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THE GERMAN ATTEMPT TO REFORM THE LEAGUE
THE FAILURE OF GERMAN LEAGUE
OF NATIONS POLICY, 1930-1932

When Germany entered the League of Nations in 1926, she was allotted a number of positions within the League hierarchy to be filled by German nationals who would then become »international diplomats« of the Secretariat. As the administrative arm of the League, the highest level of the Secretariat was composed of the Secretary-General and his Deputy, together with three Undersecretaries-General. This structure was designed to allow representation for all of the »Great Powers« – those with truly »world-wide interests« – to participate in the highest level of League management. By unwritten agreement Britain and France initially divided the two highest posts. The first Secretary-General, Sir Eric Drummond, chose as his Deputy the Frenchman Joseph Avenol. Upon the German arrival, the three Undersecretaries-General were shared by Germany, Italy and Japan, the remaining Great Powers who were members of the League. The Undersecretaries-General were officially in control of a specific section(s) of the Secretariat but in fact they were intended to serve more as liaison between the League and their home governments, the real administrative work being done by Directors and Heads of Section under them. Nevertheless, as League officials, it was hoped that the Undersecretaries-General and all other such appointments would rise above national considerations to become servants of the League. In reality, though, they composed nationalistic knots within the international fabric of the Secretariat. It was with a profound sense of national gain, then, that the Wilhelmstrasse submitted the German nominations for the Secretariat to the Secretary-General.

During the initial months of 1926, the Wilhelmstrasse had been forced to abandon wistfully exaggerated estimates of the number of officials Berlin would place within the Secretariat. German demands, which in the winter of 1923-24 found their origin in an estimate of between forty-one and fifty-nine Secretariat positions and whose author judiciously elected

to remain anonymous, had been whittled down by Drummond to ten. He and Senior Counsellor Dr. Bernhard von Bülow, the head of the League Section of the German Foreign Ministry, agreed in February 1926 that Germany should receive one Undersecretary-General, while the German contingent would number ten.¹

By early 1927, all but one of the German Secretariat positions had been filled. The highest position, that of Undersecretary-General and Director of the International Intellectual Cooperation Section and International Bureaux, went to Albert Dufour-Feronce. On paper Dufour was undoubtedly the most important German in the League. As liaison between Drummond and Berlin he was the most sensitive link in any communication between Geneva and Berlin. As Undersecretary-General he was privy to the highest business of the League as well as participant in the weekly cabinet sessions at which League policy was conceived. But he lacked the requisite political vision to be anything more than a talented conversationalist. For this reason he was given a bright young assistant, Dr. Werner von Schmieden. Schmieden was packed off to Geneva by State Secretary Carl von Schubert with the parting comment that, *We are sending you to Geneva as Dufour's corset-stay*, a pointed reference to the portly Dufour's analytical flabbiness.²

The other German positions in the Secretariat were occupied by lesser lights. The brash young Cecil von Renthe-Fink, husband of State Secretary Carl von Schubert's niece, assumed the position of Member of Section in the Political Section. There were others: German members of the Economic and Financial Section (Husslein), the Communications and Transit Section (Seeliger), the Health Section (Olsen), the Disarmament Section (Nolda) and a German member of the staff of the League printing office. But none of these individuals played a significant role in German League

¹ »Vorläufige Zusammenstellung der deutschen Forderungen auf Beteiligung am General-Sekretariat des Völkerbundes,« Berlin ca. 1923–1924 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Organisation des Sekretariats/Bd. 1); Aschmann to AA: telegram, Geneva 23. XII. 25 (Ibid.); unsigned: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin »ca. Dec. 1925« (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II Allg./Bd. 1); Bülow: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 12. II 26 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II Allg./Bd. 2). Note: the Political Archives of the German Foreign Ministry, *Das Auswärtige Amt*, has been abbreviated »AA.« Likewise, the *Bundesarchiv* appears as »BA«, the League of Nations Archive as »LoN,« the French Foreign Ministry as »QdO« and the Public Record Office as »PRO.«

² During 1972 the author had the opportunity to interview certain individuals, former German League officials, among them Dr. Werner von Schmieden, Dr. Kurt von Kamphoevener, M. Thanasis Aghnides and M. Adrian Pelt. In addition, Dr. von Schmieden was kind enough to permit me to read his confidential autobiographical report to the German Foreign Ministry of his League activities. This report, still confidential, is the property of the German Foreign Ministry and I am indebted to both Dr. von Schmieden and the ministry for their co-operation. Throughout this endeavor the confidence of these sources has been maintained.

affairs. In fact, their mediocrity was cause for Drummond's criticism, when, in 1931, he complained to Dr. Julius Curtius, the German Foreign Minister, that only one of the Germans in the League was *really first-class*. He was referring to Dr. Paul Barandon, legal expert of the Foreign Ministry and member of the Legal Section of the Secretariat. Without question the most capable member of the German contingent, Barandon served quietly behind the scenes from his entry in February 1927 until his contract expired six years later. The lone remaining position, that of German Member of Section in the Information Department, was not filled until September 1927. After a year of haggling, the noted journalist and correspondent for the »Kölnische Zeitung«, Dr. Max Beer, came to terms with both the Wilhelmstrasse and the League.³

This, briefly, was the scope of the German presence in the Secretariat. There were, of course, other dimensions to the German League effort. In the Wilhelmstrasse itself, League affairs were managed through the League Section, or *Referat Völkerbund*. Unofficially, much business and intelligence gathering was conducted by the German consulate in Geneva, while officially, German delegations journeyed to Geneva on a quarterly basis to participate in the Council sessions and the annual Assembly. It was the small contingent of Germans in the Secretariat, however, who participated in the day-to-day administration of the League and who, by their influence, could possibly effect the course of League affairs. Such was the hope of the Wilhelmstrasse, which placed great stock in the eventual ability of the Germans in the Secretariat to alter League policies.

What began in 1927 as a highly polished and successful German League effort, by dint of a constructive policy and a certain degree of good fortune, quickly soured. By late 1929 events had conspired to produce deep dissatisfaction with the League among many Germans. During the first three years of her participation German initiatives in both the disarmament and security talks, as well as minorities questions, had met with frustration. In addition, what few personnel changes had occurred in the Secretariat had not favored Germany. To most Germans the cause of their frustration was obvious: the Anglo-French domination of the League

³ Curtius: Abschrift Berlin 24.IV.31 (BA: Alte Reichskanzlei, AA 5/Bd. 6, D805862-76). Beer's conduct and the immense monetary gains he extorted not only from his colleagues in Berlin but from the Secretariat as well were a deep embarrassment to the Wilhelmstrasse. While Beer remained in the Information Department he served energetically, but throughout his tenure his effectiveness was compromised by his self-serving attempts to acquire greater power and status within his agency. Finally, following a confrontation with Drummond and the Director of the Information Department, the Frenchman Pierre Comert, Beer resigned from the League in January 1931. These and additional details on all of the Germans associated with the League can be found in: Marshall M. LEE, *Failure in Geneva. The German Foreign Ministry and the League of Nations, 1926-1933*, (Dissertation, Wisconsin, 1974).

made it impossible for Berlin to influence League policy. This argument appealed to most Germans for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that it relieved them of the responsibility for their own questionable policy. Almost as satisfying was the fact that a League dominated by London and Paris conformed perfectly to the popular German conception of the League as nothing more than an appendage of the Versailles Treaty. As such, most Germans were convinced by 1929 that the League was a stacked deck, stacked against Germany. From the beginning, moreover, certain Germans in the Secretariat had complained that Germany's position in the League bureaucracy was not commensurate with her position in the international community. At first these complaints were of a uniformly personal nature, concerned primarily with status and salaries. Gradually, however, these objections transcended their original petty origins to focus on genuine failings in the Secretariat structure.⁴

By such sentiments the Germans joined a growing number who viewed with dismay the waning internationalism of the League. On 2 July 1928 an article attributed to Professor Deslisle Burns of the London School of Economics was published in the »Manchester Guardian«. The author leveled broad criticism at the Secretariat officials, particularly the increased politicization which was taking place along national lines. A week later Dufour enthusiastically wrote Ministerialdirektor Dr. Gerhard Köpke that he was in complete agreement with the article. He lamented the fact that it had become more popular to appoint people *who enjoyed the confidence of their own government* to the Secretariat. What Dufour chose to ignore, however, was that almost all of the Germans enjoyed the Wilhelmstrasse's confidence and with several exceptions came from the Foreign Ministry or one of its sister ministries. In 1926 Germany had felt moved to appoint men of experience and authority to the Secretariat in an attempt to compensate for her late arrival.⁵

The »Manchester Guardian« article had an immediate effect on the League. There were cries in the Secretariat that the »Special Committee to examine Secretariat salaries and other relevant questions« be given the latitude to pursue Secretariat reform. This Drummond resisted. Much to his dismay, however, the issue gathered momentum during August.

The »Committee for the revision of staff regulations« convened seven times between August 1928 and the end of the year. Although Berlin had every interest in opening the reform question, things did not go particu-

⁴ LEE, *Failure in Geneva*, pp. 99-107.

⁵ *Manchester Guardian* (2. VII. 28); Aschmann to AA: telegram, Geneva 9.IX.28 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Organ. des Sekretar./Bd 2); Dufour to Köpke: letter, Geneva 9.VIII.28 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Organ. des Sekretar./Bd. 1); Egon Wertheimer, *The International Secretariat* (Washington, D.C., 1945), pp.402-403.

larly well. The committee's two opposing plans were both unfavorable to Germany. An increase in the number of Undersecretaries-General would have debased the value of the three existing posts, while the elimination of the positions was altogether unthinkable without major compensation. Despite warnings to this effect, the committee continued to refine the two alternatives. At the same time, the Secretary-General was preparing his own suggestions concerning reform. These, it developed, were no improvement over the committee's alternatives, as far as Berlin was concerned.⁶

Beer and Dufour collaborated on the German response, which was submitted to Drummond on 20 May. The German reply sounded the keynote of the German reform effort: any reform plan would have to provide the Germans with a means of overcoming what they viewed as the handicap of their late arrival in the League. In addition, the combination of Drummond's plan and the two proposals before the Special Committee posed a serious threat to present as well as future German Secretariat personnel. While the prestige of numerous Heads of Section, Class-A and Class-B positions was desirable, what really mattered were the highest offices: Secretary-General, Deputy Secretary-General, the Undersecretaries-General and possibly the Directors. If a balance was struck among these offices, then perhaps the Anglo-French hold could be loosened. In this vein Dufour raised what became the central issue of the entire reform debate: the higher administration of the Secretariat, or *Haute Direction*, as it was known among the Geneva community.⁷

The opening session of the Committee of Thirteen proved a severe jolt to German reform ambitions. Over Count Johann von Bernstorff's objections the committee recommended the dissolution of the distinction between Class-A and Class-B positions. This, taken with the committee's approval of Cécil's suggested elevation of all Directors to Undersecretaries-General, represented a grave threat to German hopes. The Wilhelmstrasse was therefore deeply distressed with the committee's first session and much criticism was leveled at Bernstorff for the way in which he had handled the German chores at the talks.⁸

⁶ Minutes of the 10th Meeting of the Committee for the Revision of Staff Regulations, Geneva 3.I.29 (LoN: Section Service Intérieurs et du Secrétariat, S. 928/Bureau du Personnel); Minutes of the 11th Meeting of the Committee for the Revision of Staff Regulations, Geneva 4.I.29 (*Ibid.*); Note on the Proceedings of the Committee appointed to Revise Staff Regulations, Geneva 17.II.29 (*Ibid.*).

⁷ Beer to Dufour: letter, Geneva 17.V.29 (AA: Referat Völkerbund Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 1, L227762-67); Dufour to Drummond: letter, Geneva 20.V.29 (*Ibid.*, L227775-780).

⁸ »The Committee of Thirteen« was actually the IV. Committee of the Assembly (Budget and Financial), whose responsibility it was to oversee any possible Secretariat Reform. Provisional Minutes of the Committee of Enquiry on the Organization of the Secretariat, ILO and the Registry of the Permanent Court of International Justice: 3rd

To those who sought to overturn the Anglo-French domination of the League by means of reform, and they numbered among Bernstorff's severest critics, the answer seemed self-evident: Germany should receive additional Secretariat positions to offset the numerical superiority of her opponents. Each year the ratio of German positions to French and British positions was charted with the same grim determination which had marked the Dreadnaught race before the Great War. The press, which was negligent in its persistent ignorance of Secretariat personnel practices, did much to promote the feeling among Germans that they were discriminated against in Geneva. Incredibly, as late as February 1930, one German daily made the claim that *not one single German was to be found in the higher levels of the League Secretariat*. Although the »Neue Preussische Kreuz-Zeitung« represented perhaps the most illinformed extreme, its more prestigious sister journals cried for greater numerical equality.⁹

While the press' ignorance of League politics is hardly forgivable, the sad fact remains that the vast majority in the Wilhelmstrasse clung to the same beliefs. Only Ernst Freiherr von Weizsäcker, Bülow's successor in the League Section, ventured to challenge the validity of a numerical comparison. In an effort to educate his colleagues he circulated a memorandum in late February 1930 which demonstrated beyond a doubt that Germany not only held numerical equality but could be well satisfied with the qualitative measure of her positions. Weizsäcker demonstrated that while England and Italy both had eleven officials, Germany and France had nine apiece. Thus, on a purely numerical basis, the German position could not be called inferior. At first glance, however, the fact that all but one of Germany's officials were Members of Section, not Heads of Section or Directors, seemed to justify the criticism that although Germany had quantitative equality, qualitatively her positions were of a lesser stature. This was the most frequently heard complaint in the Wilhelmstrasse. Again Weizsäcker took exception. He reminded his colleagues that Germany had arrived late on the League scene and that at the time of her entry all the important positions were occupied. Nevertheless, Germany had officials in every important section: the Economic and Financial Sections, the Political Section, the Information Department, the Legal De-

Meeting, Geneva 29.I.30 (LoN: Section Service Intérieur et du Secretariat, S. 929/Bureau du Personnel, Organisation générale, Commission des 13.); unsigned: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 11.III.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 3, L227977-998); Weizsäcker: »Notiz für Presseabt.« Berlin 4.II.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 2, L227915-917); Schnurre: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 18.III.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 3, L228001-8008) Bülow: marginalia to Schnurre *Aufzeichnung*, (Berlin) 20.III.(30) (Ibid., L228009).

⁹ *Neue Preussische Kreuz Zeitung* (2.II.30); *Berliner Börsen Zeitung* (29.I.30); *Der Tag* (2.II.30).

partment and the Transit Section, as well as the Health Section and the International Intellectual Cooperation Section. Germany, he explained, preferred not to be represented in the Minority Section, since to demand a position would provoke a similar demand from Poland. Likewise, the Wilhelmstrasse preferred to deal with mandate questions in the Permanent Mandate Commission rather than the Mandate Section. *If one considers all of this and will but glance at the figures cited above, concluded Weizsäcker, it is impossible to claim that German participation in the Secretariat today is anything but completely sufficient.*¹⁰

Such an admission in the midst of the Wilhelmstrasse's reform effort approached heresy. It was significant, moreover, that its author was no great friend of either the League or Germany's policy therein. Weizsäcker's comments were thoroughly objective. They agreed with similar statistics gathered by the Quai d'Orsay. Nevertheless, they failed to tell the entire story. When one consults the »Staff List of the Secretariat,« published annually by the League under a »strictly confidential« flag, it becomes evident that at no time from 1927 to 1930 did the French have more Secretariat officials than the Germans. In fact, from 1927 to 1929, the Germans, with nine, had one more than the French. Furthermore, by 1929, the Germans lagged behind the British by only one official. Finally, at no time did the Italians have more officials than the Germans. On a purely mathematical basis, then, Weizsäcker's comments gain impact, since he had erred *a g a i n s t* Germany in his calculations.¹¹

It took several weeks for Weizsäcker's colleagues to digest his memorandum. The result was, however, that March was a turning-point in the German reform effort. Having seized the reform issue in 1929 as a means to offset the Anglo-French imbalance in the Secretariat, the Wilhelmstrasse had then failed to articulate a cohesive reform plan. The upshot of this ill-preparedness was that the Committee of Thirteen had adopted Cecil's plan, whose realization would not only elevate the Directors and Heads of Section (of which Germany had none) to Undersecretaries-General, but which would, by sheer weight of numbers, make the German Undersecretary-General insignificant. German anxiety was heightened by growing uneasiness over the prospect of Drummond's eventual resignation as Secretary General. During spring 1930, therefore, the decision was reached to take concrete steps toward a reform scheme which would assure that the German position would not be undermined by the committee's work. The change from offensive to defensive strategy, however, in no way

¹⁰ Weizsäcker: »Notiz über die deutsche Beteiligung am Sekretariat des Völkerbundes«, Berlin 18.II.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II Allg./Bd. 3).

¹¹ »Tableau recapitulatif du personnel du Secrétariat classé par nationalités:« Paris I.29 (QdO: SdN, Secrétariat Général 50/Organisation et Personnel, II).

presaged the abandonment of the ultimate German goal: offsetting the Anglo-French imbalance.¹²

The Committee of Thirteen met in June. Its deliberations were marked by Italo-German cooperation and their repeated frustration at the hands of the majority. Bernstorff and the Italian Gallavresi agreed on virtually every point: they opposed long-term contracts for everyone but translators and technicians; they supported the collegial principle the political administration of the Secretariat by the First Secretaries General they called for the elimination of the Deputy Secretary-General. In every instance they were a minority of two. The majority, on the other hand, in apparent prearrangement, voted to increase the number of Undersecretaries-General by five. Even the lesser powers, whom Germany had hoped to woo with promises of breaking the Anglo-French bloc, voted with the majority. There appeared no alternative to a minority report. Despite doubts, both Bernstorff and his assistant, Senior Counsellor Hans Frohwein, relented to the combined pressure from Berlin and the Italians; the Italo-German position, worked out in April and May by Dufour and Paulucci, formed the basis for their dissenting opinion.¹³

Rather than the collegial principle embraced by the minority, the majority advocated closer co-operation between the Secretaries-General and the Directors. They therefore proposed the creation of five new Undersecretaries-General. The Secretary-General, however, informed the committee that at present he would only add two Undersecretaries-General, one of which would be the Legal Adviser. It was assumed, though, that eventually the other Undersecretaries-General would come from the ranks of non-Council nations.¹⁴

The minority challenged an increase in the number of Undersecretaries-General. Under the protective cloak of the collegial principle Bernstorff and Gallavresi attempted to fortify the privileged position of the permanent Council members in the Secretariat. Their aim was not only to limit the ranks of the Undersecretaries-General to five but to increase their own role in Secretariat management. This fortification of privilege was complete with the proposed reorganization of the sections among five

¹² Dufour to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 10.IV.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 3, L228073); Pietromarchie & Schmieden: »Vorläufiger Plan eines Berichts der Minderheit des Dreizehner-Ausschusses« Geneva 18.IV.30 (Ibid., L228081-090).

¹³ Frohwein to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 17.VI.30 (Ibid., L228130-35); Frohwein to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 18.VI.30 (Ibid., L228137-39); Frohwein to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 26.VI.30 (Ibid., L228144-45).

¹⁴ Committee of Enquiry on the Organisation of the Secretariat, the International Labor Office and the Registry of the Permanent Court of International Justice (Committee of Thirteen): Report of the Committee, Geneva 28.VI.30 (LoN: Official No. A.16.1930).

Undersecretaries-General. But the fact remained that the dissenting opinion was likely to have little effect in September. The Wilhelmstrasse gamely tried to convince itself and its embassies throughout the world that the majority report was nothing but a further example of the collusion between the British and the French. The minority, as the Wilhelmstrasse saw it, *sought to avoid the increased bureaucratization of the majority plan while attempting to divide Secretariat administration, among the remaining Great Powers* [i. e., Germany, Italy, Japan]. These were brave words, but they failed to hide the fact that unless a last minute reprieve could be found, the majority report would be adopted.¹⁵

Providentially, one was found. Foreign Minister Julius Curtius reached a compromise with Arthur Henderson during the Assembly whereby the question of the higher administration of the Secretariat was referred back to the Committee of Thirteen in exchange for German agreement to the remainder of the committee's report. Curtius thereby accepted the elimination of the distinction between Class-A and Class-B members, long-term contracts and a pension system. The solution was highly satisfying to the Wilhelmstrasse, since, by agreeing to points likely to carry over German objection, the crucial question was left unsolved.¹⁶

During the fall the Germans found it necessary to review again their policy. The picture had changed considerably during the past year. It was now clear that Drummond's desire to see the reform question through was part of his design to insure the smooth transfer of power to his successor. The coming year made reform all the more important, since both Dufour's and Paulucci's contracts would expire in 1931. Avenol's expired in 1932 and Drummond himself intended to leave in 1933. In their effort to accommodate those circumstances Berlin, accepted the necessity of an understanding with its adversaries. The September compromise with Henderson was the initial breakthrough.¹⁷

The Committee of Thirteen reconvened following the Council in January 1931. At issue was the fate of the Undersecretaries-General. The Germans now viewed the status quo as the only tenable position, in light of the committee's past recommendations. Sensing its delicate predicament, however, Berlin had already hinted at a willingness to do away with the Undersecretaries-General if guarantees existed that no two great powers or two small powers would occupy the posts of Secre-

¹⁵ Bülow to all posts: telegram, Berlin 19.VII.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 3, L228208-214); »Auszug aus der Niederschrift über die Ministerbesprechung vom 3.IX.30« (BA: Alte Reichskanzlei, AA 5/Bd. 6, D805647-654).

¹⁶ Curtius to AA: telegram, Geneva 27.IX.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 4, L228320-21).

¹⁷ Dufour: *Aufzeichnungen*, Geneva 3., 7. & 14.XII.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. I Allg./Bd. 6)

tary-General and his Deputy simultaneously. By January, moreover, the Wilhelmstrasse had committed itself to a continued British domination of the League, if Germany could thereby secure a reduction in the number of French officials in the Secretariat. The session produced the understanding that the status quo would indeed prevail for the time being, but for no more than three years after Drummond's departure.¹⁸

Frohwein jubilantly reported to Weizsäcker that the result was more than Berlin could have hoped. For the first time the Anglo-French bloc had suffered a reversal. The committee's vote demonstrated to the Germans that the Anglo-French camp was vulnerable but also that a coalition of dissatisfied Great Powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) and secondary non-Council powers could prevail. Similarly, the press celebrated the status quo as a great victory. The fact, however, that the committee's expression of its willingness to abide by the status quo was construed as a victory, demonstrates just how badly the German reform effort had foundered. Since 1929 not one single significant German reform objective had been realized. The collegial principle had perished, leaving the directorate of the Secretary-General and his Deputy intact. The distinction between Class-A and Class-B Members of Section had been erased, dealing German members, the preponderance of whom were Class-A, a severe prestige blow. Berlin's desperate bid to eliminate the Secretaries-General rather than increase their number had also failed. The Anglo-French bloc, on the other hand, despite Berlin's euphoric statements, had suffered no reversal; its influence remained undiminished.¹⁹

Indeed, the months that followed produced such jarring setbacks for German foreign policy that the Wilhelmstrasse could ill afford to rest for long on the dubious laurels of a victory fashioned from the status quo. The world depression had struck Germany with special force. In 1930, to a Germany whose economic woes were still more severe than her political discomfort, an economic adjustment in Europe appeared to hold out the promise of salvation. The subsequent collapse of the Austro-German

¹⁸ Unsigned: »Aufgaben des Dreizehner-Ausschusses,« (Berlin) no date (initialled: 10. 11.XI.30) (*Ibid.*, L228337-38); Weizsäcker: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 6.I.31 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5, L228340-45); E.H. Carr: *Minute*, Geneva 23.I.31 (PRO: Political, Western/LoN 371, 15720); Frohwein: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 29.I.31 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5 L228353-54); E.H. Carr: *Minute*, Geneva 20.I.31 (PRO: Political, Western/LoN 371, 15720); Cecil to Massigli: handwritten note, London 29.I.31 (QdO: Secrétariat Général 50/Organisation et Personnel, II); Frohwein to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 2.II.31 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5, L228355-57); Frohwein to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 4.II.31 (*Ibid.*, L228360-63); Bernstorff to AA: telegram, Geneva 6.II.31 (*Ibid.*, L228369-72); Friedburg to all posts: telegram, Berlin 17.II.31 (*Ibid.*, L228394-97).

¹⁹ *Germania* (4. II. 31); *Deutsche Tageszeitung* (4.II.31); *Dresdener Neueste Nachrichten* (5.II.31).

Customs Union only proved more conclusively than ever to the Germans at home that the League was an instrument played solely for the enjoyment of France. The time was clearly at hand for a decisive bid to reverse the anti-German trend in the League. While a small number of German diplomats realized that the recent setbacks were as much the fault of ill-conceived German policy and inadequate representation at the League, the bulk of those at the Wilhelmstrasse still adhered to the belief that given the opportunity Germany could even now overcome the Anglo-French predominance in the Secretariat.²⁰

The Germans did not have to wait long for the issue to come up. On 25 January, 1932 Sir Erich made public his intention to retire from the League. In a letter to the President of the Council he confirmed what had been the subject of rumor and speculation for years. Drummond's formal announcement reintroduced an air of urgency into the reform question, an issue which had lain fallow since February 1931.²¹

The mood in Berlin was apprehensive. Vaguely aware that certain bargains had been struck at Versailles between London and Paris, the Wilhelmstrasse could not be certain that Drummond's successor would not be a Frenchman. The Germans had a general picture of what the post-Drummond Secretariat would look like if they had their way; their problem was how to give life to their vision. For years the Wilhelmstrasse had taken for granted that another Englishman would succeed Drummond. They had also optimistically envisioned a Deputy from a secondary power. By 1931 this was considered a remote possibility. Bülow, State Secretary since mid-1930, confidently anticipated a neutral Secretary-General, with perhaps a Japanese Deputy and fifteen Directors. As for the German position in the Secretariat, this was to be improved. With the general shuffle in the Secretariat as Drummond, Avenol, Dufour and Paulucci (the latter two men having had their contracts extended one year) all departed, the Wilhelmstrasse expected to improve Germany's position by receiving not the International Intellectual Cooperation Section, but one with considerably more prestige and influence: the Economic and Financial Sections.²²

German demands for the Economic and Financial Sections predated her entry. She had always considered herself the most qualified nation to assume control of League economic affairs. With Avenol's retire-

²⁰ LEE, *Failure in Geneva*, pp. 125-130.

²¹ Massigli to Paris: telegram, Geneva 25.I.32 (QdO: SdN, Secrétariat Général/51; Dufour to Bülow: letter, Geneva 3. IX.31 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 1.).

²² Dufour to Weizsäcker: letter, Geneva 1.II.29 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. I Allg./Bd. 5); Bülow to Stresemann and Schubert: Berlin 6.II.29 (*Ibid.*); Bülow: marginalia to Wertheimer memorandum, Geneva 7.IX.31 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal Akten #490/Wertheimer).

ment approaching the Wilhelmstrasse revived its claim and by 1932 fully expected that the German Undersecretary-General who would succeed Dufour would also serve as Director of the Economic and Financial Sections. It was therefore toward a vision of a somewhat neutralized Secretariat and a German Director of the Economic and Financial Sections that the Wilhelmstrasse bent its effort in 1932.²³

Drummond's announcement set off a scramble to find the best successor to the Secretary-General. By early February the German list comprised four neutrals: three Scandinavians and a Dutchman. By mid-April the German list had swollen to nine. Among the mostly neutral ranks of the list was the name of the Deputy Secretary-General Avenol. Berlin had already discovered that the list of truly qualified candidates was severely limited.²⁴

The reform issue completely recaptured the spotlight in May 1932 with the sudden death of the Director of the International Labor Organization, Albert Thomas. The Frenchman was succeeded by an Englishman Harold Butler, his assistant for many years. The succession of a Frenchman by an Englishman and the addition of another high official to the British list virtually assured the maintenance of the existing number of Frenchmen in the Secretariat. The impact on the succession of the Secretary-General and his Deputy was obvious. Paris was sure to promote a French candidate for one of the two posts, probably the higher. Nevertheless, should an Englishman be chosen to succeed Drummond – an unlikely event – the French would undoubtedly insist on adherence to the »gentlemen's agreement« giving them the Deputy position under a British Secretary-General. Under these circumstances Bülow sent out an urgent appeal to all German diplomatic posts on 27 May for suggestions as to qualified neutral candidates.²⁵

The State Secretary concluded his appeal with the statement that although Avenol was *a calm and objective man, whoch always attempts to deal with German affairs justly . . . his selection as Secretary-General is beyond discussion for Germany*. But events in Paris were running ahead of Bülow. Throughout the year Paris had been preparing for just such a contingency. With Thomas' death, Avenol's candidacy for Secretary-General appeared self-evident to Paris. The Quai d'Orsay expected both

²³ Bail to AA: Berlin 2.III.26 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II A 3/Bd. 1); Dufour to Frohwein: letter, Geneva 17.XI.30 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. I Allg./Bd. 6); Köpke to Dufour: letter, Berlin 4.XII.30 (Ibid.); Dufour to Bülow: letter, Geneva 29.XI.30 (Ibid.).

²⁴ Köpke: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 6.II.32 (AA: Réferat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 1); Dufour to Bülow: letter, Geneva 27.III.32 (Ibid.); unsigned: (Berlin) 12.IV.32 (Ibid.).

²⁵ Bülow to all posts: telegram, Berlin 27.V.32 (Ibid.).

British and Italian support for Avenol's candidacy, both having preferred it earlier. The lack of any other serious contender made the French case that much stronger.²⁶

At the same instant Berlin was steeling itself to Avenol it was warming up for a renewed reform offensive. If Germany was to abide by Avenol, some changes would have to be forthcoming in the Secretariat. A new plan was formulated, one which combined elements of former German demands but attempted to match more closely the reality of Secretariat organization. The Wilhelmstrasse accepted both the present *comité de direction* principle and the addition of two more Undersecretaries-General. Berlin was confident that Paris was in a conciliatory position and intended to use this to great advantage. Paris was indeed willing to bargain. Instructions from the Quai d'Orsay to its delegation to the Assembly stressed the need for great caution to avoid an unnecessary confrontation. *In a word*, the instructions concluded, *the particular circumstances which created the possibility of France gaining the post of Secretary-General call for an attitude of conciliation and prudence with respect to reform of the haute direction of the Secretariat.*²⁷

The Germans were quickly disappointed, however. Their closest ally in the reform struggle had always been Italy. Now, when the Wilhelmstrasse needed their support more than ever, the Italians informed the Germans that they would not back any plan to alter the status quo. The Wilhelmstrasse had known since March that the Italians had set their sights on the Deputy Secretary-General. Because the German plan would have done away with a separate Deputy position, Berlin could hardly expect enthusiastic Italian support. The Germans nevertheless attempted throughout the Assembly to reestablish the former Italo-German coalition. Their efforts proved futile. Rome had been successfully fobbed off by London and Paris.²⁸

²⁶ Berthelot to Massigli: letter, Paris 4.II.32 (QdO: SdN, Secrétariat Général/51); unsigned: »Note pour le Président du Conseil,« Paris 13.IV.32 (Ibid.); James Banos, *Betrayal from Within. Joseph Avenol, Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 1933-1940* (New Haven, 1969) pp.1-14.

²⁷ Dufour to Kamphoevener: letter, Geneva 9.VI.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 1); Dufour to Krauel: letter, Geneva 25.VII.32 (Ibid.); Krauel: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 29.VII.32 (Ibid.); Dufour to Krauel: letter, Geneva 8.VIII.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5, L228528-532); Krauel: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 29.VII.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 1); Dufour to Krauel: letter, Geneva 8.VIII.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5, L228536); Kamphoevener: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 10.IX.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 1); Renthe-Fink to Krauel: letter, Geneva, 1.VIII.32 (Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 5 L228500-503); Renthe-Fink to Krauel: letter, Geneva 10.VIII.32 (Ibid., L228538-541); Krauel to Bülow and Köpke: Berlin 23.IX.32 (Ibid., L228590); unsigned: »Note pour le représentant de la France,« Paris IX.32 (QdO: SdN, Assemblée 22).

²⁸ Neurath: *Aufzeichnung*, Geneva 25.IX.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg.

Without Italian support the Germans quickly realized the bulk of their reform package was hopeless. They were forced to change their tactics, dropping structural reform to concentrate on securing not only the Economic and Financial Sections but the ouster of a French official as well. If Germany consented to a French Secretary-General the German public must be given *proof that in the future German influence in the haute direction of the Secretariat will, to a reasonable and justified extent, play a more important role*. Drummond communicated the German demand to the British, who, with the French, made a counter-proposal on 8 October. The number of Undersecretaries-General should be raised by only one, the elevation of the Legal Adviser. There should be, however, two Deputy Secretaries-General. Finally, to the surprise of the German camp, the proposal suggested that no more than two high officials – from Director up – could be of the same nationality at the same time. The Anglo-French plan had the support of Italy and a growing number of secondary powers under the leadership of Spain, who was actively campaigning for the second Deputy position.²⁹

Almost overnight the German position had become extremely precarious. The possibility of a second Deputy came as a shock to Berlin. By now, however, events were moving so quickly that the Germans in Berlin could scarcely keep abreast of the developments in Geneva. The cabinet hastily convened on 14 October to determine how Germany could save the situation, if indeed she should. Desperate measures were in order. Under no circumstances could Germany allow any alteration in the Secretariat or its personnel without the proposed guarantees that no more than two high officials of the same nationality hold positions simultaneously. The Germans seized this part of the Anglo-French proposal – the »maximum-two rule« – in hopes of forcing one French official out of the Secretariat, should Avenol become Secretary-General. More serious, however, was the fact, according to Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, that an additional Deputy *would so diminish the position of a German Undersecretary-General and his influence in the Secretariat that it appears necessary to consider, in addition to the occupation of the*

des Sekretar./Bd. 5, L228598); Neurath: *Aufzeichnung*, Geneva 25.IX.32 (AA: Büro Reichsminister, 18/Bd. 30, D663741); Dufour to Bülow: letter, Geneva 27.IX.32 (AA: Büro Staatssekretär, Akten von Bülow, Pol. B/Bd. 5); Bülow to Rome: telegram, Berlin 19.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 6, L228683-85).

²⁹ Bülow: *Abschrift*, Berlin 5.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Personal/Bd. 2); Rosenberg to Bülow: telephone message, Geneva 5.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 6 L228607-609); Krauel: Berlin 7.X.32 (*Ibid.*, L228618-19); Kamphoevener to AA: telegram, Geneva 8.X.32 (*Ibid.*, L228626-27); Kamphoevener to AA: telegram, Geneva 13.X.32 (*Ibid.*); Bülow: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 11.X.32 (*Ibid.*, L228636-38).

*Economic and Financial Sections by the German Undersecretary-General, the establishment of a permanent German delegation in Geneva, whose leader would have the assignment of political observer. A decision on this matter would have to be reached immediately. The cabinet agreed, leaving the details to the Foreign Minister.*³⁰

Meanwhile, furious negotiations were going on in Geneva. The committee was at loggerheads over the proposal that every nation be limited to a maximum of two high officials. Werner von Rheinbaben, one of the German delegates, was deep in private conversations outside the committee with members of the Supervisory Commission. He outlined the German position: she would agree to Avenol only if Drummond would publically announce that Germany was to receive the Economic and Financial Sections and if the »maximum-two-rule« went into effect. The thought of a Frenchman as Secretary-General and another as Director of the Information Department was too much for Berlin to bear. By the morning session of the committee on 15 October, it was obvious that the Germans would not budge. Drummond hurriedly summoned Rheinbaben to his office, bidding him to speak with the French representative Senator Berenger, whom Drummond described as *the most realistic Frenchman he'd ever met*. Left alone, the two spoke for forty-five minutes. Rheinbaben explained the German position, precisely as he had the previous day: the unconditional application of the »maximum-two-rule«, a public announcement by Drummond of Germany's control of the Economic and Financial Sections and, these two conditions met, German acceptance of Avenol. No sooner had Rheinbaben finished than Berenger sprang to his feet, exclaiming, *I give you my hand! This is a great moment for our two countries!*³¹

The reform issue was closed. Avenol was in. Drummond publically announced that the next Director of the Economic and Financial Sections would be the German Undersecretary-General. Both the French and Drummond were resigned to the departure of Comert, the Director of the Information Department, who had been the object of the German in-

³⁰ Krauel: »Stichworte für den Herrn Reichsminister zur Neugestaltung der Obersten Leitung des Völkerbundssekretariats für die heutige Kabinettsitzung,« Berlin 14.X.32 (Ibid., L228654-56); Kamphoevener: *Aufzeichnung*, Geneva 14. X. 32 (Ibid., L228652-53); Krauel: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 14.X.32 (Ibid., L228660-62).

³¹ Krauel: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 15.X.32 (Ibid., L228663-65); Krauel: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 15.X.32 (Ibid., L228669-670); Kamphoevener to AA: telegram, Geneva 15.X.32 (Ibid., L22866-67); Kamphoevener to AA: telegram, Geneva 15.X.32 (Ibid., L228668, L228674-75); Massigli to Paris: telegram, Geneva 15.X.32 (QdO; SdN, Secrétariat Général/51); Rheinbaben: *Aufzeichnung*, Im Zuge Genf-Berlin 18.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 6 L228689-693).

sistance on the »maximum-two rule.« Drummond came to Berlin late in October, at which time Neurath offered the name of Ernst Trendelenburg as Dufour's successor. One of the most powerful economic figures in Germany, Trendelenburg came from the Finance Ministry. He was an outstanding candidate for the position and Drummond readily accepted his nomination.³²

During the weeks following the Assembly, the Wilhelmstrasse bent every effort to portray the events of the past weeks in a positive light. Not only had Germany received the Economic and Financial Sections but in conjunction with the secondary powers had succeeded in limiting the number of high officials any one nation could have at the same time. Furthermore, a secondary power was to occupy the newly created second Deputy post. Care was taken not to mention the fact that the creation of this new Deputy ran counter to every German reform principle ever conceived. It was soon obvious, moreover, that the post would go not to a non-Council power, but to Pablo de Azcarate, Spaniard; this was also conveniently overlooked.³³

Among insiders the realization was widespread that things were far more bleak for Germany in the League than the Wilhelmstrasse would admit. Following the Assembly the *Referat Völkerbund* undertook a general review of German League policy. No new policy was constructed, rather a sense of *malaise* pervaded the conclusions. Germany lacked good preparation and quality representation in the most important League arena, the six committees of the Assembly. Obviously Germany must seize the initiative, submit more petitions, offer more memoranda. The decline of German League policy was acknowledged but correctives were missing. Dufour summed up the prevailing mood in the German camp when he admitted to Neurath that, *personally, I am happy to be leaving the League*. But even Dufour had only vague suggestions for an improved German policy: *What should German League policy be in the future? If Germany, Italy and Japan remain in the League it will continue to function and in that case, I believe we should seriously consider whether*

³² Unsigned: memorandum, London 19.X.32 (PRO: Political, Western/LoN 603, 16453); Kamphoevener: »Stichworte für den Herrn Reichsminister anlässlich der Anwesenheit von Sir Eric Drummond in Berlin,« Berlin 21.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund. Pers. II A1/Bd. 1); Neurath: Berlin 25.X.32 (AA: Büro RAM, 18/Bd. 31, D663945-46); Rumbold to Simon: List of Leading Personalities in Germany, Berlin 12.IX.32 (PRO: Political, Central/Germany 3028, 15952).

³³ Unsigned: »Fortlaufender Wochenbericht für die Zeit vom 15. bis 21. Oktober« (1932) (AA: Büro Staatssekretär, Wochenberichte/Bd. 2, E201710-15); Rheinbaben: »Die Reform des Völkerbundssekretariats,« *Dresdener Neueste Nachrichten* (22.X.32); Kamphoevener to all posts: telegram, Berlin 1.IX.32 (AA: Büro RAM, 18/Bd. 31, D663965-983); Kamphoevener: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 26.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Reorg. des Sekretar./Bd. 6).

*or not Germany should adopt a more positive posture toward the League than has been the case until now.*³⁴

The call for a more *positive* League policy had been heard in Berlin before. The implication was clear: Germany had indulged in a negative League policy, at least an unproductive one. In parting, Dufour tried one last time to stimulate a more imaginative approach in Geneva. But the only answer Berlin could find to stem the erosion of German League influence and heal her ailing policy was the creation of a permanent German representative to the League. The idea was advocated by both Neurath and Bülow. The Foreign Minister had broached the possibility at the cabinet meeting on 14 October. The cabinet considered a permanent representative a good idea; the Secretariat, as well as the Germans in it, did not. Both Dufour and Renthe-Fink urged Neurath to reconsider. The Italians, explained Renthe-Fink, were not at all pleased with their newly created permanent representative and the entire concept was under review in Rome. Moreover, the creation of a permanent representative would only serve to further separate the Wilhelmstrasse from the League, an opinion shared by Drummond, whose hostility to the idea was well known.³⁵

Neurath, however, was unconvinced. Instead, when the Secretary-General arrived in Berlin in late October, the Foreign Minister offered the name of Dr. Friedrich Keller, German Minister to Argentina, as permanent German representative to the League. Drummond took exception, not only to the principle of a permanent German representative, but to Keller as well. With only seven months left until his retirement, however, and reluctant to create a serious obstacle for the new Secretary-General, whose election had been the spark which ignited the German demand for a permanent representative, Drummond agreed to Neurath's proposal on the condition that Keller be based in Berlin rather than Geneva. Neurath agreed.³⁶

The government of the Reich feels that at present German influence is not sufficient enough within the offices of the Secretariat of the League and it hopes that the creation of a permanent post in Geneva will remedy the situation. The newly appointed French ambassador to Germany, An-

³⁴ Kamphoevener: Berlin 26.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Bundesversammlung Allg./Bd. 1); Dufour to Neurath: letter, Geneva 27.IX.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II A1/Bd. 1); LEE, *Failure in Geneva*, pp. 128-132.

³⁵ Dufour to Neurath: letter, Geneva 27.IX.32 (*Ibid.*); Renthe-Fink to Kamphoevener: letter, Geneva 26.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. III/Bd. 1); Renthe-Fink to Kamphoevener: letter, Geneva 31.X.32 (*Ibid.*).

³⁶ Bülow to Reichsarbeitsministerium: Berlin 29.XI.32 (*Ibid.*); Kamphoevener: »Stichworte für den Herrn Reichsminister anlässlich der Anwesenheit von Sir Eric Drummond in Berlin,« Berlin 21.X.32 (AA: Referat Völkerbund, Pers. II A1/Bd. 1); Kamphoevener: *Aufzeichnung*, Berlin 26.X.32 (*Ibid.*).

dré François-Poncet, saw the situation very clearly indeed. In the German mind, the succession of Avenol to Secretary-General could not be overcome, even by the departure of Comert from the Information Department and the appointment of Trendelenburg as Director of the Economic and Financial Sections. The creation of a permanent German League representative, however, was the public acknowledgement of a virtually bankrupt League policy. In one step Germany joined the ranks of the secondary and tertiary powers who maintained permanent League missions. In 1926 thirteen nations had permanent representatives: Bulgaria, Chile, Columbia, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Santo Domingo, Finland, Greece, Rumania, El Salvador, Siam, Sweden and Yugoslavia. By 1933 their number had swollen to twenty-two with the addition of such countries as Albania, China, Denmark, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Liberia, Poland and Turkey. The only major power which maintained a representative was Italy, and as Renthe-Fink had reported, Rome was not at all pleased with the arrangement. These nations maintained permanent missions to the League for two reasons: as lobbyists and because they could not afford to dispatch large delegations annually to the Assembly. The majority of these diplomats had supplementary duties in Switzerland as ministers, consuls or attachés. A permanent League representative was, therefore, a distinct sign of weakness. Thus, on prestige alone, the creation of a permanent German representative was questionable.³⁷

Far more serious, however, was the effect such an official had on German League policy within the Wilhelmstrasse. The insertion of a permanent representative into the German League effort could have only one effect: it further separated the Wilhelmstrasse from the League. It imposed another bureaucratic layer between Neurath and the League, one which duplicated the responsibilities of the *Referat Völkerbund*. The fact that Keller would be in Berlin, not Geneva, made his position all the more redundant. At a time when the Wilhelmstrasse should have streamlined and intensified its League diplomacy in an effort to overcome ineffectual policies and declining influence, it chose to retreat behind the shadow of a »permanent representative« located in Berlin. While the demise of German League policy is written in the failure of the Wilhelmstrasse to secure goals which, since 1926, had remained unchanged, the collapse of the German position within the Secretariat was the mortal blow from which the German effort would no recover. Keller was thus the tangible proof that the Wilhelmstrasse preferred to conceal its moribund League policy in the trappings of diplomacy rather than to breath new life into it. By December 1932 German League policy was dead.

³⁷ Poncet to Paris: telegram, Berlin 26.X.32 (QdO: SdN, Secrétariat Général/51).