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Robert W. D. Boyce

Britain's First 'No' to Europe: Britain and the Briand Plan, 1929-30

In July 1929 Aristide Briand, the Foreign Minister of France, announced his intention to address the forthcoming League of Nations Assembly on the subject of European federation.¹ There, Briand declared his support for federation, and eight months later the French government circulated a memorandum outlining his proposals to the other twenty-six European League member-states.² The memorandum, however, raised doubts about Briand's underlying motives, and most of the states responded with polite but non-committal replies. Within a few months European relations took a sharp turn for the worse, and within a year Briand's plan was practically forgotten. In the light of the extreme nationalism and autarky which characterized much of Europe during the 1930s, it is perhaps not surprising that Briand's initiative should now receive scarcely a footnote in the general accounts of this period.³ Nevertheless it deserves to be remembered, not only as a direct antecedent to post-war unification efforts, but because it illustrates in striking fashion the impact of Britain's isolationism on the pre-war 'European' movement.

The most impressive feature of the Tenth League Assembly, which convened at Geneva in September 1929, was the preoccupation of all participants with economic affairs. Briand, in his keenly-awaited speech, proved no exception. Renewed efforts must be made, he asserted, 'to secure not only political but also economic peace among nations'. As for European federation, 'obviously,' he continued, the arrangements must be 'primarily economic, for that is the most urgent aspect of the question.' In retrospect, it may seem odd that Briand should have laid such stress upon the need for

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collective economic action. Compared with the conditions that had prevailed only a few years earlier, economic conditions in Europe were reasonably buoyant; the Wall Street crash, heralding the start of the world depression, was still seven weeks in the future. Indeed, Briand's own country seemed particularly favoured: unemployment, despite the influx of several million migrant workers, was, according to official statistics, virtually non-existent; and so far from experiencing balance of payments problems, the gold reserves of the Bank of France were creating a literal *embarras de richesses*. Even so, Briand's choice of emphasis deserves careful note, for it provides the vital clue to an understanding of his plan, its origins, its form, and its fate.

From the Armistice in 1918 each stage in the evolution of French policy towards Germany had found its counterpart in economic relations. Initially the determination to maintain supremacy was reflected in French insistence upon burdening the German economy with a crushing weight of reparation charges and discrimination against German trade. The adoption of the Dawes plan modifying reparation claims in 1924 marked the tentative start of Franco-German rapprochement. The foundations were underpinned in 1926 by the institution of the European steel cartel, linking the industries of France, Germany, and the Belgian-Luxembourg union; and in 1927 by the conclusion of a Franco-German commercial treaty, popularly known as the 'economic Locarno'.⁴ The treaty, besides ending French discrimination against German trade with the concession of most-favoured-nation treatment, brought extensive modifications of the French tariff to facilitate bilateral trade. Meanwhile, the French armed forces and public services increased their reliance upon German imports, treated as reparations in kind, while private industry was encouraged by tax incentives to do the same.⁵ The first Hague conference, convened in July 1929, produced a parallel shift in French reparations policy. Whereas originally reparations had been regarded both as an end in themselves and, by stifling German recovery, as a component of French security, France now agreed to the reduction of reparation claims to the point where they could be funded commercially and trusted in Germany's desire for continued prosperity to ensure their future payment. The ostensible removal of reparations from the field of political contention and agreement on the early withdrawal of all allied troops from the Rhineland, the principal results of the Hague conference, eliminated two of the greatest obstacles to rapproche-

ment with Germany as well as reducing the possibility of sustaining an alternative policy. But if rapprochement were to be consolidated, now was the moment, while Gustav Stresemann, obviously a dying man, still held the reins of German foreign policy, and while France, basically the weaker of the two powers, still held the advantage in economic recovery and the security of a much larger army. Bilateral arrangements threatened to raise objections from all quarters: from Germany on account of the present imbalance of power; from France's eastern allies, who constantly feared arrangements made at their expense; and within France herself, owing to an acute awareness of Germany's greater potential strength and the concomitant determination to maintain close relations with Britain as well as Poland and the countries of the 'little entente'. The most promising approach was therefore by means of an association of states, large enough to submerge the German 'problem' and remove fears of immediate French hegemony or eventual German domination. And the most hopeful means of inducing the participation of other states rested with a programme aimed primarily at the resolution of economic frustrations common to almost the whole of Europe.

The 1927 World Economic Conference, a semi-official gathering sponsored by the League of Nations, had indicated the breadth of concern throughout Europe at the continuing stagnation of international trade due to the near-autarkic regulations thrown up during the war and the multiplication of tariff barriers which had accompanied the creation of new states. There, delegations representing the business communities of every European country, as well as some thirty overseas countries subscribed to resolutions endorsing the total suppression of quantitative trade controls, the progressive reduction of tariff levels, and an end to discriminatory practices by the application of unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment to foreign trade.⁶ Commercial agreements concluded that year and the next confirmed that the resolutions were seriously meant.⁷ But the increasing refinement of customs nomenclature also revealed dissatisfaction with the working of the most-favoured-nation principle, and the extreme brevity of agreements a general uncertainty about future developments. The World Economic Conference, which had been hailed in Britain as marking a victory for free-trade principles over French-inspired plans for cartels, trusts, and other restrictive and inherently discriminatory market-sharing arrangements, was not yielding the anticipated

results;⁸ acceptance of the principle of multilateralism had also increased the necessity to harmonize the commercial policies of the major trading nations and the obstruction that even one nation could cause by refusing to co-operate.⁹ In 1928 the League Economic Committee took up the problem created by states which claimed the benefit of most-favoured-nation rights while refusing to participate in efforts to reduce trade barriers. Eventually agreement was reached on the provision of an exception from most-favoured-nation commitments to allow for the development of 'plurilateral conventions of a general character and aiming at the improvement of economic relations between people', on condition that such conventions were approved by the League and were open to the participation of all states on an equal footing.¹⁰ This formula had scarcely been devised, however, when in April 1929 the League subcommittee formed to oversee the application of the World Economic Conference resolutions was obliged to warn that progress had been halted and that unless steps were taken immediately a new wave of protectionism could be expected.¹¹ Europe, the subcommittee acknowledged, was recoiling from the anticipated impact of American tariff increases.

The United States, an exporter and lender of second rank before 1914, had come out of the war the world's pre-eminent economic power. Thereafter American export sales seemed inexorably to increase, with manufactures rapidly overtaking primary products as the most important component, and equally rapidly America increased her foreign claims, both of portfolio loans and direct investments abroad. To interested governments, America's obstinate refusal to allow war debts owing to her to be treated as an integral component in the network of inter-governmental claims arising from the war provided a continuing source of frustration. But if one factor was more important than any other in the shaping of foreign attitudes it was the growth of American direct investment abroad. It is possible that this growth was no more rapid during the 1920s than at other times before or since, but certainly the form it took was uniquely awesome to the other developed countries of the west.¹² For it involved the expansion or take-over of firms prominent in industries whose products were the very symbols of twentieth century progress. The chemical industry, the telecommunications industry, the electrical, oil, aluminium, office equipment, and above all the automotive industry, all attested in the most visible way to the supremacy of American mass-production techniques

and managerial skills. In Europe popular works such as the evocatively titled *America Comes of Age*, *America's Secret*, *The Economic Impact of America*, and *America Conquers Britain* encouraged resistance to, as well as emulation of, 'the colossus of the West'.¹³ The victory of Herbert Hoover in the presidential election of November 1928 and the start of Congressional debate on tariff-raising early the following year added new intensity to European apprehensions.¹⁴ Already expectations had grown that America would be forced to concentrate upon foreign markets for manufactured goods in view of the imminent 'saturation' of her own domestic market.¹⁵ With the former commerce secretary in the White House a more ominous prospect arose; by embarking upon a co-ordinated economic offensive on the one hand, while raising to prohibitive heights her already unprecedented tariffs on the other, America might make it impossible for Europe to cover both her import bill and war-debt obligations except by selling control of ever larger portions of her own industrial base.¹⁶

Among European observers influenced by America's gigantism during the 1920s were men as diverse in political outlook as Adolph Hitler, Leon Trotsky, and Sir Oswald Mosley, at this time on the British left.¹⁷ Others closer to the centre of European opinion, however, appeared scarcely less impressed before the close of the decade. In Germany, Stresemann, for instance, asserted before the Reichstag in June 1929 that the central issue of foreign affairs was no longer Germany's isolation within Europe but 'one of Europe as a whole in fee to the power of the United States'.¹⁸ The industrialist Signor Pirelli spoke for a large section of Italian opinion when he expressed a similar view.¹⁹ But nowhere was concern more evident than in France, where feelings were exacerbated by the approaching deadline for ratifying the Mellon-Berenger war debt agreement.

Franco-American relations, never good since Woodrow Wilson's attempt to defend his fourteen points in Paris in 1919, had been strained throughout the following years by the unresolved issue of war debts. Relations were worsened in 1927 when France, having conceded most-favoured-nation treatment to Germany, refused to accord the same treatment to American goods so long as the United States continued to impose high duties on luxury goods, and, incidentally, persisted in prohibiting alcoholic beverages. Retaliation was threatened and eventually carried out, followed by French counter-measures.²⁰ The necessity to take the decision, postponed since 1925, to ratify or repudiate the war debt agreement just when

the American tariff seemed about to be raised even higher, thus led the former Radical premier Edouard Herriot, the executive of the Socialist party, the five hundred presidents of the semi-official chambers of commerce, and numerous other political and business leaders to speak with one voice against America's allegedly intolerable claims on Europe.²¹ Almost without exception, moreover, each expression of frustration was accompanied by hopes for a common European response. Only by working together, it was asserted, could Europe find markets for her own goods and create the basis for mass-production techniques which, as America had shown, were vital to the prosperity and independence of the continent.

British opinion, though muffled by the caution of a relatively much larger mercantile community, was by no means uninfluenced by these developments. Ardent imperialists such as Leopold Amery, Colonial Secretary in the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin, and Sir Hugo Hirst, chairman of General Electric, who feared that America's economic expansion would envelop the Dominions as well as Britain herself, were only the most outspoken in their concern.²² In some measure the trade unionist Ernest Bevin, the governor of the Bank of England, Montagu Norman, and even Baldwin himself shared their apprehension.²³ The second Labour government, which took office in June 1929, also showed signs of concern. But so far from turning towards Britain's European neighbours, Ramsay MacDonald indicated Labour's reaction by attacking Baldwin during the election campaign for his 'lover-like attachment to France' and confirming his personal determination to establish a special relationship with America.

Almost immediately upon its formation, the Labour government was confronted with a number of parliamentary questions, some inviting it to make representations to the United States against prohibitive tariff increases, others suggesting that Britain join with continental states in common defence against American protectionism.²⁴ As a dedicated proponent of free trade, William Graham, President of the Board of Trade, was particularly hostile to the suggestion of discriminatory trade practices.²⁵ The maintenance of harmonious Anglo-American trade relations was important enough in itself. But even more important was the need to discourage discrimination abroad, since under free trade Britain depended for fair treatment in foreign markets solely upon general acceptance of the most-favoured-nation clause in its unconditional

form. Even the previous Conservative government had jealously defended the clause at international conferences, and the present government was by comparison far more enthusiastic for free trade.

Commerce, of course, was not the only issue at stake. Commonwealth relations were intimately involved, since collaboration with Europe would probably require at least acquiescence in restrictions damaging to Dominions' trade. Yet the Labour government, no less than its predecessors, accepted Britain's existing world commitments, including the maintenance and development of imperial links. Moreover, whereas a growing number of Conservatives regarded American economic expansion as a threat to the empire and accepted the need for an exclusive empire economic bloc, the Labour government looked to the friendship and co-operation of an ever more powerful United States as a vital component in a peaceful, fundamentally unchanged world order maintained under the aegis of the League of Nations. Indeed, conversations had already begun with American officials on a projected naval agreement, and MacDonal, the Prime Minister, was preparing to continue them personally in Washington.²⁶ The government thus had no hesitation in disassociating itself from parliamentary suggestions for a European economic bloc, particularly as they seemed inspired chiefly by France, the country most closely associated with the discredited policy of 'old alliances' and continental antagonism towards America. Graham's request was accordingly granted and only when the Foreign Office advised against giving offence to Briand was Graham restrained from openly deprecating talk of European federation.²⁷ In the meantime Briand indicated to Britain's ambassador in Paris, Lord Tyrrell, his strong desire to discuss with Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, his plans for a 'United States of Europe' in advance of the Tenth Assembly.²⁸ Henderson, it appears, offered no response.

On 5 September Briand spoke before the Assembly, affirming with pride his readiness to be associated with the idea of a unified Europe, however utopian it seemed. Graham, who addressed the Assembly later the same day, discouraged resort to grandiose plans. 'Far be it from me... to throw cold water upon any plan which is designed to bring European nations more closely together', Graham insisted. But, he warned, the practical difficulties must not be underestimated, and discrimination against extra-European nations, whether by tariff preferences or limited in-

dustrial agreements, must be abjured at all costs. In his words, 'such a policy might, from the economic standpoint, generate that friction which would manufacture war between the nations — war which it is our express purpose in this League to make certain will never recur.' Thereupon Graham presented a 'concrete proposal': a two-year tariff truce, to provide a breathing-space for the negotiation of progressive tariff reductions.²⁹ The Belgian and Swiss delegates, while sharing Graham's hope for reductions in world trade barriers, emphasized the need to surmount the present impasse by endorsing the League economic subcommittee's proposal for excepting 'plurilateral conventions' from the operation of most-favoured-nation agreements. The Australian delegate on the other hand evoked a sympathetic echo from representatives of other extra-European primary producing countries when he denounced the assumption, implicit in Graham's remarks, that free trade was the inseparable economic concomitant of the League's political objectives.³⁰ All the same, the Assembly deliberations remained friendly if earnest when, on 9 September, Briand arranged a luncheon for the heads of European delegations.

Briand, now employing the phrase '*un lien de solidarité qui permette un contact permanent entre les pays d'Europe*', attempted to anticipate possible objections to European federation.³¹ As one of his professional advisers had warned, any appearance of organizing Europe against American economic expansion must be avoided since, however popular in Europe at the moment, it would arouse American or 'Anglo-Saxon' hostility; and equally important, European institutions, when required at all, must not be given the appearance of rivals to the League of Nations.³² The second danger Briand dismissed by telling his audience that he had chosen Geneva to introduce his proposal precisely in order that it would develop within the atmosphere of the League; Article 21 of the Covenant envisaged regional ententes, and Europe was in essence a 'region'. As to the suggestion current in certain quarters of uniting Europe against the United States, Briand continued, he would rather abandon his proposal altogether than allow it to take this form. In fact, he understood that America favoured his proposal, since it would open a new era of prosperity in Europe, to the profit of everyone. Co-operation in the economic sphere was Europe's most pressing need, Briand concluded, but methods of procedure were for the European states to decide upon together. Stresemann, as he had done in the Assembly that morning, welcomed Briand's

initiative and joined in the call for economic co-operation, while reiterating his own concern to avoid any measure damaging to the League. Henderson, speaking next, thanked Briand for the opportunity to discuss the European 'problem', then expanded upon Stresemann's last remarks and added a warning about a second 'danger', of appearing to organize Europe against another power, be it the United States or the Soviet Union. However, delegates from Austria, Yugoslavia and Belgium indicated greater enthusiasm, and eventually all present joined in inviting Briand to prepare a memorandum outlining his proposals for the consideration of their governments and to collate their views in a report to the Eleventh League Assembly a year hence. Presently Graham's tariff truce proposal, jointly introduced by Britain, France, and Belgium, was adopted by the Assembly. For the time being at least it seemed that a common basis might be found for reconciling British and European approaches to trade reforms.

As Graham recognized, Briand's initiative reflected in some measure the concern in Europe with American economic 'penetration'; that and the more distant but never forgotten threat posed by the USSR, which had just embarked upon its five-year plan. At the same time, however, neither the Labour government nor its Whitehall advisers took Briand's initiative seriously. In part their scepticism derived from the very frequency with which such proposals had been mooted since the war, and the absence of practical results. But partly, too, it derived from ignorance of the forces and organizations working for European unity.³³ For the 'European' movement, though including prominent figures from literary, scientific, legal and political circles, was formed pre-eminently from the continent's business elite.³⁴ Yet the Foreign Office, due to the enduring strength of *laissez-faire* attitudes, had no commercial or economic section; and Henderson, like his predecessors, directed the Office on the assumption that foreign policy and economic affairs were things apart. Thus the *Comité franco-allemand d'information et de documentation*, instituted in 1926 by the Luxembourg steel-maker Emile Mayrisch and comprising many of the leading figures in French and German banking and heavy industry, was apparently unknown to the Foreign Office.³⁵ Of the *Union douanière européenne*, which numbered among its active members Jacques Seydoux, the recently retired director of commercial and political affairs at the Quai d'Orsay, as well as several former French premiers, and was linked to almost equally impressive bodies in

other major European capitals, the Foreign Office knew only the barest details.³⁶ Nor did the Office pay serious attention to the activities of the Pan-Europa Society, the most prominent of the 'European' organizations, whose leading French official was Louis Loucheur, the industrialist, sometime cabinet minister, and Briand's closest political associate.³⁷ Even in 1930 the Office library possessed none of the publications of Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, founder of the Pan-Europa Society.³⁸

For the same reasons, the Office remained scarcely aware of Britain's crucial influence upon further European co-operation. Politically, Britain was the obvious counter-weight within a European association including the two rival powers Germany and France. But hardly less important, Britain, as the world's greatest trading nation and Europe's largest import market, possessed enormous influence over the economic policies of the continental states. In particular, Briand's initiative, which looked to the subordination of political differences and the reduction of national sovereignty for the sake of more pressing economic needs, was virtually bound to collapse if Britain indicated her opposition. This was almost certain to be the case, so long as the Labour government condemned regional trade preferences and international industrial agreements, the basic tools that Briand had to hand, as contrary to free trade principles. Nevertheless, to the extent that they took notice of Briand's initiative at all, most members of the Foreign Office, like their political masters, regarded it merely as a more subtle manifestation of the French desire for permanent hegemony on the continent, viewed his emphasis upon economic affairs as little more than an attempt to exploit anti-American sentiment, and assumed that Britain could comfortably remain safely outside in any dispute that resulted.³⁹

Typical of the Foreign Office attitude towards 'European' activity was that expressed in 1926 by the Under-Secretary Sir (later Lord) William Tyrrell, towards the founder of the Pan-Europa Society: 'I know Coudenhove: he is a thoroughly impractical theorist'.⁴⁰ In March 1928 Jacques Seydoux, just retired from the Quai d'Orsay, published a lengthy article in *The Times* pleading for closer British involvement in European affairs.⁴¹ According to Seydoux, Britain's post-war pre-occupation with the balance of power had led her to fear France and hasten German recovery heedless of the fact that French predominance on the continent was in any case strictly temporary. France on the other hand was coming to terms with Germany, particularly in the economic sphere.

The recent commercial treaty was, in his words, 'a phenomenon of unusual importance, since it means that Franco-German trade relations dominate the whole French economic system'. Agreements were already in force linking the French and German steel, steel pipe, and potash industries, and similar agreements were also being devised for the chemical, electrical, and other industries. Reparation deliveries in kind, formerly looked upon with disfavour by both countries, were now mutually encouraged. Seydoux concluded, 'France and Germany cannot do without Great Britain; but Great Britain needs them both. The peace of Europe and of the world demands that any Franco-German *entente* on the economic plane should have as its corollary a still closer *entente* between France and Britain.' Despite Seydoux's impressive reputation as an international analyst, however, Tyrrell briefly dismissed his plea with the comment, 'M. Seydoux is chasing a mirage of long standing, viz. that economics in the case of France and Germany will overcome race antagonism.'⁴²

Yet on becoming Ambassador in Paris, Tyrrell soon found cause to alter his attitude. On 3 October 1929 Stresemann died, and within the same month Briand's government fell. Nevertheless, Tyrrell reported, Edouard Daladier, who had engineered the government's downfall, shared Briand's enthusiasm for close co-operation with Britain, disarmament, and European federation.⁴³ In the new year Tyrrell received reliable information that the French government had been instrumental in reconciling Poland to a trade agreement with Germany.⁴⁴ The Foreign Office, however, was still sceptical of significant developments when Tyrrell reported an intriguing conversation with Daniel Serruys, the chief French negotiator of the commercial treaty with Germany, who though now retired from the Ministry of Commerce was a member of the French delegation to the forthcoming tariff truce conference.⁴⁵

According to Serruys, Louis Loucheur, now Minister of Commerce, was 'working on a Franco-German economic agreement to the exclusion of England', a development he 'deplored' because in his opinion British co-operation was vital to European recovery and the making of a true 'United States of Europe'. Tyrrell, suspicious that Serruys' motive might be merely to frighten Britain into a more forthcoming attitude at the approaching conference, knew of no current Franco-German economic negotiations of any significance. 'On the other hand,' he wrote to the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Vansittart, 'the Germans here seem

to be hand in glove with the French at the moment, and the intimacy of their relations constantly surprises me and would probably very considerably startle people in London.' Moreover, it seemed logical to him that France, as the weaker party in negotiations with Germany, would earnestly wish Britain to play a more active role in the economic side of European affairs.

At Vansittart's suggestion, Tyrrell therefore approached Serruys again to request clarification of French views.⁴⁶ In response to Tyrrell's blunt questioning, Serruys described the frustration that Britain's dogmatic advocacy of free trade was causing in official circles in Paris, and the conviction there that only a programme of 'industrial rationalization' based upon trusts and cartels, combined with trade preferences, could end the 'balkanization' of Europe and enable Europe to compete on the same footing with America. The uncommon frankness of Serruys' remarks deserves quotation:

As he had now been asked to come into the open, he would say that the manner in which we had consistently advocated this theory and thought we could teach it to the French, as at one time our financiers like Bradbury thought they could teach the French their methods of finance, created the most deplorable impression. If anything had turned responsible French opinion against the tariff truce it was the clumsy interventions of [Sir Arthur] Salter . . . and what he called the Free Trade *épouvantails* who were constantly paraded by British delegations at Geneva. In Serruys' opinion neither the British theory nor the French theory could carry the day at the moment. What ought to be done was to talk in a free and friendly manner. Perhaps the French had been wrong in talking too much in the past to the Germans. But it was so difficult to talk with British officials. Many of them did not seem able to understand the continental theory or talk the continental language.

Pressed further, Serruys referred to Loucheur's efforts, adding that Alexis Léger, director of the political and commercial section of the Quai d'Orsay and Briand's *chef de cabinet*, was also actively involved in efforts to secure permanent arrangements for Franco-German collaboration while their mutual relations remained in good health.

Serruys said that Loucheur and Léger and under their influence Briand — and this was what he wanted to tell me the other day — were definitely out for the federalisation of Europe on the economic basis of the organisation of production, rationalisation etc., and that as our attitude seemed to them so hopeless they were ready with Germany to organise Europe without us. Their ideas were still nebulous and they did not realise the difficulties and dangers, but they thought they could organise Europe behind some kind of tariff barrier which

would be erected to our disadvantage and still more to that of the United States. . . Loucheur and Co. seemed to think that such a scheme would appeal to the European agricultural countries, such as Hungary, just as much as to the industrial countries like Germany and France, since they would each receive advantages.

Once more Serruys stressed his own hopes for British co-operation, and urged that Graham speak frankly with M. Flandin, the new Minister of Commerce, when they met in a few days time at the tariff truce conference in Geneva. The direction of French policy, along his own or Loucheur's lines, Serruys concluded, depended chiefly upon Britain's own readiness to adopt a friendly, helpful attitude towards French aspirations.

Tyrrell was interested to note that the most-favoured-nation principle, one of the main topics that Serruys had suggested for conversation, had recently been raised for debate in the French Chamber of Deputies. He was also impressed to find much of Serruys' account corroborated by Léger himself.⁴⁷ The French government, Léger advised, could not contemplate support for Graham's idea of an unqualified tariff truce, which in any case had practically no support elsewhere in Europe. On the other hand, Flandin had no wish to act independently of Britain and, while hoping to present the conference with constructive alternatives, looked for the closest co-operation with Graham. But, Tyrrell concluded his report of the meeting, 'my informants, and particularly the member of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, have both insisted on the fact that the French government is definitely decided to organise Europe economically, and my feeling is that they have already received considerable encouragement from other countries including certainly Germany.'

The tariff truce conference, which convened on 17 February 1930, was attended by delegations from every European League member-state but only three from overseas states, and almost immediately bore out Serruys' prediction that a moratorium on tariff building undertaken solely by the European states was unacceptable. Indeed, it was Serruys himself who took the lead in rejecting the idea, expressing himself with such brutal directness that briefly the conference appeared in danger of collapse.⁴⁸ However, Flandin's arrival was delayed by a governmental crisis in Paris, and when at last he reached Geneva Graham coolly *avoided* discussion of limited 'European' arrangements.⁴⁹ During committee pro-

ceedings, delegates from Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, and Hungary spoke in favour of mutual preferences between the agricultural and industrial countries of Europe. More cautiously, delegates from France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland indicated readiness to modify most-favoured-nation commitments to enable the establishment of 'plurilateral conventions'.⁵⁰ As the Board of Trade subsequently reported to the Foreign Office, 'such conceptions cannot be said to have received encouragement at the conference, rather the reverse.'⁵¹ That this was so, the Board might have added, was due in large measure to the vigorous opposition put up by the British delegation.

In the event, the conference marked a practical defeat for Graham's free trade efforts without opening the way for an alternative approach. A loose, ineffective formula governing future tariff increases was patched together, while measures for agreed reductions were left for consideration at a second session scheduled for the autumn. Graham, under strong attack from Tory imperial protectionists, who accused him of signing away Britain's freedom of action, defended the 'valuable' work of the conference.⁵² Speaking to the press on his departure from Geneva, Flandin, however, deprecated talk of tariff reductions and reaffirmed France's commitment to 'l'élargissement du marché européen des échanges'.⁵³ At almost the same moment the United States Senate ended seven months of debate by passing the Smoot-Hawley tariff bill.⁵⁴

The Foreign Office by this time had received evaluations of Tyrrell's reports from the ambassadors in Berlin and Rome. Sir Horace Rumbold was confident that Stresemann's policy of reconciliation with France would continue, especially now that Germany was suffering severely from the world slump. Indeed, Rumbold wrote, 'German Ministers. . . have told me time after time recently that the immediate task before Germany is to set her own house in order. She asks herself which of her neighbours can best contribute to that end, and the answer is France, so far as Europe is concerned.'⁵⁵ But although Germany, with her 'natural predilection for all kinds of combines', would undoubtedly be attracted towards some kind of 'economic federation of Europe', Tyrrell, it seemed to him, quite underestimated the political differences still separating Germany from France. At all events, Rumbold concluded, the foremost consideration in German policy was to avoid any action likely to annoy the United States or Britain.⁵⁶ According to Sir Ronald Graham in Rome, Italy regarded France as 'definitely hostile to Italian

development', a view which made Briand's plans unlikely to succeed for the moment.⁵⁷ In fact, Italy, lacking plans of her own, was casting about for new support and possibly would make approaches to Germany or even eventually Russia. But it largely depended upon Britain's attitude and policy. Italy's preference, 'I have no doubt at all', Graham wrote, was full British participation in European affairs as a counterweight to France. The Italians were doubtful of Britain's willingness, however, and anticipated that she would 'pretend that she does not belong to Europe, but can concentrate on the Empire and the United States'. Both evaluations thus were negative. Yet, scarcely less significant, the principal reason in both cases was ascribed to assumptions as to Britain's own policy.

Meanwhile, evidence of French efforts to secure German support for European federation continued to mount. In February a Franco-German chamber of commerce was established in Paris.⁵⁸ In March the French *Comité d'Études pour l'Union douanière européenne* canvassed support from various European chambers of commerce.⁵⁹ Towards the end of April Rumbold described preparations for a Pan-Europa conference in Berlin, commenting, 'I was struck by the strength and composition of the French delegation', whose speakers included former premier Painlevé as well as Loucheur and Serruys.⁶⁰ *Rapprochement*, Rumbold noted the following week, was being sought in other ways as well: 'the French Embassy in Berlin continues as before to make a parade of cordial relations, not only with literary and artistic, but with political and official circles here.'⁶¹ Ronald Campbell, counsellor at the Paris embassy, offered further evidence in a letter to Vansittart on 6 May:

The Franco-German rapprochement to which we have lately been drawing your attention, is proceeding apace and is much closer in effect than appears on the surface. It is manifested not only in the official dealings between the two countries, but is now passing into the social domain. I was told, for instance, the other day that Fouquières, the *Chef du Protocole*, recently called on Hoesch to convey to him a message from the St. Cloud Country Club to the effect that it would now welcome the staff of the German Embassy on its membership list.⁶²

The British government took no notice of these developments. Since the autumn mounting pressure to alleviate unemployment had forced other issues into the background, and in the time remaining for foreign affairs ministers had been preoccupied with the London naval conference and subsequent negotiations, which stret-

ched into the spring. Tyrrell repeatedly appealed for a sympathetic attitude towards Briand's forthcoming memorandum on federation, in view of his unique contribution to European peace.⁶³ But his appeals received scant notice: the only aspect of Briand's objective that seriously interested the Foreign Office and more especially Lord Robert Cecil, Henderson's special adviser on League affairs, and Philip Noel-Baker and Hugh Dalton, his parliamentary assistants, was its ostensible anti-American appearance. Early in May Briand expressed hopes of discussing the memorandum with Henderson when the Foreign Secretary passed through Paris on his way to Geneva for a League council meeting. The Office cautioned against discussions before French intentions were clearer, and the subject was passed over quickly when they met at the Quai d'Orsay on 9 May.⁶⁴ Briand assured Henderson that his memorandum, now in proof form, conformed to League principles and safeguarded the sovereign rights of prospective participating states. Henderson promised to examine it 'with the utmost consideration'. But he was prepared to make only one observation at present, 'and that was to remind M. Briand that he had originally expressed to him the hope that there would be nothing in the scheme which would give it even the semblance of being directed against the United States of America'. Briand replied, 'there was nothing of that kind and that this consideration had been very much in his mind throughout'.

The appearance of Briand's 'Memorandum on the Organization of a System for European Federal Union' coincided auspiciously with the formal transfer of reparations administration from the reparations commission to the Bank for International Settlements, as well as the order for removal of the last French troops from the Rhineland.⁶⁵ By a stroke of luck, it also appeared just as the second Pan-Europa Conference convened in Berlin, which provided an excellent forum for its introduction into public debate, a task performed by Loucheur with assistance from Barthélémy and Serruys, two of the other principal speakers.⁶⁶ Yet the document itself, which betrayed signs of hasty rewriting, was repetitive and imprecise. In the first place, the memorandum called for an 'initial and symbolic pact', pledging member-states to the principle of union and collaboration in the formulation of a common policy. The economic importance of federation was subsequently outlined. Divisions within Europe, to which the peace settlement had added over 20,000 kilometres of trade barriers, were blamed for stifling industrial development and employment opportunities. They were

'the source of both political and social instability', and 'the most serious obstacle to the development and efficiency of all political and judicial institutions on which the foundations of any universal organisation of peace tend to be based'. Within the general principles laid down in the initial pact, therefore, members were advised to adopt as 'the objective which they intended to define as their economic policy: the establishment of a common market which shall raise to the maximum the standard of human well-being in all the territories of the European commonwealth'. This, the memorandum stressed, presented no threat to extra-European states since, unlike previous European customs union schemes, reduced internal tariffs would not be complemented by a higher external tariff wall. Hence, the assertion was made, the programme of action would conform to the recent recommendation of the League working party on the application of the most-favoured-nation principle to regional associations. That said, however, Briand now reversed his priorities as stated before the Tenth Assembly, and called for 'general subordination of the economic problem to the political problem'. Progress towards 'economic union' was 'strictly governed by the question of security': economic union could not precede 'political union'. Just as negotiations for collective regional (Locarno) security agreements had been undertaken within the framework of the League, the memorandum advised, so now European union must be underpinned by the extension of a network of arbitration and security agreements covering the whole continent.

A. W. A. Leeper, the Foreign Office official who took responsibility for drafting Britain's reply, and one of the few in the Office to take Briand's efforts seriously, found this subordination of economic co-operation perplexing.⁶⁷ Perhaps it simply denoted a retreat to the traditional French policy of demanding security before disarmament. Perhaps in promoting the plan Briand had merely been posturing for the sake of his French electorate or, in the expectation of its rejection, to score a moral victory over Italy, Germany, and other powers. This was possible, Leeper suggested, yet it would be quite out of character for Briand to act this way. 'Almost alone among French politicians he has in recent years consistently shown himself a good European, the friend of peace and of the improvement of international relations.' Moreover, as a trap for Germany or Italy it was far too 'barefaced' to succeed. A 'far more positive and practical' purpose could thus be assumed.

After all, the organization of the European economy as a counterweight to non-European and especially American competition had always been the mainspring of 'European' activity, and it was patently obvious that only the economic attractions were likely to unite Germany and Italy with France. Probably, then, Briand was acting out of 'deference' to the United States and Britain and to Germany's fears of arousing their hostility, and intended to establish a formal framework within which economic arrangements could be developed when political conditions permitted. This, too, was the view of Orme Sargent, head of the Office's central department:

I have little doubt that when M. Briand first approached this subject last September the idea he had in mind was an *economic* federation. When, however, he came to work out his ideas he realised that such a federation would obviously have the appearance of being a measure of defence against American competition (and indirectly against the possibility of British Imperial Free Trade). When, on top of this, the Secretary of State warned M. Briand that His Majesty's Government would not consider any scheme aimed against America, he must, I think, have hurriedly recast his memorandum so as to get the political aspect of his proposal in the foreground.

Sargent, to judge by the records of the Quai d'Orsay, may well have been right. For, if too fragmentary to support firm judgements, they do suggest that the memorandum underwent repeated redrafting in an effort to forestall foreign objections.⁶⁸ At any rate, Leeper assumed the best, and prepared a reply which combined caution with sympathy.⁶⁹ He had no illusions about the difficulties a European union would create for Britain: to remain both 'in and out' would probably prove impossible, and to go 'in' would mean a definite break with the Commonwealth. But such a prospect was too far distant to govern present policy, especially when the French plan failed to go beyond generalities, and Britain could only sympathize with Briand's stated aim of realizing in Europe the programme laid down by the 1927 world economic conference. More importantly, Briand himself deserved support as 'an old and valued friend of this country'. Since either Germany or Italy, 'who are far more directly concerned', would reject the plan, or it would be carried forward by the self-interest of the continental countries regardless of Britain's attitude, Britain could now safely avoid obloquy by a general expression of sympathy for Briand's efforts.

The sympathy which Leeper and fellow officials showed towards Briand, however, was as nothing compared to the zeal with which Henderson's political advisers responded to the spectre of regionalism. To Noel-Baker and Cecil, Briand's scheme threatened to weaken the League of Nations by diverting the attention of its most active members, and eventually to become a dangerous rival to it.⁷⁰ This in itself was serious enough, but ultimately more ominous was the destructive centrifugal force that would be unleashed; by adding strength to 'the Pan-American movement [and] the Asiatic feeling which already exists', it would inevitably drive the component parts of the British Empire into the separate geographical blocs that resulted. This view found identical expression in a memorandum by the League of Nations Union, of which Cecil was joint president.⁷¹ It also formed the core of an appraisal by Sir Arthur Salter, the British expert at the head of the League economic section, which was forwarded to Noel-Baker.⁷² With the division of the world into a few large blocs, 'European, pan-American, British Empire (with perhaps a Russian Asiatic to follow)', Salter wrote, 'we should have, more remotely but ultimately on a larger scale, the same kind of danger which comes from "alliances" endangering the League's overriding authority.' Henderson, thoroughly impressed by Salter's arguments, called for revision of Leeper's draft reply along appropriate lines, a task undertaken by another official, Charles Howard Smith.⁷³ The resulting document, though prefaced with professions of sympathy for Briand's pacific motives and the idea of European economic co-operation, affirmed that Britain would co-operate only so long as European affairs were considered by and in the context of the League of Nations.

Henderson, whose interest in international economics was negligible, evidently believed that the revised reply constrained Briand's plan without confounding it altogether. If so, his reliance upon Salter's advice was unfortunate. To French officials, whose exasperation with Salter's doctrinaire commitment to free trade was already known, the British claim that the international coal negotiations and the 'striking example' of the tariff truce negotiations demonstrated the League's effectiveness in matters of special European interest could not have been better calculated to annoy. For by the time the reply was received the former negotiations had broken down,⁷⁴ while the tariff truce negotiations stood no chance of success so long as the most-favoured-nation principle, insisted

upon by Britain, made extra-European co-operation essential. Since, as the Foreign Office recognized, the success of the plan depended upon its potential economic benefits, it should not have been surprising that the British reply was generally deemed hostile on the continent. The Board of Trade was indeed hostile. Only a few months earlier a departmental memorandum surveying British commercial policy had reiterated the supreme importance of ensuring that the most-favoured-nation clause was 'drawn as tightly as possible and leave as little opening as possible for evasion'.⁷⁵ Certain limited exceptions were acknowledged. But the 'so-called United States of Europe' plan inspired by France, 'that is to say not of a Customs Union but of a body of States giving each other special Customs preferences as against the rest of the world, is one which we should strenuously resist as cutting at the root of our most-favoured-nation policy, and not as being a minor derogation from it.' The cabinet was less hostile than merely uninterested. On 28 May a small cabinet committee was formed to consider Britain's response to Briand's memorandum. But the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Philip Snowden, whose dedication to free trade was equalled only by his hostility towards France, made only one contribution: to warn against encouraging any hope of British co-operation outside the strictly economic field. And the Dominions Secretary, J. H. Thomas, whose own hopes had come to rest with protectionist agreements with the Commonwealth, merely underlined the dangers to imperial unity that co-operation with Briand presented.⁷⁶ The committee met only once, on 14 July, a day before the deadline Briand had set for replies, with neither Thomas nor Snowden present. On 16 July the Cabinet gave perfunctory approval to the Foreign Office's revised draft, which was thereupon handed to the French ambassador.⁷⁷ Significantly, it was a day late.

Britain's long silence before replying did what her earlier influence on Briand's memorandum had not already accomplished. In conversation with Noel-Baker at Geneva on 12 May, M. Procopé, the Finnish Foreign Minister, had expressed enthusiasm for European union.⁷⁸ As he had already told the French, an aggressive stance *vis-à-vis* Russia or the United States must be avoided and, to succeed, British participation was vital. But he was sufficiently hopeful of the prospects that he had encouraged formation of a movement at home for the promotion of European co-operation. The following week M. Dieckhoff of the German embassy

cautiously enquired about British intentions.⁷⁹ Upon the appearance of Briand's memorandum, preliminary reactions in European capitals revealed an uncomfortable ambivalence, a Foreign Office survey noted.⁸⁰ The economic side of the plan had wide appeal, though Italy and Hungary strongly opposed any freezing of the status quo, and Czechoslovakia and Poland feared that further Franco-German rapprochement would be made at their expense. The Germans, while suspicious of French political motives, were reluctant to jeopardize the economic opportunities and reawaken old animosities. 'Opinion in most countries realises', the survey concluded, 'that the attitude of His Majesty's Government will be decisive.'

In strict confidence, Baron Ramel, the Swedish Foreign Minister, informed British Minister Sir Hugh Kennard on 17 June that his government had proposed to Norway, Denmark, and Finland a common reply, 'so worded as to discourage any positive action, while expressing polite appreciation of the admirable sentiments which inspire the proposals.' 'Baron Ramel then told me emphatically', Kennard reported, 'that an important factor in the determination of this attitude was the belief that His Majesty's Government were not inclined to accept the proposals, and he asked me if I could enlighten him on this point.'⁸¹ But Kennard was unable to comment. On 30 June Vansittart acknowledged that, having been questioned by 'nearly every foreign representative in London', Britain's continuing silence was leading them to interpret this as a negative attitude.

Cecil, writing to Prime Minister MacDonald from Geneva on 18 August, reaffirmed that 'all over the Continent it is admitted that Briand's proposals have no chance unless we support them'.⁸² At the meeting of European delegates on the eve of the Eleventh League Assembly, however, Britain's deeply cautious attitude set the tone. Briand, whose one aim now was to ensure approval of the principle of European federation, in the hope that substantive measures would thereafter become possible, found his claim that the replies to his memorandum already demonstrated approval sharply challenged by Henderson.⁸³ Henderson indeed made clear that he preferred the matter to be passed on to the League assembly without prior comment. Discouraged and annoyed, Briand threatened to abandon his project altogether before agreeing reluctantly to put a unanimous but anodyne resolution, that mentioned neither European union nor federation nor even 'un lien de

solidarité', before the assembly. The next morning the Greek Prime Minister, M. Venizelos, approached Cecil to appeal for British acceptance of greater European autonomy in the elaboration of Briand's plan.⁸⁴ A few days later M. Massigli of the French Foreign Ministry made a last minute attempt to keep the plan from being absorbed by the League organization,⁸⁵ whose British Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, was commonly understood to be a strong opponent of regionalism.⁸⁶ All the European delegations were telling him, Massigli asserted, 'Agree with the English and nothing else matters to us, we will do what you like.' He hoped that Henderson would agree to present a joint resolution at the close of the Assembly, recommending creation of a European committee under the auspices of the League, but leaving appointments to the participants themselves and providing it with a clear mandate for action. Cecil, whose own dislike of Briand's efforts had just been revealed in an interview published in the Paris press,⁸⁷ offered no encouragement: Henderson, he replied, would 'strongly prefer' appointments to be made by the League.

Briand's brief resolution was soon approved by the Assembly, and Briand himself was elected by acclaim Chairman of the League Committee of Enquiry for European Union.⁸⁸ The assembly itself, however, was riven by dispute over regional economic arrangements. M. Madgearu, the Romanian Foreign Minister, led on behalf of the eastern and southern European agrarian countries in pressing for relaxation of the most-favoured-nation principle to make room for intra-European preferential arrangements.⁸⁹ Unless they could find markets among neighbouring countries for their relatively small cereal surpluses at remunerative prices, Madgearu insisted, Europe's agrarian countries would have no choice but to intensify their autarkic defences. The British delegation, supported by the Australians, South Africans and Canadians, resisted with equal determination this attack on 'the root principles of the League'.⁹⁰ As Flandin stated on 27 September, 'all our discussions have shown that there were two equally determined camps facing one another on this issue of the most-favoured-nation clause'.⁹¹ A few days later the final plenary session culminated with Flandin's bitter recriminations against the doctrinaire and hypocritical attitude taken by 'certain' countries, which was paralysing action.⁹² By an over-rigid systematization of issues, he complained, they vainly sought tariff reductions, heedless of the fact that other countries could not contemplate such action without the assurance of

alternative sources of revenue and stable markets; and while upholding the most-favoured-nation clause in its most unconditional form, they maintained their own preferential arrangements or simply closed their doors to foreign goods. 'The nations', Flandin warned, 'have not forsworn the sword as an arbiter of international justice merely in order to replace militarist by economic imperialism, which is no less dangerous to the peace of the world.'

Briand's committee, dormant until the new year, initiated plans for alleviating Europe's now acute economic crisis at its first working session in January 1931.⁹³ Soon afterwards Howard Smith commented, 'We rather disliked the whole thing, but in spite of that it has not been possible to kill it.'⁹⁴ For all practical purposes, however, Britain had killed it. All the evidence available to the Foreign Office had confirmed that, whatever else might be needed to sustain the European movement's existence, Britain's active co-operation was vital. For if, politically, Britain's participation was probably required to remove fears of French or German predominance, economically, Britain's role was decisive; practical measures for halting the collapse of trade were undoubtedly required to induce broader-based co-operation within Europe, and Britain, Europe's greatest import market, whose very trade deficit was a source of enormous influence abroad, was capable of discouraging all hope of such measures.⁹⁵ But so far from co-operating, Britain had exerted her influence, first to emasculate Briand's proposal, then to discourage other countries from supporting it by her own prolonged, silent delay. By the time Britain's reply was received the moment for action had passed. The trend towards autarky had begun, Hitler and the radical right were making great strides towards power in Germany, and Briand himself was coming under attack at home for encouraging German revisionism with his utopian scheme.⁹⁶ For the first time in modern history, European unity had received the formal support of a major European country and the sympathetic interest of many others, and Britain had said 'No'. In the name of internationalism, Britain had turned in isolation from the continent of which it was virtually a part, impelled by the very forces drawing that continent together. Not for another fifteen years, after a second great European war had been fought, would a comparable opportunity again arise.

Notes

1. *The Morning Post*, 12 July 1929; *The Daily Herald*, 12 July 1929; *The Economist*, 20 July 1929, 107-8. Briand was also Prime Minister of a short-lived government at the time of his address to the assembly.

2. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1929*, Records of the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Plenary Minutes, 52. Briand's memorandum and the replies from the European states are collected in League of Nations 'Documents Relating to the Organisation of a System of European Federal Union', 15 September 1930, A.46.1930. VII.

3. Of the growing body of specialist literature, see in particular Walter Lipgens, 'Europäische Einigungsidee, 1923-1930 und Briand Europaplan im Urteil der deutschen Akten', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 203 (1966), 46-89, 316-63; Fernand L'Huillier, *Dialogues Franco-allemands, 1925-1933* (Strasbourg 1971); Jean Freymond, *Le III^e Reich et la réorganisation économique de l'Europe, 1940-1942* (Leiden 1974), part I; Jacques Bariety, 'Idée européenne et relations franco-allemandes', *Bulletin de la faculté des lettres de Strasbourg* (March 1968), 571-84 and 'Industriels allemands et industriels français à l'époque de la République de Weimar', *Revue Allemagne*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (April-June 1974).

4. Frank Arnold Haight, *A History of French Commercial Policies* (New York 1941), 138.

5. 'The Increased Danger to British Export Trade with France of German Deliveries in Kind', memorandum by J. R. Cahill, 4 February 1929, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), T.160/209, F7800/4.

6. League of Nations, 'The World Economic Conference, Geneva, May 1927. Final Report', CE144, 22-34.

7. League of Nations, 'Report of the Economic Consultative Committee on its first Session, 14-19 May 1928', C.217.M.73.1928.II, 7.

8. Statement by Sir Walter Layton in 'The Economic Conference: Prospects of Practical Results', *International Affairs*, Vol. VI, no. 6 (November 1927), 361.

9. The World Economic Conference and its aftermath are well summarized in League of Nations Economic, Financial and Transit Department, *Commercial Policy in the Inter-War Period: International Proposals and National Policies* (Geneva 1942), 38-49.

10. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1929*, 'Work of the Economic Committee during its Twenty-Eighth Session, 8-12 April 1929', 1228-9. However, largely owing to British obstruction, the report of the working party was not formally adopted. See League of Nations Economic, Financial and Transit Department, *Commercial Policy in the Inter-War Period*, 47-50.

11. League of Nations, 'Report of the Economic Consultative Committee on the period May 1928 to May 1929', C.130.M.45.1929.II, 8-9.

12. Mira Wilkins, *The Maturing of Multinational Enterprise: American Business Abroad from 1914 to 1970* (Cambridge Mass. 1974), Chapter 7; Robert L. Heilbroner, 'None of Your Business', *The New York Review of Books*, Vol. XXII, no. 4 (20 March 1975), 6.

13. The degree of interest in this phenomenon is indicated by the massive 'Selected Bibliography on the International Position of the United States', *Interna-*

tional Affairs, Vol. X, no. 1 (January 1931), 103-99; and *ibid.*, Vol. X, no. 2 (March 1931), 230-41.

14. *New Statesman*, 10 November 1928, 146; *The Times*, 4 March 1929; John B. C. Kershaw, 'The American Presidential Election and the Future of British and European Trade', *The Financial Review of Reviews*, January-March 1929, 50-61; S. K. Ratcliffe, 'President Hoover and Europe', *The Contemporary Review*, Vol. CXXXVI, no. 764 (August 1929), 145.

15. See, for example, statements by William Graham and Sir Robert Horne in the House of Commons, July 1927. Hansard, Fifth Series, Vol. 209, cols. 802, 913; statement by Australian Prime Minister Stanley Bruce, *The Times*, 3 July 1929.

16. The prospect of an imminent 'economic offensive' was seriously entertained within British governing circles by *inter alia* Sir Arthur Balfour, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister (later Lord Swinton), and it appears Sir Austen Chamberlain. See memorandum by Wellesley, 19 February 1929, and appended minutes, PRO FO371/13510, A1397/12/45.

17. Leon Trotsky, *Europe and America: Two Speeches on Imperialism* (New York 1971), Adolph Hitler, *Hitler's Secret Book* (New York 1961), 103, 108; Sir Oswald Mosley, *My Life* (London 1968), 185-6, 194-209. American developments profoundly influenced other radicals active on the British left; see, for instance, H. N. Brailsford, John A. Hobson, A. Creech Jones, and E. F. Wise, *The Living Wage* (London 1926); H. N. Brailsford, 'American Bankers as Europe's Real Rulers', *New Leader*, 11 January 1929, 6.

18. *The Economist*, 29 June 1929, 1439.

19. See Joseph Marion Jones Jr., *Tariff Retaliation: Repercussions of the Hawley-Smoot Bill* (Philadelphia 1934), ch. 3 and *passim*.

20. US State Department, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1929*, Vol. 1, 988-93; Jones, *Tariff Retaliation*, 159-63; *The Economist*, 2 February 1929, 221.

21. *The Economist*, 20 April 1929, 848; *ibid.*, 8 June 1929, 1279; *ibid.*, 22 June 1929, 1393; *ibid.*, 13 July 1929, 64; *European Finance*, 26 July 1929, 79-80; *The Statist*, 27 July 1929, 132; Andre Siegfried, 'European Reactions to American Tariff Proposals', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 8, no. 1 (October 1929), 13-19.

22. Amery's apprehension received clear expression in Leopold S. Amery, *The Empire in the new Era. Speeches Delivered during an Empire Tour. 1927-1928* (London 1928); Hirst's in his contribution to Barker, *America's Secret*, 1 and *passim*. Hirst's efforts to save General Electric from American take-over earned him the censure of the City, but received the compliment of emulation by Marconi International Marine, Imperial Airways, Fairey Aviation, and Rolls Royce, among others. See *The Times*, 7, 12, 13 March 1929; *European Finance*, 15 March 1929, 173, 177; *The Manchester Guardian Commercial*, 21 March 1929, 342; *New Leader*, 12 April 1929, 10; *The Economist*, 15 June 1929, 1350-1; *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 1929. The impact of American economic expansion on the empire received sober examination in 'Europe at the Cross-Roads', *The Round Table*, Vol. MCMXXVI, no. 63 (June 1926), 476-501. Less restrained was the warning issued by Thomas Greenwood that Russia and the United States 'aim both, consciously or unconsciously, at the disruption of the British Empire — the former with a subversive propaganda, the latter with financial imperialism'. See his 'Whither British Foreign Policy?', *The Empire Review*, Vol. 1, no. 344 (September 1929), 192.

23. Bevin's outlook is revealed in Alan Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin*, Vol. 1, *Trade Union Leader, 1881-1940* (London 1960), 362; *Report of*

Evidence (London 1931), I., Q.555. A glimpse of Norman's and Baldwin's outlook is provided in Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, ed. Keith Middlemas, 2 vols. (London 1969), I. 177. It is noteworthy that Baldwin chaired the cabinet meeting in 1928 which authorized investigation of the dangers to 'vital national interests' from American capital control of British enterprise. See Cabinet conclusions, 13 March 1928, PRO CAB 23/57: 14(28)5.

24. Hansard, Fifth Series, Vol. 229, cols. 225-6 and 476-7; *Ibid.*, Vol. 230, col. 1055.

25. Graham memorandum, 15 July 1929, PRO, CAB 24/205: CP209(29).

26. Even MacDonald betrayed ambivalent feelings towards American power, as indicated by the fact that the first issue to which he directed the new Economic Advisory Council was the threat to British security posed by American direct investment in British industry. See conclusions, 17 February 1930, PRO, CAB 58/2: EAC/1st Mtg.

27. Minutes by Craigie, Lindsay, Wellesley, Henderson, 12 July 1929, PRO, FO 371/13537: A4956/139/45: conclusions, 23 July 1929, PRO CAB 23/61: 29(29)25.

28. Tyrrell letter to Henderson, 29 July 1929, PRO, FO 800/284.

29. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1929*, Records of the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Plenary Minutes, 79-81.

30. *Ibid.*, 48; League of Nations, *Official Journal 1929*, Records of the Tenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly. Minutes of the Second Committee, 20, 22, 25-7, 32-3.

31. 'Résumé de l'échange de vues qui a eu lieu à l'issue du déjeuner offert le 9 septembre par M. Briand aux représentants des Etats européens à la SDN'; France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, carton 1253, no. 1.

32. 'Note pour M. Massigli', 2 September 1929, *ibid.*

33. The state of Foreign Office intelligence is indicated by the background paper prepared in the Office library for the Foreign Secretary, 'Proposals for securing economic and political unity in Europe', 24 July 1929, PRO, FO 371/14134, W7294/6739/98.

34. Compare Freymond, XIII; Sir Alfred Mond, *Industry and Politics* (London 1927) 276.

35. Jean Schlumberger, and Robert Meyer, *Emile Mayrisch. Précurseur de la construction de l'Europe* (Lausanne 1967); Jacques de Launay, *Emile Mayrisch et la politique du patronat* (Bruxelles 1965).

36. Cf. *L'Europe de Demain*. Official organ of the French section of the Union. *L'Union scandinave*, an organization dedicated to the creation of a 'United States of European nations within the framework of the League of Nations', boasted an equally impressive French 'committee of co-operation'. Its committee of honour was presided over by Gaston Doumergue, President of the Republic, and included MM. Barthou, Bouisson, Briand, Cailloux, Paul Doumer, Herriot, Leygues, Marsal, and Painlevé; its management committee included Leon Jouhaux, Theo Laurent, Henri Lichtenberger, de Peyerimhoff, Albert Thomas, Joseph Barthélémy, Yvon Delbos, Flandin, Renaudel, Rollin, and Loucheur.

37. Morinosuke Kajima, Jacques de Launay, Vittorio Pons, and Arnold Zürcher, *Coudenhove-Kalergi. Le Pionnier de l'Europe Unie* (Lausanne 1971); Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, *An Idea Conquers the World* (London 1953), 148-9.

38. Minute by A. W. A. Leeper, 8 May 1930, PRO, FO 371/14366, C3439/230/18.

39. E. H. Carr, then a member of the central department, repeatedly dismissed Briand's talk of European unity as 'hot air', 'clap-trap', and 'eye-wash'. See Carr minutes, 9 January 1930, PRO, FO371/14365; C230/230/18; 2 April 1930; PRO, FO371/14365: C2356/230/18.

40. Tyrrell minute, 2 October 1926, PRO, FO371/11246; C10417/10417/62.

41. *The Times*, 15 March 1928.

42. Tyrrell minute, 21 March 1928, PRO, FO371/12900, C2116/652/18.

43. Tyrrell letter to Henderson, 30 October 1929, PRO, FO800/284.

44. Tyrrell despatch to Henderson, no. 3, 8 January 1930, PRO, FO371/14365; C230/230/18.

45. Tyrrell letter to Vansittart, 28 January 1930, PRO, FO371/14365; C1002/230/18. Serruys, an authority on Byzantine history, had negotiated the Franco-German commercial treaty of 1927, and participated actively in discussion on the future of the most-favoured-nation principle as member and latterly chairman of the League economic committee. Resigning from public service in 1928, he had joined the investment bankers Lazard Frères and Citroën.

46. Vansittart letter to Tyrrell, 3 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C2116/653/18; Tyrrell letter to Vansittart, 11 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C1234/230/18.

47. Tyrrell despatch to Henderson, no. 26, 13 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14951: W.1602/17/98.

48. *The Times*, 1 March 1930.

49. Sargent letter to Tyrrell, 26 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C1234/230/18.

50. League of Nations, 'Proceedings of the Preliminary Conference with a view to Concerted Economic Action, 17 February-24 March 1930', C.222M.109.II., 90, 94, 103, 107, 110, 113, 114, 151, 156, 294.

51. Fountain letter to Foreign Office, 30 April 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C3359/230/18.

52. *The Times*, 26 March 1930.

53. Tyrrell despatch to Henderson, no. 319, 25 March 1930, PRO, FO371/14952: W3103/17/98.

54. *The Times*, 25 March 1930.

55. Rumbold despatch to Henderson, no. 254, 3 April 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C2694/230/18. See also Rumbold despatch to Henderson, 11 October 1929, PRO, FO371/13630: C7801/299/18; Rumbold letter to Sargent, 28 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C1753/230/18; Rumbold despatch to Henderson, no. 190, 14 March 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C2545/230/18.

56. Rumbold letter to Sargent, 13 February 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C1358/230/18.

57. Graham despatch to Henderson, no. 187, 14 March 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C2355/230/18.

58. *European Finance*, 28 February 1930, 136.

59. Rumbold despatch to Henderson, no. 214, 24 March 1930, PRO, FO371/14365: C2356/230/18.

60. Rumbold despatch to Henderson, no. 333, 29 April 1930, PRO, FO371/14366, C3438/230/18.

61. United Kingdom, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, Second series, Vol. 1, no. 303, Rumbold despatch to Henderson, no. 347, 2 May 1930.
62. Campbell letter to Vansittart, 6 May 1930, FO371/14366: C3561/230/18.
63. See, for instance, Tyrrell letter to Henderson, 28 March 1930, PRO, FO 800/281; Tyrrell despatch to Henderson, no. 411, 11 April 1930, PRO, FO 371/14365: C2841/230/18.
64. Howard Smith memorandum, 6 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14980: W5193/451/98; 'Discussion between Mr. Henderson and M. Briand at the Quai d'Orsay on May 9th, 1930', minute dated 10 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14980: W4922/451/98.
65. A. W. Cordier, *European Union and the League of Nations* (Geneva 1931), 5.
66. De Margerie to Briand, nos. 444-9, 19 May 1930, France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, carton 1253, no. 2. On the previous day, Serruys had spoken to the Mayrisch committee in Heidelberg on the implications of Briand's proposals for France and Germany, L'Huillier, 98.
67. Leeper minute, 21 May 1930, and Sargent minute, 25 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14980: W5111/451/98.
68. Compare Fouques-Duparc letter, 14 April 1930, and 'Note', undated but probably drafted about the end of April 1930, France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, carton 1253, no. 1.
69. Leeper memorandum, 30 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14981: W5585/451/98.
70. Noel-Baker minute, 26 May 1930, Cecil minute to Henderson, PRO, FO371/14981: W5336/451/98.
71. Memorandum from League of Nations Union, 23 May 1930, and League of Nations Union memorandum to Henderson, 20 June 1930, PRO, FO800/281.
72. Salter letter to Noel-Baker, 22 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14982: W5805/451/98.
73. Howard Smith minute, 5 June 1930, PRO, FO371/14982: W5805/451/98.
74. 'Disappointments at the I.L.O.', *The Industrial Review*, July 1930, 15-16.
75. Board of Trade memorandum, 5 April 1930, PRO, BT11/234.
76. Grigg letter and treasury memorandum to Selby, 11 July 1930, and Thomas letter to MacDonald, 10 July 1930, PRO, FO371/14983, W7203/451/98.
77. Conclusions, 16 July 1930, CAB23/64 PRO: 41 (30) 8; Vansittart memorandum to de Fleuriau, 16 July 1930, PRO, FO371/14983: W7204/451/98.
78. Noel-Baker minute, 13 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14980: W5079/451/98.
79. Norton minute, 19 May 1930, PRO, FO371/14980: W5192/451/98.
80. Mallet minute, 10 June 1930, PRO, FO371/14982: W5919/451/98.
81. Kennard despatch to Henderson no. 174, 17 June 1930. Minute by Vansittart, 30 June, 1930, PRO, FO371/14982: W6386/451/98.
82. British Library, Cecil MSS, 51, 081, Cecil letter to MacDonald, 18 August 1930.
83. 'Conférence tenue à Genève sur l'Organisation d'un Régime d'Union Fédérale Européenne', 8 September 1930, France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, carton 1254, no. 4. Cadogan telegram to Foreign Office, no. 45LN, 9 September 1930, PRO, FO371/14984: W9214/451/98.
84. British Library, Cecil MSS, 51, 081, Cecil minute to Henderson, 9 September 1930.
85. British Library, Cecil MSS, 51, 081, Cecil letter to Henderson, 11 September 1930.

86. Coudenhove-Kalergi, op. cit., 114. According to Dalton, however, by September 1930 Drummond was prepared to leave Briand's plan in European hands since 'he thinks it is bound to come to nothing, and doesn't want the discredit to fall on the League.' British Library of Political and Economic Science, Dalton MSS, entry of 7/9-1/10/30 in diary of 28/8/29-27/3/31. See also Ralph T. White, 'Regionalism Vs Universalism in the League of Nations. A Study of "Pan-Europeanism" and the League Secretariat between 1925 and 1930, based on material in the League Archives at Geneva', *Annales d'Etudes Internationales*, 1 (1970), 88-114.

87. P. J. V. Rolo, *Britain and the Briand Plan: The Common Market that never was* (Keele 1972).

88. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1930*, Records of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly. Plenary Minutes, 37-9.

89. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1930*, Records of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly. Minutes of the Second Committee, 23.

90. *Ibid.*, 54-5, also 87, 88.

91. *Ibid.*, 83.

92. League of Nations, *Official Journal 1930*, Records of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly. Plenary Minutes, 183-6.

93. League of Nations, note by the Secretary-General, "Resolutions Adopted at the 2nd Session of the Commission (January 16th-21st, 1931)", 22 January 1931, C.114.M.41.1931.VII.C.E.U.E.12.

94. Howard Smith minute, 13 February 1931, PRO, FO371/15694: W1649/7/98.

95. This was clearly acknowledged by Dr. Peter Munch, Danish Foreign Minister and delegate to the assembly. See Peter Munch, *La Politique de Danemark dans la SdN* (Geneva 1931), 42. On Britain's importance in European trade see, Heinrich Liepmann, *Tariff Levels and the Economic Unity of Europe*, translated by H. Stening (London 1938).

96. Tyrrell despatch to Henderson, no. 784, PRO, FO371/14366: C5529/230/18; Campbell despatch to Henderson, no. 930, 13 August 1930, PRO, FO 371/14366: C6393/230/18.

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