COMMUNICATIONS

STRESEMANN'S DIPLOMACY FIFTY YEARS AFTER LOCARNO: SOME RECENT PERSPECTIVES*

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Those who cherish the tradition of definitive biographies must be frustrated by the status of recent Stresemann scholarship. Over fifty years have passed since the Locarno Pact of October 1925, yet our picture of its acknowledged initiator remains far from clear. No definitive or scholarly and comprehensive biography of Gustav Stresemann graces the bursting library shelves on German history. Until the 1950s the relative dearth of scholarly comment on the 'secret Chancellor' and longtime Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic was understandable. The source materials were visibly incomplete and unreliable. Nor did the release of Stresemann's voluminous personal papers, the Nachlass, solve the problem. For the 80-odd microfilmed rolls of the Nachlass gave only partial insight; still unavailable for a time were the comprehensive records of the German Foreign Ministry. Moreover, the earlier paucity of adequate materials had not prevented the establishment of a Stresemann 'legend'. This legend was neither one-dimensional nor entirely untenable, given available sources. It also received official sanction from various quarters in West Germany. Stresemann, like Napoleon and Bismarck whom he admired, did not easily pass from politics into history. As a result, the Nachlass-based and scholarly, but circumscribed, monographic case studies of the 1950s added as much controversy and complexity as clarity. Some authors still find it necessary to resurrect or beat some of the dead horses of that era.

A main reason for the continued controversy has been the persistence of the monographic method evolved during the 1950s. This method prevailed primarily because the sheer bulk of the Foreign Ministry records as well as additional sources pertinent to the domestic matrix of Stresemann's foreign policy demanded monographic caution. The immense Foreign Ministry collection contains nearly all the records of German foreign policy over the active six-year span of Stresemann's tenure as Foreign Minister (1923-9); the domestic collections are multiform, ample, and still growing. This intimidating mass predictably discouraged comprehensive efforts while encouraging special studies. Possibly the reward system of western scholarship influenced the trend. In any event, the 1960s contributed a mountain of documentation and a spate of monographic scholar-

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ship. No wonder that Hans Gatzke, in a review of this vast primary and secondary literature in 1964, sighed, 'Where once there was too little, there is now too much.'

Gatzke's review article summarized the bibliographical status of Stresemann scholarship until the mid-1960s. It is updated to a certain extent by the Stresemann-Bibliographie published by Martin Walsdorff in 1972 as well as the bibliographical review of Werner Weidenfeld published in Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht in December 1973. Taken together, the three bibliographical tools allow two major observations, one methodological and the other substantive. First, to overcome the monographic plethora, it seems essential for scholars to publish periodic and hopefully dispassionate reviews of the current state of the literature. The need for this can be illustrated in several ways. Walsdorff's valuable but far from exhaustive Bibliographie, for example, lists no less than 1500 published items on or by Stresemann between 1898 and 1970, but the 70-odd items since Gatzke's essay have not received a comprehensive review. Yet they and the subsequent literature clearly merit bibliographic summary so that lacunae, areas of consensus, remaining problems and trends can be identified. Gatzke, for instance, pointed out in 1964 that by contrast to numerous studies on Stresemann's eastern -- and especially Russian -- policies, no comparable studies existed on his western policies. By 1972, however, more than a half dozen significant monographs pertinent to Stresemann's western policies had appeared. These studies not only filled gaps but also challenged traditional interpretations. Given the quantity of the literature, it would be a service to have them reviewed and placed into a proper historiographical context. Similarly, it is necessary to acquaint scholars with changing perspectives on Stresemann's domestic role since the publication of Henry Ashby Turner's pioneering Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic in 1963. At least two factors suggest this need. First, to a generation acquainted with the work of Arno Mayer, the nexus between domestic and foreign policy has surely become axiomatic; and secondly, our interpretation of liberalism, and Stresemann's liberalism in particular, seems to be undergoing changes, as the studies of Lothar Döhn, Larry E. Jones and Michael-Olaf Maxelon tend to suggest.

Several additional topics would benefit from bibliographical clarification, and since bibliographical tools must be examined for scholarly areas of omission as well as commission, the topic of economics suggests itself at first glance. For while Stresemann's larger economic aims have been sketched and variously touched

4 Lothar Döhn, Politik und Interesse: Die Interessenstruktur der Deutschen Volkspartei (Meisenheim, 1970); Larry E. Jones, 'Gustav Stresemann and the crisis of German liberalism', European Studies Review 4, 2 (1975), 141–63; and Michael Olaf Maxelon, Stresemann und Frankreich 1914–1929: Deutsche Politik der Ost-West Balance (Düsseldorf, 1972). Both Döhn, and Jones underscore the nationalistic ingredient in Stresemann's liberalism; Maxelon differentiates Stresemann's World War I nationalism from that of others by placing it under the rubric 'liberal imperialism'.
upon, the reader of Gatzke, Walsdorff, and Weidenfeld cannot but notice the virtual absence of systematic or comprehensive accounts of the Foreign Minister's economic policies. This is curious in view of Stresemann's origins and his early vocation as a business lobbyist. It is also curious in view of his repeatedly voiced trust in the German economic potential as a means to restoration as well as the manifest financial and tariff difficulties which beset Europe in the 1920s. Specifically, there is no comprehensive study of Weimar Germany's *Handelspolitik*, its trade or commercial policy towards a dozen nations. Perhaps economics is not the *métier* of diplomatic historians, but the approach of certain economic historians has not helped spur inquiry. In his brilliant *Unbound Prometheus* of 1969, for example, David Landes portrays economic relations in the 1920s as victimized by politics, adding: 'What was needed was a higher altruism that would have paved the way for compromises that, although diminishing the advantage of each [nation], would have enhanced the general welfare.' The statement probably identifies the paradigmatic problem of the nation-state, but its wishful thinking - so typical of much writing on the 1920s - is no substitute for solid studies on national economic policy.

Periodic bibliographical reviews, of course, are fraught with subjective dangers. The reviewer may cut through the mass of information but tilt the interpretation. Any review by Gatzke, for example, may be suspect because he was, along with Annelise Thimme, in the forefront of those who challenged the Stresemann legend in the 1950s. But a partial solution to this problem is suggested by Weidenfeld's article. The new source material of the 1960s contained the typed record of five crucially important speeches by Stresemann to the Central Committee of his party, the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP), in 1924, 1925, 1926, 1927 and 1929. Gatzke was evidently unaware of these speeches, but Turner discovered them and - correctly evaluating their importance - published the 1925 speech with annotation in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* of 1967. Why are these speeches so significant? Because here, in the confidential atmosphere of party leaders who largely shared his views on foreign policy, Stresemann poured his heart out with unusual candour. Weidenfeld properly apprises readers of their importance and utilizes them for his conclusions. Elsewhere he and Klaus Megerle...

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7 Henry Ashby Turner, 'Eine Rede Stresemanns über seine Locarnopolitik (Dokumentation)', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, xv, 4 (Oct. 1967), 412-36. The importance of this speech, as Turner notes in his commentary, is at least partly that Stresemann here identified general principles underlying his foreign policy. Rather pointedly, for example, he committed himself to the principle *rebus sic stantibus* which E. H. Carr has usefully defined as meaning that 'the obligations of a treaty were binding in international law so long as the conditions prevailing at the time of the conclusions of the treaty continued, and no longer'. (E. H. Carr, *The twenty years' crisis 1919-1939: an introduction to the study of international relations* (New York, 1964; orig. pub. 1939), p. 182.)
point out how much the speeches amend our understanding of Stresemann, taking us beyond the acrimonious myopia of the 1950s debate over Stresemann's famous Crown Prince letter.8 The fact that some recent Stresemann studies still fail to integrate these speeches and other new sources suggests the wisdom of reviewing significant primary sources or publishing them with annotation.9 The latter approach, incidentally, has been effectively employed by the East German scholar Wolfgang Ruge, whose work continues to be useful despite its ideological animus.10

Given the critical spirit and initiative of historians, it is doubtful whether periodic bibliographic re-examinations would stifle research and interpretation. Nor is it likely that enterprising scholars will accept Christoph Kimmich's sober statement that Stresemann's complexity means 'no judgment on him will ever be final'.11 Primarily, conscientious bibliographical reviews would spare scholars the stultifying intellectual and physical task – so painfully evident in much recent scholarship – of contending with dated, transient (zeitgebundene), or settled issues. A certain 'movement' would be restored to the historiography, allowing historians to address the new problématique posed by fifty years of perspective and to respond to contemporary questions.

This brings us to the second and more substantive point which emerges from the recent bibliographical works. It is that the partial resolution of certain traditional issues has produced new interpretations and posed new problems. In 1964, Gatzke asserted somewhat cautiously: 'Very few scholars still believe that Stresemann underwent a radical change from German nationalist to champion of European integration.' Nine years later, Weidenfeld echoed this evaluation with far greater certainty. Reflecting the impact of the intervening literature, Weidenfeld wrote: 'His policy was not dedicated to integration, but to international cooperation in order to re-acquire the relevant world-political position of Germany.' In other words, the legend of Stresemann, the good European, has been jettisoned by most scholars, and it is now widely recognized that his cooperative policies cloaked the deeper purpose of restoring German power. The decidedly instrumental character of Stresemann's cooperative diplomacy has been carefully traced in five recent books by Weidenfeld, Maxelon, Walsdorff, Jacobson, and Megerle.12 These studies do not focus upon the elusive question

9 An example is the article by Robert Grathwol, 'Gustav Stresemann: reflections on his foreign policy', The Journal of Modern History xxiv, 1 (March 1973), 52–70. Grathwol's article reveals a most selective and incomplete integration of recent primary and secondary sources; in this respect it compares rather unfavourably with Weidenfeld's and Megerle's contributions of the same year. The article may be considered the most recent spirited defence of the traditional portrait of a Stresemann who 'richly deserved' the Nobel peace prize.
11 Christoph M. Kimmich, The Free City: Danzig and German foreign policy 1919–1934 (New Haven, 1968), p. 68. The use of this quotation is not intended to take away from Kimmich's competent and useful study.
12 Weidenfeld, Die Englandpolitik Gustav Stresemanns; Maxelon, Stresemann und Frankreich 1914–1929; Martin Walsdorff, Westorientierung und Ostpolitik: Stresemanns Russlandpolitik in
of the Foreign Minister's long-range goals. They are not primarily based on Stresemann's diverse declarations. Rather, they examine the day-to-day motives and actions of Stresemann and the Wilhelmstrasse vis-à-vis Britain, France, Russia, and the Locarno powers generally. To those who have long suspected that Stresemann's politics were lifted out of the authentic context of his time, the conclusions reached are not surprising: Dawes Plan, Locarno, Berlin Treaty, League of Nations, Young Plan, and virtually all the important 'stations' of 1920s diplomacy were viewed by Berlin as potential instruments for Germany's restoration of power.13

Berlin deemed international cooperation as both necessary and desirable. It was necessary because Germany, especially between 1923 and 1925, was woefully isolated, economically troubled, and disarmed. It was desirable because German re-entry into the comity of Great Powers could not help but promote an environment favorable to German revisionist aims. Locarno, Stresemann hoped, would preserve and strengthen German sovereignty while opening up diplomatic 'prospects', particularly in the East.14 Yet the instrumental purpose of Stresemann's policy of cooperation is demonstrated not by his hopes, but by the range and persistence of German public and private revisionist objectives. Weidenfeld's review furnishes an accessible, if slightly incomplete, list of these objectives. Since they are not fully appreciated, they merit a brief listing here:15

(1) Revision of the Dawes Plan.
(2) End of the Allied Rhineland occupation.
(3) Withdrawal of the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission.
(4) Revision of the eastern boundary settlement of Versailles.
(5) An early return to the Saar.
(6) The attainment of colonies.
(7) Anschluss with Austria.
(8) The return of Eupen-Malmedy from Belgium.
(9) Defense and support of German minorities abroad.

der Locarno-Ara (Bremen, 1921); Jon Jacobson, Locarno diplomacy: Germany and the West 1925-1929 (Princeton, N.J., 1972); Megerle, Deutsche Aussenpolitik 1925.

13 The Wilhelmstrasse's motives for signing the Kellogg-Briand Pact have now been examined by Peter Krüger, 'Friedenssicherung und deutsche Revisionspolitik: die deutsche Aussenpolitik und die Verhandlungen über den Kellog-Pakt', Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, XXII, 3 (July 1974), 227-57. Krüger detects a modification in Germany's revisionist policy at this point.


These nine revisionist objectives of the Foreign Minister, when added to his sanction of secret German rearmament, suggest that he sought nothing less than the restoration of Germany’s pre-war Weltmacht. Naturally he neither pursued them simultaneously nor with equal devotion. But the point is that he pursued revision whenever possible, keeping his objectives before Allied and German eyes while simultaneously maintaining the sincerity of the policy of international cooperation. Moreover, during 1925 and 1926 Stresemann seemed genuinely convinced that cooperation with the Allies would produce the desired results. At this point two questions need to be asked in order to come closer to the Stresemann problématique as it emerges from present-day scholarship. First, was Stresemann’s simultaneously cooperative and revisionist policy realistic and viable? And secondly, was this policy necessary for domestic reasons?

Two recent authors charge that the Foreign Minister overestimated the benefits to be obtained by the policy of cooperation, and specifically the benefits of Locarno. In his Memoirs of 1968, Stresemann’s close political associate Werner Freiherr von Rheinbaben suggests that as the Foreign Minister increasingly fell under the spell of the bureaucracy of the Wilhelmstrasse, he gave too much credence to the so-called Rückwirkungen (beneficial repercussions) of Locarno as well as the effects of the vaunted ‘esprit de Locarno’. The thesis is essentially accepted and augmented by Walsdorff in his study of Stresemann’s Russian policy during the Locarno era, published in 1971. Walsdorff states that Stresemann overestimated the revisionist potential of Locarno and needlessly wasted his energies in the pursuit of the elusive Rückwirkungen. He blames Stresemann’s excessive optimism, adding that it had the additionally deleterious effect of furnishing nationalists with oppositional ammunition when the Rückwirkungen failed to materialize. Rheinbaben implies, and Walsdorff states, that contrary to the Foreign Minister’s expectations, Locarno deprived him of leverage with which to press the Allies for concessions.

The thesis that Locarno was a fateful miscalculation merits serious attention. It does, however, contain one major flaw. Both Rheinbaben and Walsdorff downgrade the defensive origins and achievements of the German security pact offer. In suggesting that Locarno did not ‘pay off’, Walsdorff forgets that Locarno succeeded as a diplomatic counter-offensive. For Germany’s security pact offer was more than an effort to integrate the Reich with the west in order to gain revisionist objectives. The German overture of early 1925 was also a defensive response to threatening international developments. As such it helped to checkmate the prospect of the Geneva Protocol, the Allied non-evacuation of the (Cologne) Rhineland zone, and the possibility of an Anglo-French-Belgian entente régionale. What proved to be problematical was Stresemann’s optimistic expectation that Locarno would serve as an instrument for the slow (schrittweise) revision of the Versailles Treaty. Nationalist critics challenged the assumption that Locarno enhanced German chances of obtaining an early Rhineland evacuation and the retrocession of former German territories. By the fall of 1925, however, Stresemann had begun to believe that Germany’s new credibility, its

revived economic potential, as well as the sympathetic attitude of Allied statesmen would aid the revisionist project. For another year, optimism seemed justifiable. The Allies modified their occupational regimes after Locarno; the Eastern boundaries had been consigned to second-class status by Locarno; severe financial difficulties troubled Poland, France, and Belgium; there were signs that Belgium might consent to a retrocession of Eupen-Malmédy; Germany's League entry and improved economic posture strengthened its international leverage, and in January 1927 the irritating Inter-Allied Military Control Commission was quietly withdrawn.

German revisionist activity in this period became intensive and far-ranging. It included the mention of colonial aims, demands for an immediate Rhineland evacuation, and – to mention a subject of recent research interest – serious efforts to regain Eupen-Malmédy from Belgium in return for financial concessions. The cost of re-purchasing Eupen-Malmédy, Stresemann confided to an audience in December, 1925, did not matter as long as the initial revision of Versailles was achieved. Specifically, he intended to use the precedent of Eupen-Malmédy as a lever to push for the revision of Germany's eastern boundaries. He tried to disguise this intention, of course. Stressing the cooperative ideal, he portrayed the return of Eupen-Malmédy to Lord D'Abernon as a potential triumph of the Locarno-Politik which could only be welcomed by London. But the Allies soon learned better. By mid-1926, they knew that Stresemann's policy of cooperation cloaked the determination to undermine the status quo. 'The Reich', Poincaré wrote to Briand, 'tries to take advantage of the temporary financial difficulties of the Allies in order to demolish one by one, all the conditions of the peace treaty. We should not tolerate it, and I am determined to oppose it most categorically.'

Important contributions to the origins of Locarno are: F. G. Stambrook, "Das Kind" - Lord D'Abernon and the origins of the Locarno pact', Central European History, 1, 3 (Sept. 1968), 233–63; Jacobson, Locarno diplomacy, esp. p. 40; and Megerle, Deutsche aussenpolitik 1925. See also the accessible Gustav Stresemann, Schriften ed. by Arnold Harttung (Berlin, 1976), pp. 304–91.


Strengthened by financial stabilization, France and Belgium retreated from cooperation. By 1927 the Locarno spirit, as Jacobson shows persuasively, dried up. ‘Germany’, Austen Chamberlain noted in 1929, ‘was still restless, still prone to suggest that her good behaviour must constantly be bought by fresh concessions.’

The pathos of Stresemann’s last year has often been shown. Seriously ill and deeply embittered, he lashed out at the Allies in an interview with the British journalist Bruce Lockhart in April 1929: ‘It is five years since we signed Locarno. If you had given me one concession, I could have carried my people. I could still do it today, but you have given me nothing, and the trifling concessions which you have made have always come too late.’ These words, of course, strongly support the thesis of Locarno as a fateful miscalculation. But it is important to emphasize what Rheinbaben and Walsdorff tend to neglect, namely that Locarno succeeded in its defensive purpose; Stresemann’s subsequent miscalculation was his belief that Locarno would permit a steady and painless revision of Versailles. Given the realities of European power politics, however, the German Foreign Minister’s optimism is puzzling. Was he ‘taken in’ by Briand or D’Abernon? Did he place excessive trust in the ‘experts’ of the Wilhelmstrasse or the lure of Germany’s economic potential? Did he seriously believe that the strategem of Eupen-Malmedy would escape the scrutiny of London, Paris, and Warsaw? Was he so dazzled by the great revisionist project as to overlook that periodic Allied concessions did not mean that they welcomed a powerful Germany, a Germany which remained a world power despite the restrictions of Versailles? And why did Stresemann fail to understand that German revisionist claims and activities tended to reduce Allied readiness to make concessions to the Reich?

These questions clearly require the attention of historians, and since it is frequently asserted that Weimar politics dictated Stresemann’s revisionism, they bring us directly to the domestic matrix of the Foreign Minister’s policies. Despite an abundance of opinion, the precise nexus between domestic politics and Stresemann’s foreign policy has not been fully clarified. The most recent scholarship does allow some observations, however. In particular, there is little doubt that Stresemann resented the chiliasm of his nationalist opponents and their noisy demand for the ‘daily bread’ of foreign policy successes. But those who stress the nationalist pressure on the Foreign Minister ignore three crucial factors. First, Stresemann shared many of the nationalist objectives, disputing primarily the practicality of their programme. Secondly he assiduously used the nationalist ballyhoo to persuade the Allies of the need for concessions. This point,


26 See for example, ‘Sitzungen des Zentralvorstandes der DVP’, Köln, 1 October 1926, _Bundesarchiv_, Koblenz, R45 II/41. In this speech to his party, Stresemann complained bitterly about the ‘eternal scorn and ridicule’ aimed at his policies, ‘from Monday through Sunday’, with the question always being: ‘was hast du in dieser Woche nach Hause gebracht?’.
noted by Michael Stürmer,\textsuperscript{27} may partly explain why he failed to ‘educate’ the ‘national opposition’ towards greater practicability – a fact bemoaned by the Berliner Tageblatt as early as September, 1925.\textsuperscript{28} In this connexion, an observation of the left-liberal journalist Ernst Feder seems relevant. At a Bierabend in Geneva following the German League entry in September, 1926, Stresemann sharply attacked the Right. But, Feder recorded, he spoke ‘like a disappointed lover who still hopes for the return of the bride’.\textsuperscript{29} Those who assert that domestic forces necessitated Stresemann’s brand of revisionism ignore a third factor. It is that the Foreign Minister and his party occupied a position of considerable power within the Weimar spectrum. Stürmer notes that Stresemann’s ‘supporters ranged from the trade unions and the SPD to his own DVP and [the] German export industry’. He adds that between 1924 and 1928 Stresemann ‘could pursue his policies without really having to bother about the views of half of his cabinet colleagues’. Thus it may be argued that while the public and cooperative policies of the Foreign Minister were necessary to maintain his domestic base of support, the private and revisionist schemes were largely unnecessary and perhaps even deleterious.

The argument that the political matrix did not compel much of the revisionist policy of the ‘secret Chancellor’ of the Weimar Republic merits serious consideration. To be sure, many historians have accepted Stresemann’s suggestion in 1929 that the coming catastrophe could only be averted through Allied diplomatic concessions. But the thesis that timely foreign policy successes would have saved Weimer Germany is both suspect and open to challenge.\textsuperscript{30} Erich Matthias has recently questioned the thesis because it is simplistic, exonerates the domestic participants of the ‘improvised Republic’ and ‘explains the collapse of the Weimer constitution by referring exclusively to external factors which interfered with political life inside the country’.\textsuperscript{31} He might have added that the thesis also tends to exonerate Stresemann. In any event, Matthias concludes by stating that it was a ‘dangerous illusion’ for Stresemann (and especially Brünинг) to think ‘that the success of the policy of revision would act as a counterforce to the attacks of the nationalists on the Republic and would result in a consolidation of the domestic situation’. Agreeing basically with the classic contemporary judgement of Arthur Rosenberg, Matthias suggests that it was not primarily foreign policy concerns but economic and political weaknesses that paved the way for Hitler.


\textsuperscript{30} Most prominently, the thesis is stated in Ludwig Zimmermann, \textit{Deutsche Aussenpolitik in der Weimarer Republik} (Göttingen, 1928), p. 474. An earlier, more qualified, version appears in Hajo Holborn, \textit{The Political collapse of Europe} (New York, 1951), p. 131; and a more recent partial restatement of it was made by von Rheinbaben in \textit{Locarno und die Weltpolitik 1924–1932}, ed. Hellmuth Rössler and Erwin Hölzle (Göttingen, 1969), pp. 50–1. All the authors may be regarded as ‘survivors’ of the Weimar Republic.

Stresemann, of course, as we know from Turner's study, had tended to neglect domestic politics since 1924. But while Turner calls this 'his great failing',\(^3\) the full reasons for Stresemann's choice of arenas remain unclear. In various ways, Turner, Stürmer, Maxelon and Döhn imply or state that the Foreign Minister was captivated by the *Privat der Aussenpolitik* (primacy of foreign policy) as an instrument for resolving domestic problems. The thesis is persuasive, but it cannot be proven conclusively except in connection with a careful and comprehensive study of the domestic impulses behind Stresemann's foreign policy. The need for such a study is illustrated by the unresolved tension of Jacobson's able *Locarno Diplomacy*: on the one hand, Jacobson traces the domestic impulses of Stresemann's policies, and on the other he asserts that the Foreign Minister was essentially free to act on his own. No doubt there is room for further studies of Stresemann's diplomatic and economic policies. In particular, now that the European archives are opening up, specific Allied responses to Stresemann's policies must be examined. Perhaps historians should take the 'methodological leap' of examining the Foreign Minister's diplomatic language (language analysis) or the psychological condition of a statesman plagued by intermittent illness (psychohistory). But the major task of historians or biographers seems to be to settle the vexing issue of the impelling forces behind Stresemann's foreign policy. For it seems increasingly clear that the Foreign Minister contributed both to the viable international equilibrium which accompanied the 'recasting of bourgeois Europe' in the 1920s,\(^3\) and to the demise of that equilibrium. This last point, finally, requires a brief discussion of Stresemann's place in the 'continuity' of German history.

The 'continuity' question, spurred by the Fischer controversy and the critical thrust of much recent Stresemann scholarship, is exceedingly complex and controversial. Three basic historiographical positions may be sketched for the sake of brevity. First, there is the view of Wolfgang Ruge of East Germany. Charging that West German politicians and scholars fashioned a positive model of Stresemann to prove the existence of pacific traditions in 'imperialist' Germany, Ruge asserts that Stresemann's foreign policy aimed 'unquestionably toward the long-term preparation of a war of aggression...'.\(^3\) Elsewhere, Ruge states that Stresemann and Hitler, 'after all', embodied different phases of the imperialist drive for power.\(^3\) The problem with this thesis is that neither a consciously aggressive Stresemann, nor the necessary continuity between Stresemann and Hitler can be demonstrated conclusively. Ruge's work illustrates how easily the 'revision' of a legend may lead to the creation of a new one. Ruge's opponents, on the other hand, underline the fact of Stresemann's peaceful policies, denying or minimizing any continuity between Stresemann and Hitler. Turner, for example, has presented the hypothetical model of a Stresemann who,


\(^3\) Wolfgang Ruge, 'Stresemann – ein Leitbild?', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik*, xiv (1969), 473. It may be interesting to note that not only Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, as Ruge points out, have commented favourably on Stresemann; Franz-Josef Strauss, too, in his 'Foreword' to Rheinbaben's *Memoirs* (see above, footnote 16) has made positive remarks.

had he lived, 'would have' prevented Hitler and 'would have' conducted very different policies.36 There are two obvious problems with this position. First, circumstances demanded that the Foreign Minister's policies be pacific; since he had no choice in the matter, the fact that his policies were peaceful tells us very little.37 Secondly, Stresemann's premature death in 1929 makes any conjecture about what 'would have' happened had he lived hypothetical. Referring to Turner's repudiation of Rugean conjectures as 'counterfactual', Istvan Deak quite properly criticized Turner: 'I am not sure if one counterfactual hypothesis is preferrable to another.'38

A third position is implied in Maxelon's Stresemann und Frankreich. Maxelon, who as a student of Andreas Hillgruber is particularly aware of the question of German continuities,39 touches on what Karl Popper has called 'the unintended social repercussions of intentional human actions'.40 That is: notwithstanding his own intentions, Stresemann's diplomacy, by keeping alive German revisionist aims and frustrations, contributed to the Nazi seizure of power and to the Nazi foreign policy programme.41 This is not a conspiracy thesis which stresses malice and invents unintended 'designs'. Rather, it takes account of the fact that demands for territorial revision 'were the most constant source of international unrest between the wars . . .',42 and that Stresemann's revisionism contributed to the continuity of this unrest. The potential danger of the Foreign Minister's revisionism, especially with regard to the east, was recognized by at least one contemporary. Writing in the Weltbühne in January 1929, the satirist Kurt Tucholsky depicted a drunk who happened to bump into Stresemann in the Wilhelmstrasse. In a thick Berlin dialect, the drunk inflicted the following short foreign policy lecture upon 'Justav', his supposed listener:43

Wer denkt denn schon en den dämmlichen Korridor, wenn ihr nich imma mecht son Jeschrei davon machen? Natierlich is a vakehrt - weil janz Europa vakehrt is. Aba meinste,  

36 Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., 'Stresemann and the problem of continuity in German foreign policy', paper read before the Georgetown History Forum, 11 October 1975.  
38 This was, I believe, the central point of Deak's critique of Turner's remarks at the Georgetown History Forum, 11 October 1975.  
40 Karl R. Popper, 'Prediction and prophecy in the social sciences', in Theories of history, ed. by Patrick Gardiner (Glencoe, Ill., 1951) p. 281. I am indebted to my colleague George M. Dennison for pointing out this quotation.  
41 See Maxelon, Stresemann und Frankreich, p. 298. My statement derives from Maxelon's somewhat more complex and less direct last sentences, which read: 'Vielleicht hätte er [den Krieg bejaht], vielleicht hätte er aber auch Hitler und folglich den Zweiten Weltkrieg verhindert. Nicht verhindern konnte er allerdings, dass gerade durch seine (offensiv geplante und so auch proklamierte) "Verständigungspolitik" mit Frankreich nationale Revisionsziele in weiten Teilen des deutschen Volkes gefährliche Illusionen lebendig erhielten.'  
think about the silly corridor if you don't always yell about it? Of course it's fouled up – because all of Europe is fouled up. But do you think things will get better if you take the corridor back from the Pollacks again? Then everything will start all over again...’ Tucholsky's view was supported forty years later by Hajo Holborn, *A history of modern Germany* 1840–1945 (New York, 1969), p. 627: '[Germany's] aim should have been to make the frontiers invisible rather than to revise them.'