

THE NEW SPIRIT IN EUROPE¹

BY M. ARISTIDE BRIAND

WE print below a press report of the salient paragraphs of Premier Briand's appeal before the Chamber for the ratification of the Locarno Accord.]

GENTLEMEN: If you examine, article by article, from a purely juridical standpoint, the Pact submitted to you for ratification, you will find that it is like all similar contracts — you can interpret it in various ways. You may imagine that it benefits such or such a nation, that it is better for one country than for another. That is a quibble with which I shall not waste the time of this Assembly.

I have followed the various interpretations given to this Agreement in the different countries concerned. What have I observed? When the German Cabinet was preparing to ask the Reichstag to ratify it, I read a letter from Marshal Ludendorff to his old army-comrade, Marshal Hindenburg, begging him to oppose it because it was a serious humiliation for Germany. I read numerous articles intended to prove that Germany had been duped at Locarno, and many speeches by German public men of different Parties appealing to the Reichstag to reject this Accord.

We have heard speeches from this very tribune dwelling upon the great advantages that England derives from this Agreement. One honorable speaker characterized it as a wonderful bargain for Great Britain, and thus explained

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the enthusiasm with which her Foreign Minister was received on his return. I think that was an exaggeration. I read articles in English newspapers, after the Locarno Agreement was signed, dealing quite as roughly with Mr. Chamberlain as our French papers have dealt with me. Speeches were delivered in the House of Commons denouncing Mr. Chamberlain for agreeing to such a compact and condemning him bitterly for letting himself be made the tool of France. One British member went so far as to say to him: 'You let M. Briand put you in his pocket without knowing it!' Whereupon Mr. Chamberlain, with that gentle and mild philosophy, with that subtlety and delicacy, that comport so well with his nobility of soul and his loftiness of mind, answered with a smile — and how patly: 'The pocket of my friend M. Briand is not big enough to hold me.' (*Smiles*)

Gentlemen, these are amusing episodes, but I think the question before us should be considered in a more serious mood. The best thing about the Locarno Agreement, in my opinion, is that it does no injustice to any of the signatory Powers. It is not designed to enable any country to get the better of another. (*Excellent! Excellent!*) In order to judge it, one must understand its true spirit, which is not the spirit of narrow and selfish nationalism. It has been conceived and agreed upon in a European spirit, with a view to enduring peace. (*Applause from the Left, the Centre, and the Extreme Left*) Does

it fully accomplish this object? Does it make war henceforth an impossibility? I would not venture to affirm that; I do not wish to mislead my country. (*Applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre*) Does it relieve us of the duty of keeping a sharp eye on international developments? (*Excellent! Excellent!*) Does it make it unnecessary for us to provide for our own safety if, unhappily, some crisis should arise that placed us in danger? I say, no! (*General applause*) But in forming an opinion of this document, we must first of all ask ourselves two questions: What was the situation before Locarno? And, if it were not for Locarno, what would the situation be to-day? (*Excellent! Excellent!*)

Had we rejected the Locarno Agreement offhand, where should we be now? Gentlemen, do you think that Europe would have remained just where it was? You, whose duty it is to follow international events with an attentive eye, should not forget that, when the negotiations that were to eventuate in this Agreement started, other feelers had already been thrown out between certain European Governments. Had our conversations at Locarno failed, might we not now face a new grouping of the Powers extremely perilous for France? Did we not see powerful statesmen hasten to Berlin in the hope of dissuading the German Government from a reconciliation with France? You must keep that in mind in judging the history of this Agreement.

Gentlemen, it takes a certain moral courage to enter negotiations such as these. It is easier for a public man to keep out of commitments like this for which I have assumed responsibility. (*Excellent! Excellent!*) But shall a great country like France have its foreign policy paralyzed by hypercritical indecision? (*Applause from the*

Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre) All I did, however, as Foreign Minister in the Cabinet of my friend Painlevé, who was one of the staunchest promoters of this Accord, was to follow a course set for me by one of my predecessors, the Honorable M. Herriot. (*Applause from the Extreme Left and Left*) It was a course that I myself sought to follow in 1921, under conditions that it may not be irrelevant to recall. (*Applause from the Extreme Left, the Left, and the Centre*) I speak without the slightest *arrière-pensée* of criticism or recrimination against anybody; nor have I complaints to make about the Treaty of Versailles. That Treaty is what it is. Drafted to settle very complex and difficult questions, it was naturally defective in many respects. If I had been entrusted with its negotiation; should I have done better? I do not know. (*Scattered applause*)

What most impressed me during the debate on the Versailles Treaty was that tragic colloquy in the Chamber concerning the imperative necessity of ensuring the security of France. That was the first thought in the mind of every member. The detailed provisions of the Treaty, important as they were, were wholly secondary to this great purpose. We had just emerged from a frightful war; we had but a single thought — to avoid another war. Our whole attention was centred on that point.

This is the phase of the debate to which I refer. The question had been raised whether we were sure that the article of the Treaty by which the United States and England jointly guaranteed us from attack, and for which we had surrendered our claim to a natural frontier, would be ratified? The speakers who questioned this cited disturbing rumors from the United States indicating that the Treaty might not be approved by her

Senate. And our Honorable Premier at that time, whom no one can reproach with failing to do his utmost to ensure our country's safety, said: 'I hope that the United States will ratify the Treaty.' When an orator exclaimed: 'But if the Treaty is not ratified by the United States, what will become of the English guaranty?' M. Clemenceau answered: 'I hope that the English guaranty will hold.' Thereupon these doubters still insisted: 'But is n't this British guaranty conditional upon the guaranty of the United States? The two go together, and if one fails, and then the second fails, what will happen?' And I can still see M. Clemenceau lifting his arms and saying: 'Then — then — there would be no Treaty at all. There would be nothing.'

Very well, gentlemen. When the hazard of circumstances put me in office in 1921, I considered it my first duty to devote all the energy, the intelligence, the courage, I possessed to trying to repair that breach. (*Applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and several benches of the Centre*) I believed that in so doing I should have the support of every public man in my country, no matter to what Party he belonged. At the Cannes Conference, and even before that Conference, negotiations having that end in view were begun with representatives of the British Government. They were received favorably. I recall that at that time gentlemen like Winston Churchill and Austen Chamberlain, whose friendship for France you well know, for they have given ample proof of it (*Excellent! Excellent!*), favored in principle such a guaranty. These gentlemen are again in power. It was understood that a British guaranty would be given. The text of the projected Agreement is now public property.

Simultaneously, gentlemen, the germ of the Geneva Protocol was born at

Cannes. We laid the plans there for an all-European conference at Genoa, to which no country was to be admitted until it had signed a pact of non-aggression. That plan contemplated a vast peace-project, a comprehensive international association that we thought we might be able to induce the nations of Europe to enter. Were we contemplating an ordinary alliance between England and France like the others with which we are familiar? Not at all, gentlemen. You will find in the Blue Book which the British Government has published upon these proceedings that our conversations contemplated that, when a treaty of guaranty had been concluded between Great Britain and France, Germany might and ought to become a party to that treaty.

This, gentlemen, is the very essence of the Locarno Pact. When the Honorable M. Herriot secured the acceptance at London of the reparation plan with which you are familiar, the question of a rapprochement between the different nations of Europe naturally arose again. It was necessary for the successful execution of this plan. Then it was that the suggestion of Herr Stresemann — that is, of the German Government — was first conceived. I welcomed that suggestion heartily. I believe that it embodied the very idea I had at Cannes. I feel that all that has happened since 1921 has only strengthened our motives for making such a pact, the necessity of which I clearly see and to the success of which I have contributed to my utmost ability. (*Excellent! Excellent!*)

Gentlemen, I do not regret what I have done. (*Lively applause*) I have not taken the step lightly; I have not acted without mature reflection. Yesterday I heard an honorable member of the Chamber, a member who fought through the war and who fears that we

may sometime have another war, dwell with great feeling and emotion upon the apparent weaknesses of the Locarno Accord and the dangers that he conceives still threaten us from Germany. He insinuated that I might perhaps be less alive to Germany's intimidating figure because my gaze was too exclusively centred upon France herself. Let me say, gentlemen, that I too lived through the war. We stood together in those tragic hours. That gentleman knows that in the darkest and most agonizing moment of that conflict, during the battle of Verdun, and when our valiant ally, Serbia, reeled under a double blow, the man who had the perilous honor of carrying the crushing responsibilities of the premiership was the man who now stands before you.

I had to look facts in the face. We were at war. We must win. I saw, gentlemen, at that time, sights so horrible and butchery so revolting, my heart so overflowed with anguish, that I swore then and there that if ever we won the victory and the hazard of circumstances called me again to power I would devote all my energy and strength and will and thought to the cause of peace, to preventing a recurrence of such atrocities. (*Lively applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, the Centre, and some benches of the Right*)

But if we are to have peace, we must not merely talk peace. We must have peace in our own hearts. We must have the will to peace. We must seize every occasion and every opportunity to promote peace, for Peace is an exigent mistress — more exigent than War herself.

War can never occur except when some unexpected event sweeps the people off their feet before they have time to reflect. But peace, gentlemen, demands unremitting and continuous service, persistent service, an enduring

and uncapricious loyalty. Hypocritical doubt, skepticism, excessive distrust — these things, let me repeat, spell paralysis, and that is not a condition favorable to peace. (*Applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre*) Too often is the German nation pictured to us as a compact bloc, impenetrable, from which you cannot detach the smallest particle. A man like Erzberger, who made timid approaches to peace, was to be commended. But when certain public men in France sought hopefully to support his policy, to what ridicule they exposed themselves! People shouted: 'A trap, a snare! Erzberger! A German like all the others!' And a few days later a German chauvinist assassinated the very man they reviled because he considered him a traitor to Germany!

When my former Cabinet was in power in 1921 and we were faced with the impossibility of securing the transfer of the billions of marks of gold which we were to collect from Germany, and therefore had to devise some more practical way of obtaining reparations, we recurred to the idea of deliveries in kind. Was that not really the first step toward the Dawes Plan? But when my colleague, M. Loucheur, began to negotiate with Rathenau, what did they say? 'Rathenau? Why, he's simply out to trick you.' For that is always the way in our country. We have such a poor opinion of ourselves that the mere announcement that we are negotiating with somebody else is greeted with a protest that we have already been tricked. As if there were no Frenchmen capable of defending the interests of their country! (*Applause from the Left*) Rathenau, too, was a German like the others, and a German, they said, would cheat us. And yet only a short time after he put his signature at the bottom of our contract he too was accused of treason to his

country and died at the hands of an assassin.

Whenever we embark upon a positive policy we are bound to meet skepticism and distrust, and it takes a certain kind of courage to face it. It is much easier to do nothing. It is simple enough to sit down and let events take their course; or to deliver resounding orations full of patriotic fireworks; or to talk eloquently about peace and do nothing to make peace practicable. But to take a real step toward peace, to make an honest conciliatory gesture, is more difficult. (*Applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre*) That is always a dangerous thing for a public man to do.

I do not exaggerate the merits of the Locarno Agreement. I know its limitations. I frankly admit its inadequacies. But I also know that it has provisions of value. One of its greatest services has been to revive confidence among nations, to cast a little sunbeam into Europe's dark and menacing shadows — a ray of hope. (*Lively applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre*) It has thus conferred a blessing on our country — where there are so many veils of mourning, where we see so many young war-cripples involuntarily burdening society — because it has helped mothers, when they gaze upon their sons, to hope that these may never suffer like mutilation upon a future battlefield. If that were all the benefit we derived from this document, I tell you I should take pride in having signed it. To encourage such hopes is already a step toward peace.

But this might be a dangerous step if it were not accompanied by more solid things. Gentlemen, if we are to have assured peace, Europe must organize herself. Do you not see, even since Locarno, many a firebrand flaring up here and there, dangerously close to

the powder barrels we have not yet removed? If you do not want a new explosion, you must be on your guard.

'Harbor our strength,' you say. Certainly. If there were anything in the Locarno Treaty that involved weakening us, lessening our ability to defend ourselves against any peril, then I should say: 'Do not ratify it. It is your duty to refuse your signature.' But there is nothing of the kind in this Agreement. The Treaty of Locarno does not rob us of any element of our security.

If other pacts are made, conceived in the same spirit, the spirit of the League of Nations; if the disposition of nations becomes more conciliatory; if even in Germany the people turn away from the pernicious counselors who still too often catch their ears, and seriously espouse the cause of peace, it will not be the result of any single piece of paper written in black and white, but of a great movement increasing from day to day and carrying the nations with it. If such a movement once starts in every country regardless of party lines, I am convinced that it will bear us forward into an era of permanent peace. (*Applause from the Left, Extreme Left, and Centre*)

At present we are still at the beginning. Bear that in mind. And this beginning, this germinating hope, we must not crush. One of the members had said that I planted a tiny olive tree on the banks of Lake Maggiore — very pretty to look at, but affording little shade. Gentlemen, I did not do even that. I did not plant even a tiny olive tree, but only a seed. That seed has begun to stir. The surface of the soil is breaking. A tender shoot is seeking the sun. It wants to find it. It will grow unless some brutal foot crushes it. And if, unhappily, it must be crushed, I hope at least that it will not be a French foot that commits that crime.

(Lively applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, the Centre, and some benches of the Right)

Gentlemen, face things as they are with confidence and resolution. Recall the facile sarcasm at first heaped on the League of Nations. That has passed. Those witticisms, those allusions to the Tower of Babel, are things of yesterday. Regardless of such raillery, our greatest and most serious-minded statesmen, supported by the instinctive common-sense of their own peoples, did not laugh. And it is because the League has struck root in the hearts of the common people that it has survived and keeps on growing.

Matter-of-fact men asked: 'How will you keep a sudden war from breaking out? It will have done its damage before you can call your League Council together. And after you have convened your Council, how are you to secure united action? During the interval the conflagration will get beyond control.'

One day when I was Foreign Minister, and had the honor to be President of the League of Nations, a telegram came notifying me that hostilities had actually broken out between two nations and blood had been shed. Armies had crossed frontiers, guns were thundering, rifles were cracking. There was every reason to believe that the conflict might not be confined to the two countries — every cause to fear a repetition of one of those frightful crises when the bloody-pinioned birds of war sweep in sombre flocks across the skies. What was to be done?

I immediately assumed the responsibility incumbent upon me. In accord with the General Secretariat of the League, I convoked at Paris an emergency meeting of the Council and instantly notified the two nations that they must halt their armies. Ah, if any statesman had done that sort of thing a

few years before what a butt of ridicule he would have been! The Council of the League met; the two nations summoned before it sent their representatives. We asked them: 'Do you accept our decision as arbiters?' They answered: 'Yes.' I said: 'That is not enough. In order that our arbiters may investigate the circumstances properly, I direct you to recall your troops to your own territories. No more rifles, no more cannon. Nothing but justice.' And those two nations, let it be said to their honor, answered: 'We agree. Our cannon shall be silent. We will withdraw our troops. We await your decision.' Two days later that war was over. *(Lively applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, the Centre, and some benches of the Right)*

Do you know the most terrible thing about a declaration of war? It is that the governments who make them are not their own masters. *(Applause from the Left and the Extreme Left)* An incident occurs; the sensational press exploits it and plays upon the over-excited patriotism of the people; national pride becomes involved; the emotions swamp the reason; and, before the common-sense of the rank and file of the population has an opportunity to manifest itself, war has broken out and the land is covered with blood and ruins. It will always be so until we learn to set up judges between nations as we have set up judges between individuals. *(Lively applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre)* I saw in Geneva in 1924 how certain slanders and misinterpreted acts of ours had exposed us to the suspicion of harboring evil designs. I overheard the way they talked about us. Men are now present in this Chamber who were there with me and who know what I mean. It was a most painful experience. I was conscious that the representatives of other Powers held

aloof from those of France. I saw cold faces, unwarmed by the memory of what our country had done for humanity. And I asked myself whether, were a new war to occur, the world would rally to the banners of France again. When I ascended the tribune at that meeting of the League Assembly as representative of France appointed by the President of this Chamber, at that time Premier, the first delegate to address that body, and perhaps the only one who could have uttered similar words, I said: 'I come here to announce that France signs without reservations the Accord before us and binds herself to accept the decisions of the International Court of Justice.'

I wish I could convey to you the enthusiasm with which that statement was received. Every face was turned, not toward us, but toward the France we represented. Calumnies dropped from us as if by magic, and our country stood forth in all her glory as the great, liberal, generous nation to whose defense the peoples of the world had sprung, believing that in defending her they were defending their own liberties. In a moment France recovered all her moral prestige.

Moral prestige! The Locarno Agreement restores that in all its plenitude by showing that France is ready to clasp the hand of her enemy of yesterday in order to end forever our bloody and tragic wars. 'Ah, the German nation!' you say. Do you suppose, gentlemen, that it was without a certain emotion that I went to that rendezvous on the shores of an Italian lake to meet the German Ministers? Do you not realize that I was filled with complex and disturbing sentiments? But I went. They came. We talked European. That is a new tongue which it would be well for all of us to learn. I must acknowledge that the two

gentlemen with whom I conferred showed both moral and physical courage in coming there, in view of the threats against them in their own country. But they understood the new tongue. Do the German people understand it? I hope so.

The German people are a great nation. They have their merits and their faults. They and the French nation have measured strength throughout the centuries on many a blood-steeped battlefield. The last war was the worst of all. It was not a war between armies, but between whole peoples struggling for years in a bloody embrace of death. At length the war was won. The victors came out of it with enhanced prestige, with increased moral grandeur, but, alas, bled white! What nation can indefinitely survive such shocks? And what fear seizes us when we consider that our country in this state of weakness, robbed of the flower of her manhood and crushed with debts, may be exposed, perhaps to-morrow, to another like disaster — and all for lack of some accord that will give us a breathing-space to avoid a war? Locarno may prevent such a catastrophe. Locarno is a barrier against hasty action. Locarno means talking things over. It means an opportunity for the people to recover their reason before blindly flying at each other's throats.

The Treaty of Versailles will always be a source of irritation. It was the fruit of war, of victory. It can be called, and is called, a treaty imposed by force, under duress, that the defeated party is morally justified in repudiating when it can do so. But the Locarno Agreement is voluntary. The frontiers it describes are freely recognized. The obligations it imposes are freely accepted. Some may say that Germany expects to profit by it. That is quite natural. We shall look out for

our own interest. We too shall resist any attempt to impose upon us. We are a powerful and intelligent nation, and we have many friends.

Need we fear lest the League of Nations be poisoned by the presence of Germany? Why? Several of our 'enemies,' to use the language of the treaties, are already members of that body. And is it a special favor to Germany to make her a member of the Council? Gentlemen, a great nation like Germany must be a member of the Council, if her collaboration in the League is to be of value. (*Applause from the Left and Extreme Left*)

Some one objects: 'Germany is scarcely in the house before she wants to rule it.' Without wishing to be disagreeable, I shall not deny that our neighbors sometimes fail to show all the tact desirable in our discussions. They have their own way of doing things. I do not think it is always the best way. But the League of Nations already has a tradition, an atmosphere, an established procedure. Any new member must conform to this, or it will suffer from its failure to do so. More than that, the League must have a certain unanimity in order to accomplish its purposes. This has produced a spirit of collaboration that rises somewhat above grossly material and selfish objects. We have to reach common accords. Germany will be forced to adapt herself to that situation if she wishes to exercise influence in that body. France believes that Germany has a rôle to play in Europe and in the world. In fact, the very equilibrium of the world depends upon the fact that we have different nations with different characters. To obliterate those diversities, to make it impossible for nations to express their own mentality and racial qualities in an inoffensive and harmless way, would be a crime against humanity. (*Applause from the Left, the*

Extreme Left, and certain benches of the Centre.)

It is with this in mind that we should view the future. Justice compels me to say that, in all the wars where France has fought Germany, Germany too has shown herself to be a strong and heroic nation. Are our two countries, then, to fight eternally? Are they to remain forever covered with ruins and desolation? They have made wonderful economic progress; they have built vast factories; they have created great centres of production; and yet every twenty-five years or so armies sweep over them and leave them in flames and ruins. . . .

Faced by such problems as these, I do not think that I have merited ill of my country, nor that I have shown lack of patriotism, because I have had faith in the possibility of an enduring peace; because I have trusted to the ability of France to organize, in coöperation with the other great nations, a true peace; because I firmly believe that we are witnessing the dawn of a new age.

All nations are trying to get closer together. We are all trying to create a Europe that will not be incoherent and anarchic. Do we not see the effects of this anarchy in industry? Do we not behold our huge factories in many cases producing goods beyond the capacity of consumers to absorb? What will happen if our Governments cannot get together and remove the economic competition that causes war? Do you imagine that you can have social peace until this is done? No. The only possible path before us is the path of concord. Of course there will be difficulties. The Locarno shoe will pinch at times. We shall have to break it in. But we shall do so little by little.

As for myself, I should not have measured up to my task if, having the honor to represent my Government, I

had exhibited so little confidence in my country as to imagine that she would lose moral prestige and material strength by taking part in the discussions that are paving the way for the Europe of to-morrow. In the past France has always been in the vanguard of nations, pointing the way for others to follow, instead of hanging back faint-heartedly, distrustful of her

own strength. Can you imagine France acting differently to-day? Never. (*Loud applause from the Left, the Extreme Left, and the Centre*) By sharing in all the negotiations and agreements that promise to better, not only her condition, but the condition of all nations, France is living up to her true character, as she was yesterday, as she is to-day, and as she will be to-morrow.

A TRAGIC CHAPTER IN MEXICAN HISTORY¹

THE CONSPIRACY AGAINST MADERO

BY JUAN SANCHEZ AZCONA

[DESPITE the greater events that have intervened, many Americans still recall vividly the shock produced in the United States by the news that President Madero, the reforming Berkeley University graduate who had overthrown the Porfirio Diaz régime in Mexico, had been assassinated, together with his colleague in office, while a prisoner in the hands of the man who had usurped his post. This episode has doubtless influenced all subsequent American opinion of political conditions in our neighboring republic. The external facts of the crime are generally known and hardly require a new description, but the following analysis of the conditions and circumstances that lay behind it throws some light into a still obscure recess of history which is not without immediate interest to the people of our country.]

¹From *El Universal* (Mexican Independent daily), March 6

OUR press has recently revived discussion of the crime committed thirteen years ago when the Supreme Magistrates of the Republic, Francisco I. Madero and José María Pino Suárez, were assassinated. This discussion concerned itself with certain definite questions, the answers to which will help us to reconstruct a moral as well as a physical picture of that nefarious deed. But these inquiries have inevitably extended beyond concrete facts, in an effort to establish the guilt or innocence of those suspected of being the remoter accessories or instigators of that act.

A comprehensive answer to the questions thus raised is easy. There is no doubt or mystery as to their answer. The names of those responsible are indelibly engraved on the nation's memory and the opinion of foreign chanceries. All that remains to-day is to assign his fair share of guilt to every person directly or indirectly