud. 9

Indeed, when only outward appearances counted, "In
Brokdorff-Rantzau the young German Republic had picked the
worst possible representative. Though he undoubtedly was an
able man, he was the very image of the Prussian Junker as
depicted in Punch." 10 Completely unaware of Brockdorff-Rantzau's more Danish than Prussian background, his past record
of independent views, his liberal and anti-militaristic
leanings, the Allied leaders saw only the arrogant, high-collared Junker. "Ramrod straight, abrupt in speech and man-
ner, stern and, at the moment, overflowing with hatred and
frustration, his very presence seemed to link the German
Republic with the authoritarian Imperial Reich. The Allies had

9 Writing in 1930, Clemenceau spoke of the new German
Government and its representatives at Versailles: "I was not
sufficiently well acquainted with the people we had to deal
with. Later on, when at Versailles Brockdorff-Rantzau addressed
me in the language of the bearer of a challenge, I was forced
to realize that the German Revolution was mere window-dressing,
and that, with the aggressor of 1914 not a whit cured of his
insane folly, we should continue without respite to be sub-
jected, in a new setting, to the same attack from the same
enemy." Georges Clemenceau, Grandeur and Misery of Victory,
tr. F.M. Atkinson (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1930),
p. 106.

10 Ferdinand Czernin, Versailles. 1919 (New York: C.P.
been fighting." Ferdinand Czernin, son of the last Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, has said it well in his recent book, Versailles, 1919. Commenting in his Diary that Brockdorff-Rantzau appeared to be ill and under a great nervous strain on May 7th, Lord Riddell continued his first visual impressions of the Count: "He strikes one as a stiff, precise, industrious, mechanical, tactless sort of man."12

**Brockdorff-Rantzau's Qualifications**

This, then, is the heart of the matter. Brockdorff-Rantzau met the peculiar qualifications of Germany in her hour of need at the end of the war from the German standpoint only. Although his appearance and demeanor were automatically misunderstood by the Allies, he was a high-ranking, professional diplomat who had broken with the old régime. Describing himself often as "an optimist with faith in the future of the German people," he looked toward Germany's resurgence through democracy and economic recovery and was determined to secure that chance for his country. He was a diplomat of the old régime, but unsoiled with the planning and intensification of the Empire's war policies. Never a sycophant at the Court of Kaiser Wilhelm II, Brockdorff-Rantzau was actually disliked

11 Ibid. Actually, his posture is usually described as "a little stooping." See, for instance, Bonn, p. 228. He often leaned on his ebony walking stick, and the occasional limp was probably due to a riding accident in his youth. Cf. Stern-Rubarth, p. 35.

12 Riddell, p. 71; see the preceding part of Riddell's comment in Ch. V, supra, p. 100.
by the military, the Pan-Germans, and most conservatives. He was affiliated with no political party, but actively willing to back the Social Democrats and the Weimar Coalition after the war. As a result of his connection with the German Republic he became estranged from many of his social class, including members of his own family.¹³

Though they tried it, the Count was a man that the German Generals and Admirals could not push around or manage. Well before the war's end he had criticized Ludendorff to his face and opposed the Admiralty on many occasions. Brockdorff-Rantzau did not accept the military's "stab-in-the-back" accusation against the post-war civilian government. He repudiated this "Dolchstosslegende" on the evening of April 4, 1919, when he said to General Groener that "the disaster which has broken over Germany originated with the Army; it was there that the collapse took place." Groener, although he cooperated with the Republican Government, of course maintained the opposite view that the military collapse was a result of happenings on the home front.¹⁴

¹³BMS, 1961H/1013/397 386. There is a story, possibly apocryphal but very much in character, that after the war the Count had been asked by members of the Brockdorff family to give up that name. Brockdorff-Rantzau is said to have answered that the Rantzaus had already requested that he no longer use the name of Rantzau. "What should I call myself, then," asked the Red Count. "Perhaps Graf Bindestrich?" The hyphen was all that was left. Klatt, p. 28.

¹⁴"Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3441/H234 212.
The Count's disagreement with General Groener was relatively minor, but his feuds with Generals von Seeckt and Ludendorff lasted for years. At Versailles, Seeckt had openly accused Brockdorff-Rantzau of sacrificing Germany's national honor by denouncing German militarism in his support of the Republic and his refusal to press for a German Army far in excess of the 100,000 men permitted under the Treaty. On the 26th of May, 1919, General von Seeckt wrote a letter to this effect, sending copies of it to the Count, the other German Delegates, and to Weimar. "Since your Excellency has not considered it necessary," Seeckt flung at Brockdorff-Rantzau, to seek the advice of the military experts in these military matters, I must conclude that only pure political considerations have determined the stand of the Delegation. . . . I consider myself duty-bound and justified to speak out that Germany has, through this act of disarming brought about by political judgments of the moment, sacrificed her last and highest possession, her national honor.¹⁵

For the Count it must have been a tremendous inner struggle to retain his temper, but he was determined to allow no indications of discord and animosity among members of the German Delegation to reach the ears of the Allies.¹⁶ Instead, the Delegation voted unanimously to remove Seeckt from the military commission present at Versailles and the Count made

¹⁵Rabenau, p. 178.

¹⁶Ibid. Cf. Ch. V. supra, p. 90 and p. 91n, where Dr. Simons referred to the "silent battle" between Brockdorff-Rantzau and the German military representatives at Versailles.
a request to the Government that this be done. On June 1, 1919, Brockdorff-Rantzau wrote to Baron Langwerth (also his cousin) in the Foreign Office: "It is too bad that in these times we have to knock about with such psychopaths as von Seeckt."  

Brockdorff-Rantzau especially disliked and distrusted General Ludendorff, who wrote an article in a weekly military publication in February, 1921, accusing the Count of fomenting the revolution in Russia and collaborating with "the eastern Jew Parvus-Helphand" to put the Bolsheviks in power. The article implied also, said Brockdorff-Rantzau, that from Copenhagen he had worked toward inducing a collapse in Germany—nothing less than an accusation of high treason. He replied in the press with a vitriolic open letter to Ludendorff containing the incontrovertible fact that the General had assured Chancellor Hertling in May, 1918, of the complete confidence which the Supreme Command and Ludendorff himself had in the "Imperial Minister Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau." The Count would leave it to history to decide whether Ludendorff's actions during and after the war were, in the end, more useful than his own. Un-

17Rosenbaum, p. 36; Rabenau, p. 180. According to Rabenau, p. 178, Seeckt had expected a challenge to a duel at Versailles. Three years later Seeckt objected to the appointment of Brockdorff-Rantzau as Ambassador to Soviet Russia, saying that his conduct at Versailles had been "unpatriotic." This time the Count was indeed ready to meet Seeckt with pistols, but the difference was settled peacefully although with great difficulty. See Holborn, "Diplomats," p. 170, and, for a more detailed account, Rosenbaum, pp. 35-48.

18"Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3443/H255 351.
fortunately I was called too late to the position of leadership,"

Brockdorff-Rantzau concluded,

or I would have attempted to make it easier for your Excellency to admit that after the failure of the offensive in July, 1918, if not before, that militarily for us the war was lost. Whether or not your Excellency knew this consciously or subconsciously I do not know; not to have come to this decision remains as the monstrous responsibility which you bear before the German people and history.19

When the General retracted nothing, Brockdorff-Rantzau issued a challenge to a pistol duel which was also declined. He then let the matter drop, but wrote prophetically in a letter to Professor Delbrück:

In the present situation I see in General Ludendorff one of the greatest dangers to our poor, misguided, apolitical people. They can only, if ever, be free of their idolatry /Götzenlauben/ when they recognize how frivolously many demi-gods assume the heaviest responsibilities and how deplorably they behave when one day they are actually called to account.20

While he was "a resolute hater of generals meddling in foreign affairs,"21 Brockdorff-Rantzau was able and willing to get along with the politicians, businessmen, bankers, and intellectuals, many of them Jewish, who were prominent in the Republic's early days. His social eminence, his own reputation as a gentleman and an intellectual, together with his economic and legalistic approach to national problems facilitated such cooperation. There is no doubt that he had tremen-

19BMS, 1691H/1013/397 277. 20BMS, 1691H/1013/397 284.

dous personal ambition which transcended party politics, and that some found him a "difficult colleague." But in early 1919, this remarkable man acted as a sort of catalyst in the process of establishing the Republic's authority. Although he was not without critics in the new Germany, his presence signified prestige and continuity when the Republic needed it most.22

Discussing Brockdorff-Rantzau's approach to democracy, Professor Hajo Holborn says: "The Russian and German revolutions impressed him with the strength of the masses and, though he was no genuine democrat, he considered the introduction of democracy as inevitable and as the only bulwark against Bolshevism."23 He therefore took steps to apply democratic principles. Especially for the foreign press the Count stressed the importance of the fact that decisions in the new Germany were now made by the Reichstag majority. Dur-

22 A member of the German Delegation informed Brockdorff-Rantzau that Matthias Erzberger was loudly declaring "in the beer halls of Weimar" that the Count was a man who "must be dismissed from office as quickly as possible--his policy is dangerous to the State." SMS, 1691H/1013/397 220; Epstein, p. 302.

Count Anton von Monts, another nobleman and ex-Imperial Ambassador who realized the importance of the working man in the modern nation, wrote of Brockdorff-Rantzau in a letter to his nephew in early 1919: "When even B. shines as a light, the darkness must be enormous. The intelligence of Count Rantzau is indisputable. But can he not be compared to a puffed-up frog . . . ? The man has managed affairs very badly and continues to do so, with the help of falsehood and deceit." "Nachlass B-R," 9105H/3441/H234 177. On Monts, see David Balfour, The Kaiser and His Times (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1964), pp. 270-71.

23 Holborn, "Diplomats," p. 133.
ing his tenure as Foreign Minister, he initiated the long-needed reform of the Foreign Office.24

However he may have appeared to the Allies, Brockdorff-Rantzau was quite aware of the extent of Germany's military defeat. He approved the idea of a league of nations, to be established after the conclusion of a just peace. His preferred term, Völkergemeinschaft, or "community of nations," implied economic cooperation as well as the league's primary position as an international arbiter.25 When presented, the Treaty of Versailles included the League Covenant inextricably bound up with the stringent peace terms, all based upon the assumption of Germany's war guilt.

German Weaknesses

Operating under great pressure at Versailles, not to mention the humiliations to which they were subjected, the experts of the German Delegation repeated the errors already made by the framers of the Treaty. They overstated their case

24Ibid., p. 150. The reorganization, under the direction of Geheimrat Edmund Schüler, was intended, among other things, to liberalize the selection of personnel. See also Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 43, 83-94, 96-97.

Paul Seabury, The Wilhelmstrasse, A Study of German Diplomats under the Nazi Regime (University of California Press, 1954), pp. 11-21, describes the "Schüler Reforms" and notes that the program faced resistance from the right and that "the aim of 'democratizing' German diplomacy seriously failed of its mark."

25Brockdorff-Rantzau, Dokumente, pp. 13, 105-07. See also Stern-Rubarth, p. 77. The accepted German term for the League of Nations was Völkerbund.
and overwrote, and the resulting reply of over 300 pages solidified their stand just as the Treaty had crystallized that of the Allies. The result was intensified anger on both sides. Once again, the words of Professor Shotwell are relevant to each situation. His observation that "the failure in statesmanship lay in the fact that when one added all the parts of the treaty together 'the whole was greater than the sum of the parts'" can certainly be applied to the German effort as well.26

Oral negotiations over the financial and economic clauses of the Treaty were the unswerving goal of the German Delegation. Handled by like-minded men on both sides, who realized the grave necessity for a settlement, such meetings could well have resulted in agreement. On May 2, 1919, the New York Times reported a meeting of German and Allied representatives held in the Trianon Palace Hotel several days before the formal Treaty presentation. Those present included the American financial experts Thomas W. Lamont and Henry F. Davison, and the German bankers Max Warburg and Karl Melchior.27 Although he was very unimpressed with the general ability and

26See Shotwell's Preface in Luckau, p. vi.

27New York Times, May 2, 1919, p. 2. The article reads in part: "A meeting of the German and Inter Allied Finance Commission was held this morning at the Trianon Hotel. The German Delegates, numbering eight, arrived on foot, walking across the park under the escort of a French Captain. The American and other inter-allied delegates drove from Paris in automobiles. The delegates embarked on a prolonged discussion, apparently a continuation of the negotiations at the Château Piessis-Millette, at Senlis, near Compiègne."
training of the German businessmen present in Versailles with the Delegation, Professor Moritz J. Bonn considered Melchior, especially, a highly capable, reasonable man, respected by the Allies and Germans alike. Bonn also mentions some furtive meetings of German experts, including himself, with French and British representatives in spite of the ban on communication with the Germans.28 As pointed out in Chapter VI of this thesis, the desirability and possibility of oral negotiations over the technical financial clauses of the Treaty was actually considered by the "Big Three," and abandoned largely due to the influence of Clemenceau. Others realized that the psychological effect of even relatively minor oral negotiations would have palliated the Germans' indignation and cleared the air.

It is often pointed out that the Germans believed Wilson's position at Paris to be much stronger than was actually the case. Perhaps, as Professor Brandenburg has suggested, the fact that no American had been present at the Armistice proceedings nourished the illusion that Wilson would be stronger vis-à-vis Clemenceau and fight for the principles of the Fourteen Points.29 The very fact that "German foreign policy and propaganda under Count Brockdorff-Rantzau represented the Germans as the true champions of pure and unadulterated Wilsonianism"30 contributed to Allied hostility and weakened the German position. Holborn discusses how the extreme German interpretation of the war-guilt clause obliged the Allies to

stand firm on Article 231, which:

had been written to cap a delicate political compromise among themselves which would have been endangered if they had disavowed its text. Moreover in public they would have appeared as betraying a main tenet of common faith. For everybody in the Allied camp was convinced of Germany's war guilt.\(^{31}\)

Clemenceau never wavered in his idea of how to deal with the Boche. The unimaginable strain of the Peace Conference caused Wilson to become ill in April, after which he was less and less inclined to cope with the physical and mental demands of the problems of peace and wanted only to preserve what had been accomplished. In the end, ironically, Wilson's views did prevail: the Treaty was signed without any changes to speak of.

In addition to overstating their cases, other parallels appear in the actions of the Allies and the Germans at Versailles. Each group was aware of disunity on the opposite side and hoped, while not exploiting it overtly, to benefit from it. In Germany, Brockdorff-Rantzau's whole Versailles policy depended upon a solid majority, which indeed existed to start with, but crumbled as Matthias Erzberger's agitation, especially, became vociferous and known to the Allies. When Brockdorff-Rantzau presented the report of the Delegation to the Cabinet in Weimar on June 18, 1919, and recommended the refusal of the Treaty as it stood, he remarked ironically that:

during three years of the war I have fought against two slogans; one was "hold out," and the other was "time is on our side." Today I must declare my deepest conviction that both sayings are really applicable now, and that with a refusal [to sign]

\(^{31}\)Holborn, "Diplomats," pp. 143-44.
we will split the bloc of the Allies. Through the institution of oral negotiations in the course of which the impossibility of carrying out the Treaty conditions will become apparent we will surely be able to arrive at a feasible peace. 32

Both the Allied and German stands required "holding out" and for Germany this proved to be impossible.

**Later Years**

In the words of Edgar Stern-Rubarth, Versailles was "a personal Amfortas wound in the soul of Brockdorff-Rantzau." 33 In later years he became morose about it, expressing once to his brother that had he been killed during the stoning of the German Delegates at Versailles, perhaps the German people would have united behind a firm stand for treaty revision. He died in Berlin at the age of fifty-nine, on leave from his post in Moscow, a victim of long-neglected heart trouble and incurable throat cancer. 34 In his last hours he had said to his brother, "The only thing that upsets me is how the English and French, when I die, will rejoice over my death." 35 In actual fact, the London Times obituary was scrupulously correct in its detailed account of his life, ending, "Brockdorff-Rantzau will long be remembered here as the Foreign Minister who resigned, with the other members of the government of the day, rather than sign the Peace

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33 Stern-Rubarth, p. 152. In Wagner's Parsifal, Amfortas, chief of the Knights, suffered from a wound which could only be healed by a sacred spear.


35 Ibid., p. 156.
Treaty."36 The New York Times ended its article with the sentence, "With his passing, Germany loses one of the most fearless figures of her history."37 Hermann Lutz notes that in 1940 the French historian and political philosopher Bertrand de Jouvenel, "interpreted the Count's conduct as 'an effort of dignity on the part of the vanquished.'"38 Perhaps the most striking reference at the time, however, was the French newspaper which, with its obituary, ran a picture of the Count with the caption: "The man who offered us 100 milliard marks at Versailles, which we unluckily refused."39

In subsequent years, some strange things have happened in Germany, too. The history of the Weimar Republic, blackened by the acceptance of the punitive Treaty of Versailles, and buried under the rubble of Hitler's Third Reich, is all but forgotten. "Oftener than one would expect," said a recent article in the historical journal Beiträge zur Schleswiger Stadtgeschichte, "is Brockdorff-Rantzau mentioned as the signer of the Treaty of Versailles."40 A modern emotional historical novel by Bruno Brehm portrays him as a signatory in the Hall of Mirrors.41 An article in the Schleswiger Nachrichten in

36 The Times (London), September 11, 1928, p. 17.
40 Klatt, p. 33.
April, 1961, mentioned the Count as co-signer of the Treaty with Dr. Bell. The following edition, however, ran an article to correct this error: "Count Brockdorff-Rantzau did not sign the Friedensdiktat of Versailles, which was signed by Reichskanzler Hermann Müller and Dr. Bell."42

"That man who placed his services at the disposal of the Republic," wrote the German Socialist journalist Victor Schiff, who was a Secretary of the Delegation at Versailles, "who made for all future generations one necessary gesture of protest... is worthy of a place of honor in German Republican chronicles."43 Did anything, then, result from this symbolic gesture? In San Francisco in 1951, American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles concluded with Japan "a final peace treaty which represented the greatest unity for peacemaking the world has ever known...." The Japanese Prime Minister added, "This is not a treaty of vengeance but an instrument of reconciliation."

Dulles then continued,

I had seen the handiwork of the so-called "realists" in other treaties. Most notable of their achievements was Versailles. I remember vividly how, there, the members of the German peace delegation were put in a barbed-wire enclosure, exposed as animals in a zoo, denied any personal contact with Allied delegates. We know the consequences of that realism. What happened at San Francisco showed, at a time when it needed showing that not merely physical, but moral law has reality and power.44

42Schleswiger Nachrichten, April 1, 1961; April 3, 1961.
43Schiff, p. 44.
In Conclusion

After almost fifty years, the events of Versailles have begun to fall into historical perspective. As hopefully made clear in the preface, this thesis is not an attempt to "whitewash" Germany's Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, nor to exonerate him from the mistakes in strategy which he unquestionably made. Such mistakes were indeed made on both sides of the fence at Versailles. But little factual information regarding him has thus far been easily available to the American student. What does exist in English is often strongly biased and incomplete, or simply ignores his ability and the very real qualifications which he brought to the job. With a few exceptions, all extensive material abides in hard to obtain German sources.

In his recent book Gustav Hilger has discussed Brockdorff-Rantzau's philosophy at the close of the Great War:

Rantzau had no illusions of turning back the wheel of history. His conception of the well born leader's function was a positive one of leading a German people's state toward better days. Beneath these considerations a deep pessimism and despair were hiding; he seems to have been dimly aware that his idea of leadership in democracy was the last conceivable task left for the aristocracy before it would disappear altogether. Moreover, he must have had semiconscious doubts concerning Germany's ability to make a comeback.45

After Philipp Scheidemann hastily proclaimed the German Republic amidst the chaos of November 9, 1918, it was still uncertain what forces would fill the political void left by the collapse of the Monarchy and the revolution. Brockdorff-Rantz-

45Hilger, p. 89.
zau's long-standing relationship with the Social Democratic leaders was instrumental in replacing anarchy with the authority of the Majority Socialists and their plan for a National Constituent Assembly. He was of the caliber of a statesman; his singular role as "Count and Democrat" facilitated Germany's transition from a defeated Empire to a people's Republic.

But he failed the Republic in several respects. Amazing as was his ability to work constructively with the democratic forces of the future, his concept of the nature and purpose of diplomacy was incompatible with democracy in operation. His idea of foreign policy never changed—it was to be formulated at the top level and carried through by the Foreign Minister without interference. This suited the time of Bismarck, but in a twentieth century democracy public opinion could be expected to have some bearing on diplomatic decisions. As Erich Brandenburg points out, the Count sincerely believed in the rights of the common people, but he had never really been close to them in daily life. Believing that only those ablest and best qualified should and would attain positions of leadership in a democracy, Brockdorff-Rantzau also accepted the principle that the people had the right to remove from office anyone who no longer retained their confidence. As long as he was entrusted with high office, this "stubborn Holsteiner" demanded complete authority in a carefully predetermined sphere of activity and expected full cooperation from his subordinates. He sought the advice of colleagues and experts, but final policy decisions were his own. He was often impatient with those who hesitated
on decisions, and once he had formulated a clear-cut policy, he seldom deviated from it. As a minister of state he was an exacting and uncompromising chief; it must not be forgotten, however, that he was equally determined to assume full and complete responsibility for his actions and decisions.

Although Brockdorff-Rantzau was a capable, adaptable, and brilliant man, his many-sided personality had insuperable deficiencies. Dr. Simons once characterized him as "our somewhat overcivilized Count." It was a good assessment of his exceptional and compelling personality. Brockdorff-Rantzau's innate aloofness and egoism, his aesthetic and high-strung nature, and his unremitting feudal sense of honor and dignity, all combined with a lawyer's meticulous intellect, made him irascible and unrelenting when he felt that his own or Germany's honor was threatened. He continued to believe fervently in the policy of his "ephemeral Ministry," and the historic significance of his tragic role at Versailles.

Someone had to face the ordeal for Germany when the chiefs of the Paris Peace Conference requested German plenipotentiaries to come to Versailles. Logically, the task fell to the German Foreign Minister, and Count Brockdorff-Rantzau had been peculiarly suited to serve in this capacity in the German Republic's first turbulent months. But when Germany sent her "last Knight" into the lists at Versailles, he sought honorable treatment on equal terms and was hopelessly misunderstood.

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46 Luckau, p. 124.  
47 BMS, 1691H/1013/397 380.
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"Nachlass Brockdorff-Rantzau"

1. "The Brandenburg Manuscript":
   Serial 1688H, Roll 1012, Frames 396 573 – 396 677
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   Serial 1690H, Roll 1013, Frames 396 931 – 397 252
   Serial 1691H, Roll 1013, Frames 397 254 – 397 534
   Serial 1692H, Roll 1013, Frames 397 536 – 397 885

   Serial 1688H is a file of correspondence relating to the actions of the German Foreign Ministry in preventing the publication of Professor Brandenburg's work.

   Serials 1689H through 1692H comprise the entire manuscript of a biography of Brockdorff-Rantzau prepared by Professor Erich Brandenburg from the personal files of the Count and other sources. The Brockdorff-Rantzau papers were sold to the Bibliographisches Institut in Leipzig by the Count's brother, Count Ernst zu Rantzau, in May of 1930. From 1932 to 1934 the Foreign Ministry would not clear Brandenburg's work for publication, and eventually retained it and the Brockdorff-Rantzau papers in their official files.

   The Brandenburg Manuscript has twelve chapters and it is divided into four parts, with extensive commentary by Count Wedel, Roediger, and Legation Secretary Hencke. Apparently, Serials 1688H and 1689H, Roll 1012, were restricted until recently. Dr. Kurt Rosenbaum has informed the author that Roll 1012 was not available at the time he was engaged in research for his doctoral dissertation.¹

2. Additional Microfilm Rolls:
Serial 9101H, Roll 3434, Frames H227 890 - H229 270
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Serial 9105H, Roll 3438, Frames H231 197 - H237 652
Serial 9105H, Roll 3439, Frames H232 298 - H233 728
Serial 9105H, Roll 3440, Frames H233 265 - H233 398
Serial 9105H, Roll 3441, Frames H233 729 - H234 791
Serial 9105H, Roll 3443, Frames H234 492 - H236 260
Serial 9105H, Roll 3444, Frames H235 660 - H235 802

These Rolls include personal and official correspondence, secret memoranda, official directives, telegrams, etc. Some of the material goes back as far as 1898 and it continues through the 1920's. The bulk of the material in the Rolls from Serial 9105H used in the preparation of this thesis concerns the events from the Armistice through the Versailles episode. There is also much material dealing with the Copenhagen years and these Rolls contain many of the original documents used by Professor Brandenburg in his biography.

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A brilliant portrayal of the Paris Peace Conference and Wilson's part in it.

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This is a recent bid for the definitive biography of the Kaiser. It is well done, with emphasis on the Hohenzollern family, but other biographies are equally as good.

The personal and political reminiscences of Count Bernstorff.

A highly interesting account of Bernstorff's years as German Ambassador in Washington, his general observations on Americans, and his difficulties with the German U-boat menace to America.

A fine treatment of the Paris Peace Conference, with the perspective of years, emphasizing President Wilson's diplomatic accomplishments.
An excellent documentary study of the middle years of the war, with great emphasis on German Foreign Office documents.

The very useful and interesting memoirs of a German Foreign Office expert who was involved in German affairs from Brest-Litovsk to the Rapallo Treaty. The book is dedicated to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau and Baron von Maltzan.

The interesting, amusingly cynical, memoirs of an eminent German professor who was attached to the German Delegation at Versailles and otherwise active in German political affairs. Bonn had traveled widely in America.

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A rambling, emotional "historical novel" in three parts, based on the end of World War I and the fall of the Austrian and German dynasties.

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A major historical reference for students of the Paris Peace Conference. Contains a first rate discussion of political conditions in Germany, the Versailles episode, and the denouement at Weimar. Dr. Luckau includes a selection of letters written by Dr. Simons to his wife from Versailles, in which are found valuable details and insights. The book contains speeches, documents, and all the correspondence between the German Delegation and the Allies.
A reappraisal of German and French policy from 1870-1933, bringing out many interesting and relatively unknown facts. Has a good discussion of Versailles and Brockdorff-Rantzau. Lutz holds that Western European unity is needed, in partnership with the United States, Britain, and the United Nations, to maintain world peace.

Extremely valuable and usually hard-to-obtain source material. For this thesis, only information contained in Vol. XIX was used. On microfilm, University of Nebraska.

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The story of the Germans at Versailles, written by an eminent German writer who knew Brockdorff-Rantzau personally. Rather emotional writing at times, but on the whole, reliable.


A biographical work on General Hans von Seeckt, based on his private papers and correspondence. General von Rabenau was Chief of the Military Archives. In these pages, Seeckt's character and personality come through vividly.


This was an indispensable reference for this thesis. With a retentive eye for detail, Riddell was a meticulously objective reporter. He also included humorous incidents and anecdotes and excellent verbal sketches of the personages of Paris and the years following.


The very interesting reminiscences of a British Lieutenant-Colonel who was in Germany with the Disarmament Commission from 1919-1926 and knew almost everyone of importance.


Based primarily "on the thorough exploration of over 100 rolls of microfilmed German Foreign Office Files." This is an absorbing and painstakingly written study of the post-Versailles relations between Germany and Soviet-Russia, and the major part played in the diplomacy of the period by Count Brockdorff-Rantzau.
Rudin, Harry R.  **Armistice 1918.** New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1944.

A wonderful study of the events leading to the Armistice and the actual meeting at Compiègne. The views of all the Allied Powers and the Germans are well presented, especially Ludendorff's loss of confidence in the German military situation.


A history of stately homes in Schleswig-Holstein and Hamburg, with extensive commentary on the notable families, including the various branches of the Brockdorffs and the Rantzaus, and their historical significance. Contains a section of fine old prints.


Both volumes were valuable references. The first covers Scheidemann's youth and early political career through the middle of 1917. The second is the story of the Weimar Republic, the struggle over the Treaty, the Kapp Putsch, and the increasing dangers on the right.


One of the best accounts available of the days at Versailles and the struggle over the Treaty in Weimar. Schiff makes an honest effort to be objective, and includes many incidents and anecdotes that are found in no other work.


The political memoirs of a life spanning the time from the Monarchy to the 1950's, exceedingly well written and interesting. A Democrat, Schiffer was Vice-Chancellor under Scheidemann.


This book deals with the changes in the Foreign Office between the Monarchy and the Third Reich. It discusses briefly the "Schüler Reforms," initiated when Brockdorff-Rantzau was Foreign Minister, and opposed by right-wing elements.


_________. *What Germany Forgot*. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1940. Shotwell, a noted historian of the Peace Conference and the aftermath of the Treaty, discusses Germany and the Treaty. Here he disputes some of the German arguments against the Treaty, discusses the evolution of war guilt, etc.

Stern-Rubarth, Edgar. *Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau, Wanderer zwischen zwei Welten. Ein Lebensbild*. Berlin: Reimar-Hobbing, 1929. Published in the year after the Count's death, this biography is laudatory and artistically written. Count Ernst zu Rantzau supplied Dr. Stern-Rubarth with much material, but not all could be used at that time.

Swope, Herbert Bayard. *Inside the German Empire, In the Third Year of the War*. New York: The Century Co., 1917. Swope's first-hand account of life in war-time Germany, which earned him the first Pulitzer Prize ever awarded for reporting.


A very fine biography of Woodrow Wilson, with the usual superficial mention of Brockdorff-Rantzau.


The very interesting reminiscences of President Wilson's second wife. Mrs. Wilson recalls much about the end of the war and the Peace Conference.


A valuable collection of documents tracing German interest in the course of the Russian Revolution. Includes several dispatches from Brockdorff-Rantzau in Copenhagen to the Foreign Office.


A detailed study of foreign policy of the Weimar period. Very good on the revolution and the early days of the Republic.

Articles and Periodicals


A good discussion of how Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles was evolved in the drafting sessions.


A tribute, full of interesting facts, from the former Danish Minister of Finance in the Zahle cabinet. The first 47 pages of the January, 1929, issue of Europäische Gespräche comprise a symposium entitled: "In Memoriam Graf Brockdorff-Rantzau."


A personality sketch of the Count, drawn largely from French newspapers. Sarcastically written, it is accurate in many respects and also contains some curious misinformation.

A recent and intensive treatment of the war-guilt clause. Has much material on Brockdorff-Rantzau at Versailles and as Foreign Minister, from which its author draws some enlightening conclusions.


A study of German policy, stressing what led to Lenin's trip to Russia through Germany in April, 1917.

Hahlweg, Werner. "Lenins Reise durch Deutschland im April 1917," Vierteljahrsheft für Zeitgeschichte, Heft IV (October 1957), 307-333.

An excellent discussion of Germany's plan to end the war by removing Russia from the ranks of the Entente. This was to be accomplished by encouraging revolution in Russia and using Lenin to spark it.


Concerns the resumption of German-Soviet diplomatic relations after the Rapallo Treaty and General von Seeckt's part in establishing clandestine military collaboration.


Discusses John Foster Dulles at San Francisco in 1951, when the peace treaty between Japan and the United States was signed. A high moral influence characterized the event.


An interesting discussion of the Count, especially his years as Ambassador in Moscow.


A very fine German study of Lloyd George during World War I and his qualities of leadership. Also discusses British influence on Colonel House.


An interesting symposium of articles and collection of material concerning the Count as a foremost German diplomat.
An engaging history of the Brockdorff family from the 1700's to the 1960's and the Estate of Annettenhöhn. It has much interesting material and several little known anecdotes about Count Brockdorff-Rantzau.

This includes some discussion of Rathenau's attitudes at the time of the Versailles Treaty.

Outlook, CXXII (May 7, 1919, and May 14, 1919).
This bound volume of Outlook, passim, is very useful as an indication of the American view of the Paris Peace Conference and the problem of post-war Germany.

A short history of Zeppelin development and the German Naval Airship Service in World War I, and the raids on England. Includes many interesting photographs.

Presents the Czarist Russian aims at the war's beginning, and discusses the first and unsuccessful German efforts to ascertain the possibility of a separate peace with Russia through Danish channels.

Newspapers

Schleswiger Nachrichten (Schleswig, Germany). 1961.