

Stresemann and Locarno

Author(s): Jonathan Wright

Source: *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Jul., 1995), pp. 109-131

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20068657>

Accessed: 05-05-2019 11:05 UTC

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Contemporary European History*

---

# Stresemann and Locarno

---

---

JONATHAN WRIGHT

The significance of the Locarno treaties remains one of the central issues of the interwar period. Did they mark, as Austen Chamberlain claimed, 'the real dividing line between the years of war and the years of peace' or were they, at best, a truce masking the incompatible ambitions of France and Germany and, at worst, a first act of appeasement by which France and Britain obtained security for the Rhineland at the expense of Poland and Czechoslovakia?<sup>1</sup> A different approach is offered by economic history: from this perspective the significant events are seen as the defeat of the French occupation of the Ruhr and the acceptance of the Dawes Plan in July 1924. France had to abandon its attempt to break the power of German industry and had to accept the British and American view that European peace required German economic recovery. The Locarno treaties may be seen simply as the best arrangements that France could make for its security following this decisive defeat.<sup>2</sup>

In any assessment of the significance of Locarno, the crucial question is whether the *détente* it appeared to inaugurate had the potential for the peaceful resolution of Europe's problems or whether such hopes were vain from the start. That this remains a subject of debate is clear from the contrasting views of two leading German authorities: on the one side Peter Krüger, who argues that the commitment to peaceful diplomacy became the determining factor of Weimar foreign policy from 1924–9 (as it did again later in the Federal Republic), and, on the other side Franz Knipping, who argues that the incompatibility of French and German aims had already undermined the will to solve problems by negotiation before the

<sup>1</sup> Chamberlain to the British press, 23 Oct. 1925, quoted in C. A. Macartney, ed., *Survey of International Affairs 1925*, Vol. 2 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928), 56. The most comprehensive account remains Jon Jacobson, *Locarno Diplomacy. Germany and the West 1925–1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972). A critical assessment from the Polish point of view is given by Anna M. Cienciala and Titus Komarnicki, *From Versailles to Locarno. Keys to Polish Foreign Policy, 1919–1925* (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1984), 223–76. There is also an important new volume of essays on this theme, Ralph Schattkowsky, ed., *Locarno und Osteuropa. Fragen eines europäischen Sicherheitssystems in den 20er Jahren* (Marburg: Hitzeroth-verlag, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen A. Schuker, *The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan* (thereafter Schuker, *End of French Predominance*) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976). For a discussion of the economic re-interpretation, see Jon Jacobson, 'Is There a New International History of the 1920s?', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 88, no. 3 (1983), 617–45.

Depression transformed the political landscape.<sup>3</sup> In any period of *détente* between antagonists – and there are interesting parallels between the 1920s and the 1970s – there is bound to be ambiguity about its direction and achievements. Was the agreement on the Rhineland frontier more or less important than the failure to resolve the issue of Germany's frontier with Poland? Was it inevitable that the latter would lead to war or could a *modus vivendi* have been found? These questions may be addressed at many levels: the instability of a multi-polar system in which the potential of the leading revisionist powers, Germany and the Soviet Union, was an implicit threat to the status quo powers, France and its East European partners, a threat made worse by the relative isolation of the United States and the semi-detachment of Britain from Europe; the dislocation of the European economy compounded by some of the same factors; the ideological gulf between the Soviet Union and the Western powers; and the competing goals of policy makers (and their officials) and the constraints on them of domestic politics in systems which often suffered from chronic instability.

The purpose of this article is to examine the strategy of one of the major figures in the Locarno area, German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann. This approach may contribute to an assessment of the significance of the *détente* in two ways. First, Stresemann's aims remain controversial, more so than those of his French and British counterparts, Aristide Briand and Austen Chamberlain. Secondly, his strategy offers an insight into the interaction of the policy of a key player with the structural forces, international and domestic, with which he had to contend.

The controversy over Stresemann's aims may be simply stated. Did he remain, as he had been in the First World War, an unqualified nationalist pursuing the goal of a 'greater Germany' but now by stealth in view of Germany's temporary weakness, or had he grown beyond this crude vision to a concept of Germany as part of a European concert of powers? Each view has persuasive advocates. The left-wing British journalist Claud Cockburn, somewhat improbably starting his career in the *Times's* office in Berlin in 1927, was taken by the Berlin correspondent, Norman Ebbutt, to drink beer with Stresemann in the garden of the Foreign Ministry. He wrote later of his disenchantment with Stresemann and of the whole Liberal concept of international relations for which Stresemann had become a symbol:

Personally I found that Stresemann was entertaining provided that you did not believe in him. He was one of those Germans who had, at a fairly early date, discovered that the way to get away with being a good German was to pretend to be a good European. He had a wonderful act in which he pretended to be not only fat, which he was, but good-hearted and a little muzzy with beer into the bargain. In reality he was as quick and sharp as a buzz-saw, and if being a sharp, fast-moving buzz-saw was not enough, he would hit you from behind with a hammer.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Peter Krüger, *Die Aussenpolitik der Republik von Weimar* (thereafter Krüger, *Aussenpolitik*) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1985), 207–506, 551–5; Franz Knipping, *Deutschland, Frankreich und das Ende der Locarno-Ära 1928–1931* (thereafter Knipping, *Ende der Locarno-Ära*) (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Claud Cockburn, *In Time of Trouble. An Autobiography* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957), 97.

Another contemporary, Thomas Mann, writing in 1930, put the opposite view:

The history of this extraordinary man belongs to the most remarkable of German lives. Coming from a right-wing bourgeois background, with the spiritual and political traditions of this origin in his blood, as a patriotic middle-class business man, even if above average in education and intellectual curiosity, identified with the idea of an expansion of German power and still during the war a convinced advocate of imperial conquest, he was able through a power of understanding, which was simultaneously full of vitality and refined by illness, directed and driven by an exemplary commitment to life, which was physically already marked by death, to grow out from and above all the traditions he had inherited, faster and faster – a man who was both driven and gripped, who did not have much time – into the world of a European society of nations in thought, conviction and deed, which no one would have dreamt possible on the basis of his early adulthood.<sup>5</sup>

This division of opinion is also to be found in the work of historians. Stresemann's early biographers emphasised the way in which he had outgrown his wartime nationalism to become a man of peace and an architect of Franco-German reconciliation.<sup>6</sup> This Stresemann 'myth' was challenged in 1957 by Annelise Thimme with her acute portrait of the contradictions of Stresemann's personality, at once a Romantic nationalist and a fiercely realistic, practical politician. She argued that he should be seen as a brilliant politician pursuing strictly national goals rather than as a European statesman.<sup>7</sup> More recent research has concentrated on specific themes: Stresemann and the domestic politics of the Weimar Republic, his policy towards France, Belgium, Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and Poland, his use of trade as an instrument of revision, Stresemann and the League of Nations and the issue of minorities, his relations with the permanent officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt* and so forth.<sup>8</sup> In these specialised studies, differences of interpreta-

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Felix Hirsch, *Stresemann. Ein Lebensbild* (thereafter Hirsch, *Stresemann*) (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1978), 307–8.

<sup>6</sup> Rudolf Olden, *Stresemann* (English ed., London: Methuen, 1930); Antonina Vallentin, *Stresemann* (English ed., London: Constable, 1931).

<sup>7</sup> Annelise Thimme, *Gustav Stresemann. Eine politische Biographie zur Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Hanover, Frankfurt am Main: Norddeutsche Verlagsanstalt O. Goedel, 1957).

<sup>8</sup> For publications up to 1970, see Martin Walsdorff, *Bibliographie Gustav Stresemann* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972). Henry Ashby Turner, *Stresemann and the Politics of the Weimar Republic* (thereafter, Turner, *Stresemann*) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), remains the best guide to Stresemann's domestic politics. More recent monographs include: Martin Walsdorff, *Westorientierung und Ostpolitik. Stresemanns Rußlandpolitik in der Locarno Ära* (thereafter Walsdorff, *Westorientierung*) (Bremen: Schünemann Universitätsverlag, 1971); Michael-Olaf Maxelon, *Stresemann und Frankreich. Deutsche Politik der Ost–West-Balance* (thereafter Maxelon, *Stresemann und Frankreich*) (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972); Werner Weidenfeld, *Die Englandpolitik Gustav Stresemanns. Theoretische und praktische Aspekte der Aussenpolitik* (Mainz: v.Hase & Koehler Verlag, 1972); Manfred J. Enssle, *Stresemann's Territorial Revisionism. Germany, Belgium, and the Eupen-Malmédy Question 1919–1929* (thereafter Enssle, *Territorial Revisionism*) (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980); Robert P. Grathwol, *Stresemann and the DNVP. Reconciliation or Revenge in German Foreign Policy 1924–1928* (thereafter Grathwol, *Stresemann and the DNVP*) (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1980); Manfred Berg, *Gustav Stresemann und die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika. Wirtschaftliche Verflechtung und Revisionspolitik 1907–1929* (thereafter Berg, *Stresemann*) (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990); Piotr Madajczyk, *Polityka i Koncepcje Polityczne Gustawa Stresemanna wobec Polski (1915–1929)* (Warsaw: Instytut Nauk Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1991). There is also a useful collection of essays, Wolfgang Michalka and Marshall M. Lee, eds, *Gustav Stresemann* (thereafter Michalka and Lee, *Stresemann*) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982).

tion remain but there is also much common ground. It is not in dispute that Stresemann hoped to see the Treaty of Versailles replaced by a different international system or that one aim behind the policy of accommodation with the Western powers at Locarno was to increase the chance of revision in the East. It is also not in dispute that a distinguishing feature of Stresemann's foreign policy was his recognition of the constraints on German power consequent on defeat, disarmament and isolation. From this sprang his interest in how Germany could be made a worthwhile ally (*bündnisfähig*) again and the hopes he attached to economic factors as an instrument of revision. Following the spate of detailed monographs, it may now be useful to try to put together again a picture of the whole man. What follows is an attempt to supply a biographer's perspective on Stresemann and Locarno.<sup>9</sup>

The indispensable background is Stresemann's experience as chancellor and foreign minister from August to November 1923. These hundred days, which he later said he would not have wished on his worst enemies, brought a series of crises which threatened to destroy both the Republic and Germany itself in the form created by Bismarck.<sup>10</sup> Stresemann found himself fighting desperately to save the two things he cared most about: parliamentary democracy and the Bismarck Reich, the symbols of the liberalism and nationalism which were at the heart of his political creed. The first problem was inflation of the currency, which was out of control as a consequence of the policy of passive resistance which had been adopted against the French occupation of the Ruhr in January 1923. By the autumn, Germany faced what Stresemann described as a 'total collapse of the whole German economy'.<sup>11</sup> Any hope of currency stabilisation, however, required ending the subsidy to the occupied territories which would effectively leave them to their fate. This might well begin a process which would lead to a separate Rhineland state under French control, depriving Germany of its most important industrial region with a population of 12 to 15 million.<sup>12</sup> Stresemann attempted to avoid this dilemma by opening direct negotiations with France, but Poincaré, sensing victory, refused and Stresemann was forced to abandon passive resistance unconditionally on 25 Septem-

<sup>9</sup> Recent biographical studies include three sympathetic portraits by people who knew him: Hirsch, *Stresemann*; Theodor Eschenburg and Ulrich Frank-Planitz, *Gustav Stresemann. Eine Bildbiographie* (thereafter Eschenburg and Frank-Planitz, *Stresemann*) (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1978); and Wolfgang Stresemann, *Mein Vater Gustav Stresemann* (Munich: F. A. Herbig, 1979). There is also Kurt Koszyk, *Gustav Stresemann. Der kaisertreue Demokrat* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1989). A fine, brief appreciation, which ranges over his whole career, is Karl Dietrich Erdmann, 'Gustav Stresemann. Sein Bild in der Geschichte', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 227, no. 3 (1978), 599–616.

<sup>10</sup> Speech to the party conference of the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP), 30 Mar. 1924; Rochus Freiherr von Rheinbaben, ed., *Stresemann. Reden und Schriften. Politik—Geschichte—Literatur 1897–1926* (thereafter Rheinbaben, *Stresemann*), Vol. 2 (Dresden: Carl Reissner Verlag, 1926), 185.

<sup>11</sup> Stresemann to the Minister Presidents of the *Länder*, 25 Sept. 1923, Karl Dietrich Erdmann and Martin Vogt, eds, *Die Kabinette Stresemann I und II* (thereafter Erdmann and Vogt, *Kabinette Stresemann*), Vol. 1 (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1978), no. 79, 349.

<sup>12</sup> The figures come from 'Politische Umschau', 17 May 1923, *Deutsche Stimmen*, Vol. 35, no. 10 (1923), 167. Stresemann edited this party journal from 1918 until he became chancellor in August 1923. He wrote the fortnightly 'Politische Umschau' articles himself.

ber. This was a necessary and courageous decision but it was also profoundly unpopular and humiliating – Stresemann did not exaggerate when he told the Reichstag that he was well aware that it could cost him the leadership of his party and even his life.<sup>13</sup>

The decision to abandon passive resistance immediately set off a domestic crisis which threatened to bring down the Republic and end in civil war. The nationalist leagues in Bavaria were waiting for the opportunity to march on Berlin under the tolerant eye of the Bavarian Government, which defied the attempts of the Reich Government to re-assert its authority there. Meanwhile, Bavaria's northern neighbours, Saxony and Thuringia, under left-wing socialist governments, were believed to be moving towards a Communist insurrection. The *Reichswehr* chief, General von Seeckt, was keen to intervene against Saxony and Thuringia but refused to take action against Bavaria. When Stresemann, in an attempt to keep control of the crisis, agreed to the action against Saxony and Thuringia at the end of October, the SPD resigned from his government, depriving it of its majority. Far from being satisfied, Seeckt now let it be known that the situation in Bavaria could only be resolved peacefully if Stresemann stood down in favour of an authoritarian government which would be effectively, if not explicitly, under Seeckt's control.<sup>14</sup> Stresemann could not even rely on the support of his own parliamentary party where a substantial group was prepared to ditch him. Showing remarkable tenacity, Stresemann refused to bow to this pressure, telling his party that the nationalist leagues would have 'to shoot me at the place where I have a right to sit'.<sup>15</sup> His determination almost certainly saved the Republic from the 'national dictatorship' advocated by Seeckt and other groups on the Right. The fiasco of the Hitler *putsch* on 9 November then removed the threat of civil war and restored the authority of constitutional government. The abyss of domestic disorder leading, Stresemann predicted, to the break-up of the Reich had been avoided by the narrowest of margins.<sup>16</sup>

This searing first experience of power had a profound influence on Stresemann. It demonstrated beyond any doubt the precariousness of Germany's internal and external security. The fortunate escape from civil war still left the future of the occupied territories in the balance. The last weeks of his administration were spent in increasingly desperate schemes to prevent them in effect organising themselves into autonomous economic and political regions, without being able to promise the vital lifeline of the new currency for fear that this would set off a new inflation. This

<sup>13</sup> Speech to the Reichstag, 6 Oct. 1923; Rheinbaben, *Stresemann*, ii. 70.

<sup>14</sup> Erdmann and Vogt, *Kabinette Stresemann*, ii. 1176–217. F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918 to 1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 163–95; Hans Meier-Welcker, *Seeckt* (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe, 1967), 376–413.

<sup>15</sup> Turner, *Stresemann*, 135. Minutes of the meeting of the DVP Reichstag party, 5 Nov. 1923, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 87. The original Nachlaß is in the *Politisches Archiv* of the Auswärtiges Amt in Bonn but it forms part of the captured German Foreign Ministry Archives and is therefore also available on microfilm. An extract from the minutes is printed in Henry Bernhard, ed., *Gustav Stresemann Vermächtnis* (thereafter Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*) I: *Vom Ruhrkrieg bis London* (Berlin: Verlag Ullstein, 1932), 195–7.

<sup>16</sup> Minutes of the meeting of the DVP Reichstag party, 5 Nov. 1923, *ibid.*

problem was still unresolved when Stresemann resigned after failing to win a vote of confidence in the Reichstag on 23 November, though he returned as foreign minister in the next administration, a position he then held without interruption until his death in October 1929.

The only way of avoiding the loss of the occupied territories at the end of 1923 was for Britain and the United States to persuade France to back down. This was the hope to which Stresemann clung. He had developed the argument from the beginning of his administration that the Germans should adopt the strategy of holding out until they could exploit what he described as the possibilities 'objectively based' in 'the European distribution of power', in other words, they should wait for British and American opposition to the French occupation of the Ruhr to produce results.<sup>17</sup> Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, had already condemned the Ruhr occupation as illegal and 'doomed to failure' in a magisterial note on 11 August, just before Stresemann became chancellor.<sup>18</sup> As an alternative to Poincaré's policy of direct control of the Ruhr, Stresemann renewed previous German offers to link the payment of reparations to guarantees on the whole German economy and (following a proposal of the American Secretary of State, Charles Hughes) for Germany to join in an international guarantee of the Rhine frontiers. These proposals were made in close consultation with Lord D'Abernon, the British ambassador in Berlin.<sup>19</sup> However, this alternative strategy only achieved success several months after Germany had been forced to give up passive resistance.

During this time Stresemann could only plead with the representatives of the occupied territories to hold out and cajole his Finance Minister, Hans Luther, to find stop-gap solutions to their most urgent needs. This led to a revealing clash with Konrad Adenauer, who as Lord Mayor of Cologne, was directly involved in the fate of the occupied territories and did not believe in Stresemann's policy.<sup>20</sup> Adenauer thought that only words of support could be expected from Britain and the United States and that there was, therefore, no alternative to a direct settlement with France. His idea was that this should consist in a new state (*Land*) within Germany, composed of the occupied territories. This new *Land* would exercise a powerful influence on German policy through its size and industrial importance; its population would be naturally peace-loving and its economy would be closely linked to that of France. He hoped to persuade Poincaré that this was the only realistic basis for long-term peace between the two nations though he admitted that as a last resort they might be forced to accept separation from the Reich. Stresemann also believed, during the worst period of October to November 1923, that

<sup>17</sup> Minutes of the meeting with the *Länder* Minister Presidents, 25 Sept. 1923, Erdmann and Vogt, *Kabinette Stresemann*, i. 79, 350.

<sup>18</sup> *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939* (hereafter *DBFP*), 1st Ser., Vol. 21, no. 330, 467-82.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum by Carl von Schubert, head of the British and American department in the Auswärtiges Amt, 29 Aug. 1923, *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik* (hereafter *ADAP*), Ser. A, Vol. 8, no. 123, 312-14. D'Abernon to Curzon, 30 Aug. 1923, *DBFP*, 1st Ser., Vol. 21, no. 340, 496-8.

<sup>20</sup> Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Adenauer in der Rheinlandpolitik nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1966), 87-186.

separation might be unavoidable, but he was adamantly opposed to Adenauer's plan. He argued that it offered no solution as the French occupation would continue, and it might itself provide a stage leading towards separation. When Adenauer persisted with his plans and contacted French intermediaries in December, Stresemann suspected, with reason, that he was being used by Poincaré to undermine the position of the German Government. Adenauer suspected, equally with reason, that Stresemann was less than frank in the arguments he used to kill Adenauer's scheme; in particular, Stresemann kept silent about the opposition he was still encountering from Poincaré to opening negotiations. The conflict between Adenauer and Stresemann left a lasting legacy of mutual suspicion between them. It also illustrated the difference between a policy which assumed that a solution for the occupied territories would have to be found which was acceptable to Poincaré, and Stresemann's view that the pressure of Britain and the United States would, in the long term, make possible a solution which committed Germany as a whole and thereby avoided a separate status for the occupied territories.

Stresemann's patience and persistence were ultimately rewarded. The international committee of experts established by the Reparations Commission in November under an American chairman, Charles Dawes, visited Berlin at the end of January 1924. Stresemann was able to report to representatives of the occupied territories that the committee accepted the need to restore the Ruhr to German control and to provide an international loan, secured on German assets like the railways, to fund reparations to France.<sup>21</sup> Seeing at last real grounds for believing that his strategy would succeed, Stresemann referred to the work of the committee as 'the first ray of light on the dark horizon'.<sup>22</sup> His endorsement of the Dawes Plan, which was finally presented in April 1924, was a measure of his relief that they had come through the crises of 1923. He told the minister presidents of the *Länder* that 'after the lost battle of the Ruhr it seemed to him an honourable peace'.<sup>23</sup> For the next four months he devoted all his energy to ensuring that the plan was adopted. This meant negotiating satisfactory terms with the other powers and mobilising sufficient support in the Reichstag, no small task since some of the legislation involved constitutional amendment and therefore required a two-thirds majority. The task was made the more difficult by elections in May from which the main opposition nationalist party, the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP), emerged greatly strengthened and, in alliance with the agrarian *Reichslandbund*, formed the largest parliamentary group in the Reichstag while Stresemann's party, the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP), lost a third of its seats. Having the courage to take unpopular decisions was clearly not the way to reap electoral rewards.

Despite this set-back, which he had expected, and despite another attempt by his

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the meeting, 7 Feb. 1924, Günther Abramowski, ed., *Die Kabinette Marx I und II* (thereafter Abramowski, *Kabinette Marx*) (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1973), i. no. 92, 331–2.

<sup>22</sup> Speech in Elberfeld, 17 Feb. 1924, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, i. 300. Stresemann borrowed the phrase from Carl Bergmann, the long-standing German representative to the Reparations Commission, *ibid.*, 301.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the meeting, 14 Apr. 1924, Abramowski, *Kabinette Marx*, i. no. 175, 557.



party to force him to stand down (which led him to comment that he understood what Bismarck had meant when he said 'I hated all night'), he did not waver in his support for the Dawes Plan.<sup>24</sup> He was encouraged in his view by the German ambassador in Paris, Leopold von Hoesch, who urged that by 'freely adopting a policy of understanding, of peace and of international solidarity', Germany could regain, if not its old power, at least sovereignty, equal rights and freedom. Hoesch's advice was given in the context of the French elections (held a week after the German ones) which led to the fall of Poincaré and the formation of a weak centre-left government under Édouard Herriot. Stresemann saw the danger that if Germany failed to respond positively to the new situation, French policy could revert to the control of Poincaré.<sup>25</sup>

During the summer, Stresemann argued the case for acceptance of the Dawes Plan in public speeches, confidential meetings with party leaders, the minister presidents of the *Länder*, the national executive of the DVP, in newspaper articles and in the Reichstag. This activity provides a perfect example of Stresemann's primary role as a politician: to build a consensus in a political culture which was highly fragmented and in which nationalist parties formed one of the major sections of élite and popular opinion. Although there was no realistic alternative to acceptance of the Dawes Plan, Stresemann faced the entrenched opposition of those who regarded it as a 'second Versailles' because of the international controls it imposed on the German economy and because of the schedule of reparations payments which it laid down.<sup>26</sup> Stresemann had the gift of presenting his arguments in terms his nationalist critics could understand, but in doing so he sometimes expressed views which raise doubts about his own real intentions, a process that was to be repeated with the Locarno policy.

His central argument, set out for instance in his confidential briefing of the *Länder* minister presidents, was that the Dawes Plan gave Germany the chance to enlist the whole power of American as well as British capital against 'French imperialism'.<sup>27</sup> This made it a 'world political event', a real change in the international system. The United States alone could put pressure on France by means of war debts; if it demanded even the interest due the franc would collapse. It was unthinkable that Germany should reject this opportunity; if the Germans imposed conditions, the French would lay down more conditions and the whole plan would fall. If that happened, Germany could not expect to hold on to the occupied zone and its economy would go under for lack of credit. With implementation of the plan, foreign loans would flow in and Germany would have the chance to rebuild. He accepted that reparations payments would be heavy when they reached the 'normal' level foreseen by the plan in 1928–9, but he added that both the British and the Americans understood the disturbance to international trade which would be

<sup>24</sup> Lord D'Abernon, *An Ambassador of Peace*, III: *The Years of Recovery January 1924–October 1926* (thereafter D'Abernon, *Ambassador*) (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Hoesch to Auswärtiges Amt, 5 June 1924, with Stresemann's marginal comments, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 10, no. 126, 306–9.

<sup>26</sup> Grathwol, *Stresemann and the DNVP*, 20.

<sup>27</sup> Minutes of the meeting, 3 July 1924, Abramowski, *Kabinette Marx*, ii. no. 243, 766–855.

required to finance payments of that kind, and experts from both countries tacitly expected the levels to be scaled down. To the objection of a DNVP minister president that Germany would be taken over by Anglo-American capitalism, he replied that that had been the decisive power in winning the war and, more robustly, that once the German economy was strong again it could 'throw away the crutches'. In the same way, to the criticism that Europe's problems could only be solved 'by the sword', he replied that if that was so 'and I believe that ultimately these great arguments are always decided by the sword', he hoped it would be put off as long as possible as Germany did not possess the power of the sword. If one wanted a more important role, one must first lay the foundations.

To the DVP national executive, he explained his view of how Germany could regain international influence.<sup>28</sup> Describing the five years since 1919 as a period of domestic consolidation, he went on: 'Only abroad, we have at present neither political power nor influence. You can only conduct successful policy if you have one or the other or the first through the second. I consider all the elaborate games to recover power secretly as total nonsense. You cannot produce heavy artillery or build a thousand planes secretly, that damages our foreign policy without bringing us anything. The only policy which can succeed is that which aims to become a worthwhile ally [*bündnisfähig*] for other nations, so as, at the moment of achieving alliance-worthiness, to receive from the other side what you would never get with old, buried guns.' He hoped that the next five years would see a consolidation of Germany's international position and this meant putting an end to the conflict over reparations. The Dawes Plan offered the chance to do that and, through the involvement of foreign, especially American, capital in the economy, 'quite different perspectives' for the future. This was the course of 'sober *Realpolitik*' which would in the end be successful.

These quotations contain the heart of Stresemann's strategy. The Dawes Plan offered Germany the opportunity to break out of the isolation of an ex-enemy state and, buttressed by Anglo-American loans, to resume its place among the European great powers. There it could bring its economic and political weight to bear to achieve the revision of the Treaty of Versailles. The only alternative concept, Seeckt's secret rearmament for a war of revenge against France and the associated policy of close relations with the Soviet Union, was wholly unrealistic. Nevertheless, Stresemann had a difficult task answering critics who did not believe that Treaty revision could come by peaceful means. He side-stepped the issue by agreeing that 'ultimately' force would decide but immediately countered that, as a disarmed state, Germany had no alternative to peaceful methods, which he clearly hoped would produce results.

The first and crucial result which he needed in order to have any hope of persuading the Reichstag to accept the Dawes Plan was the military evacuation of the Ruhr. This issue did not lie within the terms of reference of the Dawes committee, nor was it officially part of the agenda of the international conference

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of the meeting, 6 July 1924, R. 45 II/39, Deutsche Volkspartei papers, Bundesarchiv, Koblenz.

which met in London in July to decide on the implementation of the Dawes Plan. Germany was invited to join the conference in August and Stresemann finally succeeded in extracting the crucial concession from Herriot, although with the proviso that the evacuation would take a year to complete.<sup>29</sup> The conference was followed immediately by the session of the Reichstag. Theodor Eschenburg, then a first-year student, later wrote of Stresemann's speeches on this occasion as not just 'fine talking as they were so often described' but as expressing 'the most honest conviction, passion and an unbending will'.<sup>30</sup> The votes of the DNVP which were crucial for a two-thirds majority remained in doubt up to the time they were being counted in the final vote. Stresemann was involved in intensive lobbying until the last moment and, after DNVP opposition remained firm on the second reading, agreed that his party should offer its support to bring the DNVP into the government provided the DNVP helped to pass the legislation.<sup>31</sup> On 29 August the DNVP split down the middle with the more pragmatic sections, who understood the critical nature of the Dawes credits for industry and agriculture, providing forty-eight votes in favour. The legislation was saved.

This was a triumph for Stresemann. It was a success for his foreign policy and, no less significant, a breakthrough in domestic politics. If the DNVP – or at least a major section of it – could be persuaded to accept his foreign policy then there was a real prospect of achieving a broad consensus. This would stabilise the Republic, isolating the extremes on the right and left. It would also protect the DVP from further loss of support to the DNVP. Stresemann was still doubtful about the DNVP. He distrusted its leaders who were allowing themselves to be feted by their constituency associations as 'No' voters, and he was emotionally averse to co-operation with a party which had repeatedly attacked him.<sup>32</sup> He gave vent to some of these feelings while on holiday on the North Sea island of Norderney immediately after the Dawes vote. He wrote an autobiographical sketch called 'The Bar' – a reference to the sandbank which protected Norderney from the full force of the sea.<sup>33</sup> In the story, a visiting young friend points out that the sandbank gives Norderney a subdued and repressed character, unlike the outer islands where the waves are wild and free. Stresemann sees in this an image of the constraints of his career as a successful politician, compared to the spontaneity and idealism of his youth. His idealism had been worn away by the need to compromise until he no longer felt the same person: 'His face became often only a mask adapted to his surroundings. Some called him unprincipled, but those who looked more deeply detected an element of cynicism which arose from seeing that the ideas paraded in

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Bariéty, *Les Relations franco-allemandes après la première guerre mondiale. 10 novembre 1918–10 janvier 1925 de l'exécution à la négociation* (Paris: Editions Pedone, 1977), 505–716; Schuker, *End of French Predominance*, 295–382.

<sup>30</sup> Theodor Eschenburg, 'Stresemann und die Studenten', *Nord und Süd*, Vol. 52, no. 11 (Nov. 1929), 998–1003, repr. in part in Arnold Harttung, ed., *Gustav Stresemann Schriften* (thereafter Harttung, *Stresemann Schriften*) (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1976), 404–8.

<sup>31</sup> Grathwol, *Stresemann and the DNVP*, 50.

<sup>32</sup> Stresemann to Rudolf von Campe, 8 Sept. 1924, *Nachlaß Stresemann*, Vol. 15, Harttung, *Stresemann Schriften*, 234–6.

<sup>33</sup> Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, i. 549–53.

public life served mainly as a cover for individual interests.' It is certainly tempting to see in this a reference to the strains of the previous weeks, and in particular the bargain with the DNVP.

Whatever his reservations, Stresemann decided in the autumn to go ahead with the change of tactics to the DNVP. He told the Cabinet that it would be easier to conduct foreign policy with the DNVP in government and that it would encourage the moderate forces within the party to deal with the radical wing, which would be good for the state.<sup>34</sup> The DNVP had an interest in entering the government in order to influence the new tariff policy which would take effect as Germany recovered its freedom to negotiate commercial treaties with other countries. This had been restricted by the Treaty of Versailles for five years, ending in January 1925. Given the likely future agenda of foreign policy – evacuation of Allied troops from the Rhineland and the question of French security, disarmament, German entry into the League of Nations – there was obviously every incentive for Stresemann to draw the DNVP into a share of responsibility to prevent it from reaping further electoral rewards by nationalist agitation. Nevertheless, it was a bold manoeuvre which risked alienating his coalition partners, the Catholic Centre Party and the left liberal Democratic party (DDP). It also confirmed, as he had expected, his reputation for opportunism, particularly since he had previously been identified with the policy of coalition with the SPD. Stresemann's decision led to the resignation of the Cabinet, which could not agree on the inclusion of the DNVP, and to new elections in October. He based his campaign on an appeal to all constitutional, middle-class parties to unite behind a foreign policy of 'national *Realpolitik*'.<sup>35</sup> This he defined rather awkwardly as a policy, free of the illusions of both right and left, 'which is conscious of the limitations on our power, which seeks understanding and peace because we need both, but which does not try to bring about peace by creating an atmosphere but sees the concept of understanding as a mutual process of conciliation achieved by conscious, tough effort'. The elections failed to break the deadlock against both of the possible majorities: the DVP blocked a coalition with the SPD and the DDP blocked a coalition with the DNVP. In the end, at Stresemann's suggestion, Luther succeeded in forming an 'above party' minority government in January 1925. The DNVP, DVP and Centre Party were represented in it without being bound to support it. Stresemann had succeeded in bringing the DNVP in – D'Abernon noted that he was regarded as 'the politician behind the throne' – but it was an extremely fragile construction.<sup>36</sup> He could only hope that it would grow, as he intended, into a firm alliance behind his foreign policy.

It was in these circumstances that he launched the initiative which led to Locarno. What were his goals and how far were they influenced by domestic politics?

His primary goal was to maintain the impetus, provided by the Dawes Plan,

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of cabinet meetings, 6 and 15 Oct. 1924, Abramowski, *Kabinette Marx*, ii. nos. 317 and 329, 1092, 1113–14.

<sup>35</sup> Speech to the DVP party conference, 14 Nov. 1924, R. 45 II/29, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, published as *Nationale Realpolitik. Rede des Reichsaußenministers Dr. Stresemann auf dem 6. Parteitag der Deutschen Volkspartei in Dortmund am 14. November 1924* (Berlin: Staatspolitischer Verlag, 1924).

<sup>36</sup> D'Abernon, *Ambassador*, iii., 127.

towards a new alignment of the European powers in which Germany would be treated as partner. His hand was forced by developments over the twin problems of French security and German disarmament. Stresemann feared that proposals adopted by the League of Nations to supervise German disarmament under Article 213 of the Treaty of Versailles would allow a permanent staff to be maintained in the demilitarised zone of the Rhineland even after its evacuation by Allied troops, and that this would revive the danger of a separate Rhineland state under French influence. In addition Austen Chamberlain, who became foreign secretary when the Conservatives returned to power in November, was known to be pro-French. There was a danger that he would offer the French a bilateral security guarantee in place of the 'Geneva Protocol', which had been adopted by the League Assembly to strengthen the provisions of the Covenant against aggression, but which Britain was now unwilling to ratify because of the extent of the responsibilities it involved. In December it became known that the Allies had decided not to evacuate the first of the Rhineland zones in accordance with the Treaty on 10 January 1925, on the grounds that Germany had failed to fulfil its disarmament obligations. Stresemann was concerned that Germany was becoming once more only 'the object of the policy of the others'.<sup>37</sup>

The obvious way for Germany to counter the threat of renewed isolation was to bring forward proposals of its own for European security. Carl von Schubert, Stresemann's clear-sighted and forceful Secretary of State, took the hint from Lord D'Abernon and drew up a memorandum which was communicated to the British Government on 20 January and subsequently to the French.<sup>38</sup> Building on previous proposals, this suggested a non-aggression pact of the Rhineland states, with the United States as trustee, and backed by a comprehensive arbitration treaty. Anticipating the objection (which Poincaré had raised in previous discussions with the German ambassador) that Poland would then be put at risk, it stated that Germany would be willing to sign 'arbitration treaties providing for the peaceful settlement of juridical and political conflicts with all other States as well'. Reflecting Schubert's view that a general guarantee of the Rhineland states would not be specific enough to satisfy France, the memorandum also made a second proposal for 'a pact expressly guaranteeing the present territorial status on the Rhine' to which the powers concerned would be bound individually and collectively. This could be combined with a guarantee of the demilitarisation of the Rhineland and arbitration agreements as in the first proposal.<sup>39</sup>

This was a remarkable initiative, clear evidence of Stresemann's (and Schubert's)

<sup>37</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 20 Oct. 1924, Abramowski, *Kabinette Marx*, ii. no. 376, 1235. Christoph M. Kimmich, *Germany and the League of Nations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 61–2; Anne Orde, *Great Britain and International Security* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), 68–98.

<sup>38</sup> Angela Kaiser, *Lord D'Abernon und die englische Deutschlandpolitik 1920–1926* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), 333–43. On Carl Schubert, who became State Secretary in Dec. 1924, Peter Krüger, 'Zur Bedeutung des Auswärtigen Amtes für die Außenpolitik Stresemanns', in Michalka and Lee, *Stresemann*, 400–15.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum by von Schubert, 20 Jan. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 12, no. 37, 84–9.

anxiety for Germany to be accepted as a partner by the Western powers. D'Abernon, who admittedly could take some of the credit for it, described it as of 'vast importance'.<sup>40</sup> The proposals contained, as Stresemann pointed out to Hoesch, a voluntary renunciation of claims to Alsace-Lorraine and, so far as the Eastern frontiers were concerned, Hoesch was authorised to tell Herriot that, while Germany could not accept the same 'solemn recognition' of them as in the West, the arbitration treaties would 'offer in practice a thoroughly secure guarantee for the preservation of peace'.<sup>41</sup> On the face of it, Germany was committing itself to what Stresemann later called in the Reichstag, 'a peace offensive on the grand scale'.<sup>42</sup>

It was also a bold move in domestic politics. The memorandum was drawn up in great secrecy in the *Auswärtiges Amt* while Germany was between governments. Luther was informed of its contents on his appointment as chancellor, immediately before it was sent to Britain. Both the British and French governments were asked to keep it strictly confidential. Stresemann hoped to win their support for the proposals before the memorandum became public to maximise the chance of overcoming opposition to it in each country. In Germany, the situation was particularly delicate since the DNVP which Stresemann had laboured to bring into government was likely to react badly, as also was Field Marshal von Hindenburg who became Reich President in May 1925. Nor surprisingly, when the German proposals became known, Stresemann found himself at the centre of a storm of protest, with his position as foreign minister again under threat and even his relations with Luther strained. In these circumstances, it was inevitable that he would defend his policy at home in terms calculated to win over the DNVP.

This raises problems of interpretation for the historian. How can one tell whether Stresemann's arguments were contrived to enable him to lead the DNVP in a direction it did not want to go or whether they represented his own real views? Did he know himself or was his face 'only a mask adapted to his surroundings'? How did his views develop over the five years of the Locarno era? And, given the strength of nationalism in the political culture of the Weimar Republic, how much room for manoeuvre did he have in any case?

Let us first consider in more detail what Stresemann hoped to achieve by his Locarno policy. The first gain which he always regarded as central, reflecting his traumatic experience as chancellor, was that the Rhineland would remain German. 'The essence of European politics in this connection is the question to whom do the Rhine lands belong; it would be decided in this way that the Rhine lands belong to Germany', he told journalists at the first press conference called to discuss the German memorandum.<sup>43</sup> German territory would be guaranteed against France as well as French territory against Germany. In return, Germany voluntarily renounced Alsace-Lorraine, 'but I believe there is no one who could have any doubt

<sup>40</sup> D'Abernon, *Ambassador*, iii. 127.

<sup>41</sup> Stresemann to Hoesch, 5 Feb. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 12, no. 67, 167.

<sup>42</sup> Speech to the Reichstag, 22 July 1925, Gerhard Zwoch, ed., *Gustav Stresemann Reichstagsreden* (Bonn: Verlag AZ Studio, 1972), 217.

<sup>43</sup> Stresemann's briefing of the German press, 7 Mar. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, II: *Locarno und Genf*, 68–9.

that the German people – either now or in the future – would not follow a government which started a war of aggression against France with the goal of reconquering Alsace-Lorraine'. Later, in deference to the DNVP which refused to accept 'a renunciation of German territory and people', Stresemann modified his stance by arguing that the Locarno pact did not prevent a peaceful change of frontiers, but this was a highly academic point in relation to Alsace-Lorraine, where there was no significant support for a return to Germany.<sup>44</sup> The possibility of peaceful change did exist, however, in relation to the small territory of Eupen-Malmédy which Belgium had acquired from Germany at Versailles as compensation for the violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914.<sup>45</sup> By helping to satisfy French and Belgian fears, the Locarno pact would increase the chances of regaining Eupen-Malmédy (Stresemann hoped to buy it back) and, more important, also the valuable industrial region of the Saar, whose mines had been ceded to France under the Versailles Treaty while its government was put under the control of the League of Nations for fifteen years, after which a plebiscite was to be held. Stresemann hoped to be in a position to ask for the plebiscite to be held earlier and to buy the mines back as well.<sup>46</sup>

There would also be substantial gains in other ways. Germany could argue that the Allied military occupation of the Rhineland had been superseded by the Locarno pact – particularly as the demilitarised status of the left bank was guaranteed by the pact – and that the Allies should therefore withdraw their troops in advance of the fifteen-year timetable foreseen by the Treaty.<sup>47</sup> The improvement in European security would also create the right climate to encourage American investors to continue to provide the loans which the German economy needed, an argument which Stresemann underlined to the DNVP.<sup>48</sup> In addition, Germany was likely to find it difficult to make the reparations payments due under the Dawes Plan by 1927 or 1928; it would be essential that its relations with its creditors should then be such that it would not be threatened with new sanctions. It was therefore important for political as well as economic reasons to continue to attract American private investment, which would create an interest group in the United States more concerned with the success of the German economy than with reparations.<sup>49</sup>

The advantages of the pact were less clear in relation to German aims in the East. The main issue was the Polish frontier, a matter on which even Social Democrats

<sup>44</sup> Memorandum by Stresemann, 5 July 1925, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 275, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 131. Karl-Heinz Minuth, *Die Kabinette Luther I und II* (thereafter Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*) (Boppard am Rhein: Harald Boldt Verlag, 1977), i. 170, 665.

<sup>45</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 24 June 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. 110, 365–6. Cf. Enssle, *Territorial Revisionism*, 80–114.

<sup>46</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting with Hindenburg, 24 Sept. 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. no. 161, 569; Stresemann's speech to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Landsmannschaften in Gross-Berlin*, 14 Dec. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. B, i/1. appendix 2, 749–50. Maxelon, *Stresemann und Frankreich*, 221–5.

<sup>47</sup> Meeting of the German, French and British delegations at Locarno, 12 Oct. 1925; *DBFP*, 1st Ser., Vol. 27, appendix no. 11, 1137–43.

<sup>48</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 15 July 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. no. 123, 432–3.

<sup>49</sup> Stresemann's speech to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Landsmannschaften*, 14 Dec. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. B, i/1. 731–6. Berg, *Stresemann*, 274–8.

felt strongly.<sup>50</sup> Stresemann regarded the frontier as a violation of self-determination and was committed, as any German foreign minister was bound to be, to the goal of revision. In a dispatch to German embassies, he explained that the aim was not 'a new partition of Poland' but the recovery of Danzig (which had been made a Free City under the League of Nations by the Treaty), the northern half of the 'corridor' separating West from East Prussia to give Poland access to the sea, and the part of Upper Silesia which had been awarded to Poland in October 1921 after a plebiscite had shown an overall majority in the province for Germany. The Prussian province of Posen, on the other hand, would not be reclaimed because its population was overwhelmingly Polish. Poland would be compensated with a free port in Danzig and rights of transit similar to those Germany had been given in the corridor.<sup>51</sup>

The difficulty was to know how this goal could be achieved in a way consistent with the Locarno pact. There were three aspects to the problem: the arbitration treaty which Germany concluded with Poland, the implications of joining the League of Nations which the Allies made a condition of the Locarno agreements and the consequences of both for German relations with the Soviet Union. Each of these produced complications for Stresemann's policy which required finesse and involved him in a degree of disingenuousness. They also produced the fiercest domestic opposition, leading Stresemann into justifying his policy in ways which have raised doubts about his good faith. The basic issue was a very simple one: would Germany confine itself to peaceful methods in pursuing its claims against Poland, as the wording of the Locarno agreements and Germany's obligations under the League covenant required, or did it intend to maintain other options?

Stresemann's overriding priority was that Germany should reach an accommodation with the Western powers, which alone offered the prospect of recovery from the nadir of 1923. He also shared the Western values of democracy and capitalism and was naturally hostile and suspicious towards the Soviet Union. He was also sceptical of the value of military and economic co-operation with the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless he wanted, if possible, to avoid Locarno and German entry

<sup>50</sup> The frontier with Czechoslovakia was not in dispute during the Weimar Republic, though Stresemann had no liking for a state which had resulted from the defeat of Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1918 and was therefore committed to maintaining the Paris peace settlement. In an anonymous newspaper article Stresemann mentioned 'German Bohemia', as well as Czech opposition to *Anschluss* with Austria, in a list of the disputes which, he claimed, the Treaty of Versailles had created between Germany and all its neighbours. 'Zwischen London und Comerse. Deutschlands Paktpolitik', *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, No. 255, 14 Sept. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 171. Germany concluded an arbitration treaty with Czechoslovakia as well as with Poland at Locarno. F. Gregory Campbell, *Confrontation in Central Europe: Weimar Germany and Czechoslovakia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 141–54.

<sup>51</sup> Stresemann to German embassies, 30 June 1925, Christoph M. Kimmich, *The Free City. Danzig and German Foreign Policy 1919–1934* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 73–5. On the strategic factors behind German claims, Gaines Post, *The Civil–Military Fabric of Weimar Foreign Policy* (thereafter Post, *Weimar Foreign Policy*) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 21–5.

<sup>52</sup> After Seeckt's resignation in October 1926, Stresemann expressed his views openly to the DVP national executive: 'Soviet Russia is very greatly overestimated here; it cannot bring us much economically, nor can it offer us much militarily, and those who believe that we would get out of everything, if we joined the Soviet Union are, I believe, the maddest foreign policy makers.' Speech to the meeting on 19 Mar. 1927, R 45 II/42, Bundesarchiv Koblenz. Stresemann also believed, however,



into the League of Nations leading to a break with the Soviet Union. This was partly in order to maintain joint pressure on Poland, since the Soviet Union had an interest in revising Poland's Eastern frontier to recover the territory lost in the Polish–Soviet war of 1920–1. It was also because of the entrenched opposition which he faced from Hindenburg, Seeckt, the German ambassador to Moscow, Graf von Brockdorff-Rantzau, and nationalist opinion in general to abandoning what was seen as the 'eastern option', symbolized by the Treaty of Rapallo which had been concluded with the Soviet Union in 1922. He therefore set out to achieve, as he told the Cabinet, a 'compromise' between the Western and Eastern policies.<sup>53</sup>

Stresemann intended that this compromise should have three key elements. Germany would refuse any form of recognition of the Polish frontier, which ruled out a non-aggression pact as against an arbitration treaty since a non-aggression pact – like the Locarno Pact – was considered tantamount to recognition. In this way a distinction would be drawn between Germany's Western and Eastern frontiers which underlined its claim to revision. Germany would also refuse to allow France to act as a guarantor of the arbitration treaty with Poland, since France was Poland's ally; this would create a further distinction between the Rhineland pact, which would be guaranteed by external powers (Britain and Italy), and the arbitration treaty with Poland which would not be guaranteed in this way. Most important, Germany would seek an exemption from Article 16 of the League Covenant, in view of its disarmed status, enabling it to remain neutral in a Soviet–Polish war.<sup>54</sup> These three points would, he hoped, be sufficient for Germany to maintain its link with the Soviet Union and their joint pressure on Poland and therefore satisfy his domestic critics.

The discussion of Stresemann's motives has been caused by the ways in which he explained these points to different audiences. At Locarno, he insisted that Germany would give its full moral support to the League in the event of Soviet aggression against Poland, but that because it was disarmed it could not itself take part in sanctions because of the risk of a victorious Red Army threatening its Eastern frontier as had happened briefly during the Polish–Soviet war in 1920.<sup>55</sup> To the Soviet Foreign Minister, Chicherin, however, he had previously given assurances that Germany would use its influence to prevent the League declaring war on the

that the Soviet Union might grow out of Bolshevism and that German trade would promote this process. Stresemann's memorandum of a conversation with Chamberlain, Briand, Vandervelde, Graf Ishii and Scialoja, Geneva, 15 June 1927, *ADAP*, Ser. B, Vol. 5, no. 236, 537–8; the British record is in *DBFP*, Ser. IA, Vol. 3, no. 240, 374–5. Cf. Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann, 'Grossindustrie und Rapallopolitik. Deutsch-sowjetische Handelsbeziehungen in der Weimarer Republik', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 222, no. 2 (1976), 265–341.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 24 June 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. no. 110, 364.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 358–64. Note from the German Government to the French Government, 20 July 1925. The *ADAP* volumes for May–Nov. 1925 have not yet appeared. The note is printed in the collection, Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ed., *Locarno-Konferenz 1925* (Berlin: Rütten & Loening, 1962), 109–13.

<sup>55</sup> German record of the meeting of the Locarno Conference, 8 Oct. 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, ii. no. 179, 697–708; British record, *DBFP*, 1st Ser., Vol. 27, appendix 8, 1110–21; Stresemann's diary, 8 Oct. 1925, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 30, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 191–2.

Soviet Union and that this was the purpose of the German stance on Article 16.<sup>56</sup> The same disparities arose between his interpretations of the arbitration treaty with Poland. The French and British were told that Germany could not agree to a non-aggression pact for fear that that would constitute recognition but that they were willing to accept arbitration treaties which bound Germany to pursue its claims by purely peaceful methods.<sup>57</sup> Chamberlain was initially unable to follow this casuistry and believed that the hapless German ambassador in London, Friedrich Sthamer, was simply being incompetent.<sup>58</sup> Even Friedrich Gaus, the chief legal expert of the *Auswärtiges Amt*, thought that it was best to leave the German position obscure for fear that, if it were clarified, the distinction which Germany wanted to draw between its commitments on the Polish frontier and on the Rhine frontier would be undermined.<sup>59</sup> To Brockdorff-Rantzau, however, Stresemann described the arbitration treaty as merely 'a façade' to enable the French to drop their demand that Poland be included in the security pact.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, to a nationalist audience at home, Stresemann belittled the significance of the arbitration treaty, and of Poland's guarantees from France and under the League covenant – even arguing that there

<sup>56</sup> Stresemann had two meetings with Chicherin on 1 and 2 Oct. 1925 before departing for Locarno. His record, misdated 30 Sept. 1925, is in *Nachlaß Stresemann*, Vol. 272. The version in Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, i. 523–7, is heavily censored. The full text is in Karl Dietrich Erdmann, 'Das Problem der Ost- oder Westorientierung in der Locarno Politik Stresemanns', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, Vol. 6 (1955), 153–62. Walsdorff, *Westorientierung*, 132–8.

<sup>57</sup> Stresemann to Hoesch, 5 Feb. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 12, no. 67, 167; memorandum by Stresemann of a conversation with the French ambassador, de Margerie, 16 Mar. 1925, *ibid.*, no. 169, 420–1; memoranda by von Schubert of two conversations with D'Abernon, 26 Mar. 1925, *ibid.*, nos 201, 202, 514–17.

<sup>58</sup> Chamberlain to D'Abernon, 25 and 26 Mar. 1925, following an incident in which Sthamer asked to see Chamberlain to correct a statement he had just made to the House of Commons about the German position on the Eastern frontiers, *DBFP*, 1st Ser., Vol. 27, nos 269, 416–18, and 273, 421–2. Post, *Weimar Foreign Policy*, 28–31.

<sup>59</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 15 July 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. no. 123, 436. The intricacies of the German position are explored by Peter Krüger, 'Der Deutsch-Polnische Schiedsvertrag im Rahmen der deutschen Sicherheitsinitiative von 1925', *Historische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 230, no. 3 (1980), 577–612. The central point was whether, despite the arbitration treaty, Germany would retain the right under Article 15, paragraph 7 of the League Covenant to take unilateral action in its frontier dispute with Poland in the event that conciliation failed and the League Council did not reach a unanimous view. This was the issue of the so-called 'free hand in the East' which taxed the ingenuity of the lawyers at Locarno. The solution, proposed by the Foreign Office legal adviser Sir Cecil Hurst, was to incorporate a reference into the Locarno Pact (Article 2, clause 3) which restricted the right of both France and Germany to take action under Article 15, paragraph 7 of the Covenant to the case of action 'directed against a State which was the first to attack'. Notes of a Conversation between Members of the British Delegation in Mr. Chamberlain's Room at the Grand Hotel, Locarno, on October 7, 1925 at 10 p.m.; *DBFP*, 1st Ser., Vol. 27, appendix 7, 1108–10. Krüger shows that as a result of internal discussions, officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt*, including Gaus, had come to accept that the frontier question might in any case fall into the category of justiciable issues for which the treaty with Poland provided binding arbitration rather than into the category of political issues for which only the non-binding conciliation procedure was foreseen. If Germany (or Poland) submitted to binding arbitration then its right to a 'free hand', even as restricted by the Locarno Pact, would be undermined. Stresemann, for political reasons, did not want to accept Gaus's view on this issue or acknowledge that Germany's rights under the League were in any way restricted by the Locarno Pact or the arbitration treaties.

<sup>60</sup> Stresemann to Brockdorff-Rantzau, 19 Mar. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 12, no. 182, 458.

were ways to start a war without appearing as the aggressor – and described with satisfaction the way the Polish Foreign Minister, Graf Skrzyński, had been humiliated at Locarno, though he immediately went on to say that he was not thinking of using force to solve the problem of self-determination in the East.<sup>61</sup>

Despite these obvious contradictions in the way Stresemann presented his policy, his main aim was to gain the support of the Western powers for revision. He believed there was no chance of revision in the East without the consent of the Western powers. The Locarno policy was therefore the pre-condition for any revision. As he wrote to Brockdorff-Rantzau, one of his most determined critics, the use of force against Poland even in alliance with the Soviet Union was not an option 'for the foreseeable future'.<sup>62</sup> This meant, as he explained to German journalists, that the only hope of success was in convincing people 'that the greatest danger for the pacification of Europe lies in the conditions in the East'.<sup>63</sup> If Germany could succeed in changing the climate of opinion, then in any future crisis involving Poland it might be able to secure frontier revision. How such a crisis would arise, Stresemann could only speculate. He thought it might come as a result of the Soviet–Polish frontier dispute or as a result of the weakness of the Polish economy. Exactly how Germany would exploit these opportunities was also unclear. In the event of a Soviet–Polish war, Stresemann may have hoped that by remaining neutral Germany would be able to mediate between the Soviet Union and the Western powers. In an anonymous newspaper article he wrote that 'one could well imagine that all these questions will be discussed at a great international conference, which will create a new just order'.<sup>64</sup> The important point was that if a crisis arose 'it may also be possible for Germany to succeed with its demands, if it has previously established ties of political friendship and an economic community of interests with all the world powers who have to decide the issue. In my opinion this is the only practical policy'.<sup>65</sup> The force of this statement is all the greater since it was delivered to the same nationalist audience whom he had previously delighted by ridiculing the arbitration treaty.

Although Stresemann aimed at peaceful revision in the East as in the West, his Polish policy put a strain on the Locarno *détente*. This was partly because it was unclear how peaceful revision could occur. German policy faced something of a

<sup>61</sup> Speech to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Landsmannschaften*, 14 Dec. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. B, i/1, 739–45, 752.

<sup>62</sup> Stresemann to Brockdorff-Rantzau, 19 Mar. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. A, Vol. 12, no. 182, 464.

<sup>63</sup> Stresemann's briefing of the German press, 7 Mar. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii, 72.

<sup>64</sup> 'Die Initiative der deutschen Außenpolitik', *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, no. 100, 10 Apr. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii, 93.

<sup>65</sup> Speech to the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft deutscher Landsmannschaften*, 14 Dec. 1925, *ADAP*, Ser. B, Vol. i/1, 743. He used the same argument to the DVP national executive on 22 Nov. 1925, R 45 II/40, Bundesarchiv Koblenz, published by Henry Ashby Turner, 'Eine Rede Stresemanns über seine Locarnopolitik' (thereafter Turner, 'Eine Rede Stresemanns'), *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 15, no. 4 (1967), 412–36 (reference to revision of the Polish frontier, 429). For a persuasive account of Stresemann's peaceful intentions towards Poland, Robert Grathwol, 'Gustav Stresemann: Reflections on his Foreign Policy', (thereafter Grathwol, 'Stresemann'), *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 45, no. 1 (1973), 67–8.

contradiction: it was in its interest to provoke a crisis in order to demonstrate the need for peaceful revision. In fact, German attempts to put pressure on Poland by a trade war and by exploiting the issue of the German minority at the League were ineffective. Indeed, Stresemann seems to have concluded by 1929 that revision would be better served by normalising relations with Poland. Just before his death, he was about to appoint as secretary of state (in succession to Schubert) the German envoy to Poland, Ulrich Rauscher, who advocated this policy.<sup>66</sup> But the problem for Germany's *détente* with the Western powers lay deeper, in their suspicion about German understandings with the Soviet Union. Stresemann's explanation at Locarno as to why Germany wanted to be able to remain neutral in the event of a Soviet-Polish war was unconvincing. It was obvious that Germany intended to weaken the League's capacity to react to Soviet aggression and this was against the spirit, if not the letter, of the Covenant. Briand, accurately interpreting Stresemann's intentions, warned that it was not possible for Germany 'to stand with one foot in the League of Nations and with the other, or at least the tip of the toe, in another camp'.<sup>67</sup> Stresemann might have avoided this difficulty by simply accepting Article 16, which was not nearly as binding in practice as the Germans assumed. Indeed, having heard Briand and Chamberlain explain their view of the latitude allowed by Article 16, Gaus belatedly suggested to Stresemann that they should, after all, accept it.<sup>68</sup> But Stresemann had committed himself to gaining a formal exemption for political reasons, to satisfy both the Soviet Union and his critics at home. Hindenburg for instance feared Article 16 would be 'a noose around our neck'.<sup>69</sup> Stresemann therefore stuck to the demand and got it, but the suspicion aroused by Germany's dual policy remained. Chamberlain warned Briand that they were engaged in a struggle for 'the soul of Germany' to prevent it turning to the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup>

This brings us back to the questions raised at the beginning of this paper about the character of the Locarno *détente* and of Stresemann's statesmanship. Both were rooted in realism. Stresemann did not believe that the League had transformed the nature of international relations, any more than Briand or Chamberlain. He distinguished his policy from the illusions of those on the left as well as the right.<sup>71</sup> This leaves open the question, however, of what Stresemann thought was realistic

<sup>66</sup> Kurt Doß, *Zwischen Weimar und Warschau. Ulrich Rauscher. Deutscher Gesandter in Polen 1922-1930. Eine politische Biographie* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1984) 89-97.

<sup>67</sup> Meeting of the Locarno Conference, 8 Oct. 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, ii. no. 179, 703. Edward David Keeton, *Briand's Locarno Policy. French Economics, Politics and Diplomacy, 1925-1929* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), 152-5.

<sup>68</sup> Stresemann's diary, 6 Oct. 1925, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 30, Walsdorff, *Westorientierung*, 141.

<sup>69</sup> Pünder to Kempner, 12 Oct. 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, ii. no. 183, 722.

<sup>70</sup> Chamberlain's record of a conversation with Briand, 18 May 1927, *DBFP*, Ser. IA, Vol. 3, no. 201, 309-10. Grathwol points out that both Chamberlain and Briand were well aware of German claims to revision of the Polish frontier and both were prepared to consider the idea at some time in the future. This is not inconsistent, however, with French and British apprehension about German calculations as to how revision would come about and what part the Soviet Union might play. Grathwol, 'Stresemann', 53-4.

<sup>71</sup> Speech to the DVP party conference, 14 Nov. 1924, R 45 II/29, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

for German foreign policy both in the immediate future and in the longer term. What did he see as Germany's natural place in Europe and the world?

His immediate goals have been described above, an accommodation with the Western powers to stabilise the Rhine frontier, enable the German economy to recover and make possible a revision of the Polish frontier. He also discussed on various occasions Austria and the acquisition of colonies.<sup>72</sup> Austria was an emotive issue and one with propaganda value, as an example of self-determination being denied by the Treaty of Versailles, but Stresemann expressed reservations about *Anschluß* in practice, because it would change the balance of power within Germany towards the Catholic and Socialist parties and from north to south.<sup>73</sup> Colonies he dropped in practice after Chamberlain had peremptorily snubbed him on the issue.<sup>74</sup>

How far was this limited programme of revision conditioned by German disarmament? Was the process of Western *détente* simply a tactic which would be discarded once it had achieved its purpose and Germany was rearmed? Stresemann's language on several occasions can be interpreted in this way. When Seeckt attacked him at a critical cabinet meeting before Locarno, arguing that frontiers were never revised peacefully, Stresemann replied simply that 'He agreed in general with the remarks of General von Seeckt but not his conclusions. The role which he [Seeckt] intended for Germany we could only play when we were materially and militarily a power. This would not be the case for a long time ahead.'<sup>75</sup> And to the Crown Prince who wrote, objecting that Germany would lose its freedom of action by joining the League, Stresemann replied, 'The most important thing . . . is the liberation of German territory from foreign occupation. We must first get the strangler from our neck. Therefore German policy as Metternich said of Austria – it must be after 1809 – must in this respect consist first in finessing and avoiding fundamental decisions.'<sup>76</sup> But these passages can also be regarded as skilful ways of deflecting influential opponents. Stresemann enclosed with his letter to the Crown Prince a short work describing the mission of Prince Wilhelm of Prussia to Napoleon in 1808, pointing out the sacrifices Prussia had been prepared to make to persuade Napoleon to relax the Treaty of Tilsit, including offering the then Crown Prince in marriage to a daughter of Joseph Bonaparte.<sup>77</sup> The message was clear:

<sup>72</sup> For instance in his speech to the DVP national executive, 19 March 1927, R 45 II/42, Bundesarchiv Koblenz.

<sup>73</sup> Stanley Suval, *The Anschluss Question in the Weimar Era. A Study of Nationalism in Germany and Austria, 1918–1932* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 127–45.

<sup>74</sup> Stresemann described the incident which occurred at a meeting on 1 Dec. 1925, while he and Luther were in London for the formal signing of the Locarno Treaties, as 'very unpleasant and painful'; diary, 'Beginning of December 1925', Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 272, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 251. Andrew J. Crozier, 'The Colonial Question in Stresemann's Locarno Policy', *International History Review*, Vol. 4, no. 1 (1982), 51–2.

<sup>75</sup> Minutes of the cabinet meeting, 24 June 1925, Minuth, *Kabinette Luther*, i. no. 110, 369.

<sup>76</sup> Stresemann to Crown Prince Wilhelm, 7 Sept. 1925, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 29, Harttung, *Stresemann Schriften*, 336–40. Grathwol, 'Gustav Stresemann', 52–70.

<sup>77</sup> This work, which was written at Stresemann's request by Prince Otto von Bismarck, the grandson of the Chancellor and an employee of the Auswärtiges Amt, was published as Fürst Otto von

entry into the League was a small price compared to that required of Wilhelm's ancestors!

There are good reasons for thinking that the Locarno policy was more than a mere tactic. Stresemann had been close enough to the centre of power in 1918 not to have illusions about the causes of Germany's defeat. He understood the superiority of the Western allies and, having been spectacularly misled by the High Command once, he was not likely to trust German military experts again.<sup>78</sup> The model for his statecraft in the 1920s was Bismarck not Ludendorff. As a realist, he saw German security as best achieved in partnership with the Western allies. It is true that he also understood the role which the Soviet Union might play in a future balance of power in Europe, and he thought that Germany as a great power in the centre of Europe was in a special position to be 'the natural great mediator and bridge between East and West'.<sup>79</sup> As we have seen, he hoped that revision of the Polish frontier could be brought about this way. But he was consistent in rejecting a one-sided alliance with the Soviet Union, warning the Crown Prince prophetically 'against the utopia of flirting with Bolshevism. When the Russians are in Berlin, the red flag will at once fly over the palace and in Russia, where they want world revolution, they will be quite content to have bolshevised Europe as far as the Elbe and they will give the rest of Germany to the French to devour'.<sup>80</sup> There is every reason to suppose that, like Bismarck after 1871, he saw Germany's interests as best secured by peaceful management of the balance of power. War, even a campaign for limited revision against Poland, would carry with it the risk of renewed isolation, jeopardising all the progress that had been made since 1923. As he told the students of Heidelberg in 1928, 'the preservation of peace and the attempts to achieve it are not timidity, are not weakness, they are the real political recognition of our own national interest'.<sup>81</sup> In this stance, he anticipated the peaceful revisionism practised by the Federal Republic after 1949. As Krüger has pointed out, if continuities can be traced in German foreign policy from Bismarck to Hitler, they can also be found between the Locarno policy and that of the Federal Republic.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, the unification of Germany in 1989–90 followed a path similar to that which Strese-

Bismarck, *Prinz Wilhelm und Napoleon. Neue Bilder aus Preussens Notzeit* (Dresden: Carl Reissner, 1929); Stresemann to Eulenberg, 8 Aug. 1928, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, III: *Von Thoiry bis zum Ausklang*, 497.

<sup>78</sup> At a meeting with the leaders of the provincial organisations of the National Liberal Party on 13 Oct. 1918, he spoke of the 'total collapse' of the High Command and criticised their failure to recognise the power of the enemy and their failures in arms production, adding that the Admiralty had been the most incompetent of all. He continued to criticise the Kaiser and the Crown Prince and concluded that 'the old system was absolutely bankrupt, could not have been preserved any longer and also did not deserve to survive any longer'. Notes of his speech, probably taken by a member of the audience, Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 180, Erich Matthias and Rudolf Morsey, eds, *Die Regierung des Prinzen Max von Baden* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1962), 178–80.

<sup>79</sup> Stresemann's radio broadcast, 1 May 1926, to mark the conclusion of the Treaty of Berlin with the Soviet Union; Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 542.

<sup>80</sup> Stresemann to Crown Prince Wilhelm, 7 Sept. 1925, Harttung, *Stresemann Schriften*, 339.

<sup>81</sup> Speech at Heidelberg University, 5 May 1928, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, iii. 487. Eschenburg and Frank-Planitz, *Stresemann*, 113.

<sup>82</sup> Krüger, *Aussenpolitik*, 555. See also, Henry Ashby Turner, 'Continuity in German Foreign Policy? The Case of Stresemann', *International History Review*, Vol. 1, no. 4 (1979), 509–21.

mann had set out in the 1920s: Germany had first established good relations with the world powers on whom its goals depended – the achievement of Adenauer, Brandt and Genscher – so that when a crisis occurred in the Soviet Empire, Kohl enjoyed the support of Washington and the acquiescence of Moscow and peaceful revisionism triumphed.

This interpretation of Stresemann is supported by considering his place in the political spectrum of the Weimar Republic. He was not a racist. He also did not believe that Germany should aim at autarchy. From his pre-war career, in which he had built up an organisation to represent German export industries against the dominant agricultural and Ruhr coal and steel protectionist lobbies, he believed that Germany's future depended on overseas trade, not on the conquest of 'living space'. As foreign minister, he supported trade liberalisation and looked to expand German influence through a series of commercial treaties against the opposition of protectionist lobbies at home and abroad.<sup>83</sup> Although his loyalties were to Germany's national interests, and he was not in that sense a 'European statesman', he was fascinated by the prospects of European economic integration. In a newspaper article in 1925, he looked beyond the security pact to the development of 'economic understanding between the great industrial nations of Europe and beyond that something like the structure of a European community, in comparison to the present system which has created a Europe reminiscent of the old Germany with its dozens of states and customs barriers'. He returned to this theme in his last speech to the League Assembly in September 1929.<sup>84</sup> In domestic politics, he feared nothing so much as the break-down of parliamentary democracy and civil war. His grand strategy of building a consensus around his foreign policy failed at the first test. The DNVP – 'these donkeys' as he called them – could not stomach the Locarno treaties and went back into opposition in October 1925.<sup>85</sup> Stresemann was able to rely on the SPD to provide the majority for his foreign policy but, as he had feared, this produced in time a nationalist backlash and, whipped up by the Depression, the

<sup>83</sup> Krüger, *Aussenpolitik*, 247–58; Berg, *Stresemann*, 94–122, 418–23; Hans-Jürgen Schröder, 'Zur politischen Bedeutung der deutschen Handelspolitik nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in Gerald D. Feldman, Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich, Gerhard A. Ritter and Peter-Christian Witt, eds, *Die deutsche Inflation. Eine Zwischenbilanz* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), 235–51.

<sup>84</sup> 'Zwischen London und Comersee', *Hamburger Fremdenblatt*, No. 255, 14 Sept. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 175; speech to the Assembly of the League of Nations, 9 Sept. 1929, *ibid.*, iii. 577–9. Stresemann was responding in this speech to Briand's proposal for a 'European union'. Stresemann did not want to offend the United States and the *Auswärtiges Amt* feared that Briand's proposal was designed to prevent further revision of the Versailles Treaty, but he was still attracted by the scheme, applying to it one of his favourite quotations, 'Ein großer Einfall scheint im Anfang toll' ('A great idea seems crazy at the start'). Knipping, *Ende der Locarno-Ära*, 88–9. In the same way, after meeting the leading champion of the Pan-Europe movement, Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, on 11 June 1925, Stresemann recorded in his diary, 'Whatever one may think about him, he is certainly a man of exceptional knowledge and great energy. I am convinced that he will yet play a great role.' Nachlaß Stresemann, Vol. 272, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 307. Coudenhove-Kalergi later described Stresemann as an 'enlightened nationalist', noting that his interest in the Pan-Europe movement was to speed revision of Versailles, whereas Briand's was to stabilise it. Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, *An Idea Conquers the World* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), 106–7, 142–3, 156–7.

<sup>85</sup> Speech to the DVP national executive, 22 Nov. 1925, Turner, 'Eine Rede Stresemanns', 427.

triumph of the man whom he had described in 1923 as 'only able to destroy'.<sup>86</sup> It is unthinkable that he would have embarked on the same policy, which was a denial of everything he stood for.

The character of Stresemann's statesmanship only brings into sharper relief, however, the size of the structural problems, domestic and foreign, with which he had to deal. The very fact that he tried to appease nationalist opposition by speaking its language is itself indicative of the constraints on him. It also shows the degree to which he sympathised with his opponents' nationalist sentiments, even while he rejected their arguments. He thought of himself, too, as a German nationalist but in the tradition of Stein and Bismarck, who had also faced the mistrust and opposition of conservative groups. The international problems facing the Locarno *détente* were equally formidable. There was no easy solution to the central problem of the potential threat posed by German recovery to France. Stresemann understood the problem and was appreciative of Briand's efforts to find common solutions to it. He told the national executive of the DVP that Briand had offered more at Locarno than a German government would have done in the same situation.<sup>87</sup> He also understood the importance of responding to public opinion abroad and maintaining the 'spirit of Locarno', referring to what Bismarck had called the 'imponderables' in politics.<sup>88</sup> But none of this was sufficient to overcome the fear of German dominance. In addition, the economic climate did not favour a strategy which depended for its popularity on being able to demonstrate the success of freer trade and export-led growth. The process of peaceful revision was both too slow to become popular in Germany and too fast to reassure the French. When Stresemann died in October 1929, the policy of *détente* was already increasingly under threat, although it was not clear what would replace it. The significance of Stresemann's career was that, rather surprisingly given his background, he had provided a force for integration both for the precarious structure of Weimar democracy and for the equally precarious structure of European peace.<sup>89</sup> As such it was not inappropriate that he should have become a symbol for liberals, and given the problems not surprising that the attempt ultimately failed.

<sup>86</sup> Speech in Halle, 11 Nov. 1923, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, i. 209.

<sup>87</sup> Speech to the DVP national executive, 22 Nov. 1925, Turner, 'Eine Rede Stresemanns', 417–18, 427.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 426–7; speech to the press in Dresden, 31 Oct. 1925, Bernhard, *Vermächtnis*, ii. 217–18; Stresemann's radio broadcast on the Treaty of Locarno, 3 Nov. 1924, Rheinbaben, *Stresemann*, ii. 215.

<sup>89</sup> Karl Dietrich Erdmann, *Gustav Stresemann: The Revision of Versailles and the Weimar Parliamentary System* (London: German Historical Institute, Annual Lecture, 1980).