

# While Some Headway Likely Progress Must Remain Slow

## Approaching Conference at London Not Likely to Achieve Spectacular Results in View of Temper Disclosed by Recent Events in France by MacDonald's First Blunder

By FRANK H. SIMONDS  
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Washington, July 12. — Three sharp rebuffs administered to Premier Herriot in rapid and regular succession, the last in a sense the most significant of all, must serve as a warning to the outside world that the liberal mood in France has about reached its limit and for the present everything depends not merely upon Herriot's success in the forthcoming London Conference, at which America will be present, but quite as much upon the immediate revelations of British purpose.

Of the three checks to Herriot, the first was the defeat of his candidate, Paul Painlevé, for President of the Republic, by Doumergue; the second was the rejection of this candidate for President of the senate to succeed Doumergue, De Sollevé, a Poincaré lieutenant, defeating Henriens Martin. But it is the third and last of these which must cause most reflection: the election of Maginot to head the War Commission of the French Parliament.

After all Doumergue was a liberal if more moderate than Herriot; De Sollevé, if a follower of Poincaré, was only one of the several lieutenants, but Maginot was easily the second man in the Poincaré Cabinet; indeed, the only man of prominence Poincaré retained when he made over his Cabinet after the crisis of the first days of April. And in addition, Maginot is known in France both as "the man of the Ruhr" and as the champion of the maintenance of the French army at its present strength.

Before his election Maginot openly lacked horns with Herriot in debate in the Chamber, boldly challenging that portion of the new Ministry's program which expressly promised the further reduction of the strength of the French army. Maginot squarely announced such a project to be not alone dangerous, but unpatriotic—and close upon his declaration he has been chosen instead of a follower of Herriot to head the War Commission.

If this selection means anything it means that the French Chamber, despite the triumph of the Left in the last election, is by no means ready to go to extreme limits in a program of disarmament. Indeed, it would seem to mean that it is the settled conviction of the French Parliament that the moment has now come for France to rest on her oars and see just what is to be the practical effect of her recent concessions to world opinion and to the general cause of appeasement.

France is Waiting  
Since the close of the war the French army has been reduced one half; that is, the part of the army which is made up from the annual contingents of recruits. This result has been achieved automatically by the reduction of the period of service with the colors from three to one and a half years. In his announcement of his legislative program Herriot had pledged himself to a further reduction which had been estimated to insure a maximum period of service of a year and perhaps a drop even to nine months.

Roughly speaking the annual class, that is, the recruits called up each year for military training, numbers something more than 200,000. Thus the conscript army of France is now, in round numbers 300,000. In addition there is, theoretically, a permanent stiffening represented by 100,000 re-enlisted and thus professional soldiers, corresponding to our own and the British regulars, although, of course, they are merged with the rest of the force. But so far as I can ascertain, the French have not been able to recruit their 100,000 to full strength.

In any event the regular army of France, outside of the colonial contingents, numbers around 400,000 under the new establishment, which has been adopted since the war, and was, I think actually arranged for by the legislation passed during the session of 1922, when there was a long fight over the question of a one year or 18-month service period. In the end the 12-month period was rejected not because there was much doubt as to the adequacy of a year as a period of training, but because of the belief of the majority that in the situation of Europe which then existed, France needed an army of the size the 18 months' service period would insure.

The reduction of the French army then, from the pre-war strength of 1914, falls little short of 50 per cent. And this reduction has naturally entailed a thorough remodeling of the whole force, reduction in the number of divisions, re-adjustment of the location of the troops as between the several branches of the service; and this task, really enormous, has hardly been completed. Therefore a second re-adjustment, which called for another cut, this time of a third at least, would present a very serious problem.

Herriot and the Ruhr  
In addition, one has to take into account the matter of the Ruhr and Rhineland occupation. It is true that Herriot has announced that he

will evacuate the Rhine industrial area when the Germans have given the necessary proofs of good faith in the matter of the acceptance of the Dawes report. Assuming that the Germans may in the end give these proofs, that is still for the future. There are also interesting problems presented by the necessity of still maintaining an army of occupation on the left bank of the Rhine, in accordance with the Treaty of Versailles, while strong forces have to be kept in French colonies, notably in Morocco.

Under the existing establishment the so-called Active Metropolitan Army, that is the force kept in France, should be 256,000. There were in the Ruhr, on the Rhine and in the Sarre Basin around 120,000 troops last November and in addition 12,000 in Syria or roughly 400,000 in Europe and the Syrian mandate. But of this number a considerable portion were North African, Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian, still black troops from French West Africa present in France. To complete the tale France has 202,000 troops in her colonies, chiefly in Africa, 25,000 in Indo-China, in large part native or made up of European volunteers in the Tonkin Legion.

A reduction of the period of service now, before the Ruhr is evacuated, would automatically cut down the number of French troops in France by 100,000, perhaps more. Such a reduction in advance of the evacuation of the Ruhr and at least the beginning of the progressive retirement from the middle and lower Rhine forces in the Treaty of Versailles, seems to many Frenchmen, of whom Maginot is the spokesman, a grave danger.

Naturally the whole situation would be modified materially were there some settlement of the question of French security, which is tantamount to repeating the old assertion that France will reduce her army further in proportion as she is provided aid from other nations in case of an attack from Germany, an unprovoked attack like that of ten years ago. The old formula was that France would reduce division by division from her existing establishment, as Great Britain or Great Britain and the United States agreed to keep ready divisions to replace those disbanded by the French in case of new war.

France Must Have Security  
What the Maginot episode really means, it may be guessed, is that the majority in the French Chamber, disregarding for the moment the party line established by the recent election, have chosen Maginot as a warning to Britain, Germany and the world that even under a radical ministry, the question of security remains paramount in France and any discussion of disarmament is idle, unless the matter of French security is first disposed of. And any discussion that is to come must start with the question not of reduction of strength but of maintenance of protection.

In addition, all dispatches from Paris in recent days have agreed that the Paris press and the French Parliament were equally cold to the results of the first Herriot-MacDonald discussion at Chequers. Again the coldness may be traced in part to the false report circulated just after the meeting, that Herriot had obtained from MacDonald a new treaty giving France a British military guarantee. An emphatic denial of this rumor by MacDonald left Herriot with the appearance of coming home empty handed and of having made all the sacrifices to restore Anglo-French harmony.

Nor were the French more enthusiastic over the explicit agreement that at the forthcoming London conference the matter of inter-allied debts will not be discussed, a decision which must have been made, in part at least, in deference to the stand of the American Government on this matter. Surely we ought

should not have consented to be represented, had the debate over the debt been permitted. But on the other hand, to the French it looks dangerously as if one of the things promised them by previous British ministers, namely a reduction, a drastic reduction if not a cancellation of their debt to Britain balances their reduction of their claims upon Germany, was now being quietly withdrawn.

Herriot had to come back from London with no assurance in the matter of security and no promise in the matter of inter-allied debts. From the French point of view this was a failure which was hardly balanced by the outward evidences of improved atmosphere in Anglo-French relations. And Paris took about as cynical and un-enthusiastic a tone as it had been accustomed to take when Briand and his predecessors journeyed abroad to meet Lloyd George and came back with empty hands, also. All the cheering over the London meeting, that is, the Chequers week-end, was on the British side of the Channel, which was a little unfortunate to say the least.

It follows quite logically that Herriot will have to do better at the next London Conference, or that will be trouble. Proof of this is found in the decision of the Chamber, at least to adjourn until after the completion of the Ruhr evacuation, and then to immediately adjourn on the results with the obvious possibility that if the results are not better, Herriot may not during the present Cannes Conference.

No Further Disarmament  
And just as it had been decided that inter-allied debts shall not be mentioned at London, so, by virtue of the action of the Chamber in choosing Maginot, it is now plain that there is no chance of even a side remark about disarmament or even the reduction of armaments, despite the fact that the British are acutely interested in bringing about a reduction of both the air and submarine strength of the French.

In sum, then, while the recent French election was a victory for the radicals and the present Prime Minister represents the victorious combination of Radicals and Socialists, it is manifest that he is not to have a free hand. He cannot dominate as did Clemenceau and he does not represent an overwhelming and solidly united group as did Poincaré, at least during most of his period as Premier. Unable to dictate in the matter of President of the Republic, Herriot is placed in a rather humiliating position.

The underlying fact is, I think, that the present Chamber wants Briand just as the last wanted Poincaré, Millerand, Leygues and Briand in turn were tried. Millerand was kicked upstairs into the Presidency, Leygues was disposed of easily and Briand was thrown out with an enormous explosion, before the Chamber settled down to two years and a half of Poincaré. It may well be that if Herriot falls, and his position is becoming compromised, there will be one or two experiments before Briand is at last called, but all signs now point to an eventual Briand ministry and to little positive progress until that moment arrives.

Meantime everything depends upon Herriot's next visit to England. He had definitely committed himself to continuing in occupation of the Ruhr until Germany makes all the necessary changes of law and transfers of title incident to the application of the Dawes report. He has, apparently with success, joined with Ramsay MacDonald in compelling Germany to consent to a new examination of the state of German military preparations, interesting because both Maginot and General Nollet, who is now Minister of War and was until the other day head of the Allied Commission to disarm Germany, have testified that Germany has violated and evaded the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Obviously it is on the basis of what is now discovered that Herriot must construct any program for the further reduction of the French standing army.

Progress Must be Slow  
One must, then, in the following weeks and perhaps even months, guard against any extreme optimism, not perhaps in the matter of ultimate results, but as to current rate of progress. France has taken a long step in the direction of meeting Allied and particularly British Premier who, in British and some American eyes, was the great obstacle to settlement. She has modified her program of occupation of the Ruhr in such fashion as to make retirement follow on the heels not of fulfillment by Germany but application of the system of fulfillment.

But France has not by any means abandoned any one of her major contentions. She has sent a new man, a new spirit, to discuss the familiar questions of reparations, security and inter-allied debts; but she still insists upon the certainty of large payments, such as the Dawes report foreshadowed, and while she accepts the estimates of the Dawes commission she consistently demands that steps be taken to insure delivery, she predicate all investigation of reduction of armaments upon maintenance of her own security, and she insists that, since she does not consent under the Dawes report to reduce her claim upon Germany, debtor, Britain must take a similar course toward the French debtor.

Moreover, an enormously significant circumstance, the French Chamber of Deputies has resumed control of the Foreign relations of France. It has reserved to itself the function of passing immediate judgment upon the action of Herriot in the next London Conference and it has not troubled to conceal its dissatisfaction with his record of performance, although at least nominally a majority of a bloc which has an absolute majority in the Chamber and which has not hesitated to give the Prime Minister a severe lesson in the matter of army bills, stands by the action of Maginot.

Unless all stars fall from the sky, it is pretty clear, at least when Ramsay MacDonald will have to give proof of his statesmanship and of his ability and will to meet France. So far, he has not disappointed, he has been astonishingly successful and his is the credit for the unprovoked change in Anglo-French relations, a change which if successful is never-the-less undeniably, but so far he has dealt only in words, his gestures have been instantly and utterly successful; now the actual meeting for which he has been preparing the way is at hand.

George Was Dishonest  
Lloyd George failed in the dealing with France because primarily he was essentially dishonest, he would promise anything and so back on any promise, when he saw that to perform was to invite domestic disaster. Bonar Law, who was an honest man failed because there was no conceivable way of reconciling British and French policy when it came to power on the eve of the Ruhr occupation. Stanley Baldwin failed because the Ruhr occupation preceded his arrival and he could not raise a

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## Was Barnum Right?

P. T. Barnum is reputed to have said, that "The American people like to be humbugged." I do not agree with Barnum. I believe that every normal minded person wants a Square Deal in every transaction or "Full value for every dollar expended, and nothing more!"

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