THE LUXEMBURG QUESTION

AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE AND AFTER

by

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At the Paris peace conference of 1919, the French and, to a lesser extent, the British considered the several questions concerning the western frontier of Germany as a single problem but historians have never done so, perhaps because work upon these questions at the conference was administratively scattered. There has been some historical examination of the minor territorial transfers from Germany to Belgium and exhaustive analysis of the Saar and Rhineland settlements but no attention whatsoever to the fourth piece of the puzzle, the problem of Luxemburg. British diplomatists at the conference well realized the potential connection between the Luxemburg settlement and that of the Saar, while Belgian leaders were painfully aware of its relationship to the Rhineland regime but historians, for all their intensive study of the voluminous documentation of the conference, have neglected to trace the British failure to link the Luxemburg question to the other German frontier problems and the consequences of this failure. The oversight has probably occured because Luxemburg's fate was ultimately, to the relief of the French and the dismay of senior British officials, examined independently of all other considerations and because most of the interest in Luxemburg at the conference was generated by the Belgians who of course looked at the problem from a purely Belgian point of view.

The chief Belgian objective at the peace conference was extensive revision of the 1839 treaties which had defined Belgium's borders and her international status. This simple sounding but complex claim included not only the end of enforced neutrality and minor territorial transfer from Germany, both relatively non-controversial, but also a variety of concessions from Holland, encouraged by the French but discouraged by the British, as well as some sort of reunion, either political, dynastic, or economic, with Luxemburg, which Britain favoured and France resisted. On 11 February 1919, the Belgian delegation, led by the outspoken foreign minister Paul Hymans, presented these claims in detail to the Council of Ten and requested great power assistance both in treaty revision and in facilitating a Belgo-Luxembourgeois rapprochement. The next day, the Ten decided that most

of the issues raised by the Belgians should be referred to various commissions (as were also the Rhineland and Saar questions) but, on the recommendation of Balfour, the problem of Luxemburg was reserved to the council of the five powers because this was considered to be a political question not requiring expert study in a commission (1).

Some expert analysis of Luxemburg's tangled past and confused present would undoubtedly have been a good idea. The powers dealt with the question intermittently and off-handedly in their spare time and did so in almost total ignorance of events and opinions in the Grand Duchy. They were in whole-hearted agreement on only one point: that the international status of Luxemburg must be revised. By this, they meant the legal status whereby the Grand Duchy had become a German satellite.

This state of affairs had developed over a period of years. Modern Luxemburg was a creation of the Congress of Vienna which merged the two low countries into the United Kingdom of the Netherlands to which was attached as a personal possession of King William I the newly created Grand Duchy of Luxemburg. This arrangement derived from the desire of the victorious coalition to build a strong military barrier against France, and a Prussian garrison was installed in the powerful fortified position of Luxemburg city. The new enlarged Dutch kingdom lasted only until the Belgian revolution of 1830, in which Luxemburg participated. Great power intervention quickly produced draft treaties in 1831 but Holland refused to accept them and so, from 1830 until 1839. Luxemburg remained in every respect part of the new and precarious Belgian state. When the treaties were re-imposed upon Belgium in 1839 after eventual Dutch acceptance. loud were the cries from the detached territories, especially Luxemburg. To the Belgians, Luxemburg became their Alsace-Lorraine and, after 1871, they frequently referred to it as such.

By the terms of the treaties of 19 April 1839, part of Luxemburg was incorporated into Belgium while the remaining smaller portion reverted to its former status, thus preserving both King William's seat in the German Bund and part of the barrier against France (2). Over the years the Dutch tie with the Grand Duchy weakened as Luxemburg gained increasing autonomy and a growing enjoyment of its semi-independent position. Upon the accession of Queen Wilhelmi-

Office, British and Foreign State Papers, xxvii, 990-1002,

⁽¹⁾ Paul HYMANS, *Mémoires* (Brussels, 1958), i, 396; meeting of Supreme War Council, 12 Feb 1919, I.C. 140, CAB 28/6 (Public Record Office, London).
(2) For the texts of the treaties of 19 April 1839, see: Great Britain, Foreign

na to the Dutch throne in 1890, the Grand Duchy passed, by the terms of the Nassau family compact, to the male heir of an older German Nassau branch and became a fully independent state. In the meantime, however, in 1842 Luxemburg entered the German Zollverein and in 1857 the Société Guillaume-Luxembourg, the leading railway company of the Grand Duchy, granted a sweeping concession to a French concern. In 1867, as a result of a dangerous Franco-German confrontation on the brink of war over Luxemburg, diplomatic intervention of the powers, notably Britain, led to the treaty of London of 11 May 1867. This document confirmed Luxemburg in her independance, imposed perpetual neutrality under the collective and therefore worthless guarantee of the powers, removed the Prussian garrison, required the destruction of the fortress, and limited the Luxembourgeois army strictly to the tiny force needed to maintain order. As a result of the Franco-Prussian war, control of the Guillaume-Luxembourg railway was transferred to the Prussian state railways with the proviso that the network not be used for any military purpose, a commitment duly violated in 1914.

With the outbreak of World War I, Luxemburg was immediately occupied by German forces and closer acquaintance only intensified the already active Luxembourgeois dislike of Germany. During the war and especially in its final year, the young, fragile, and abnormally pious Grand Duchess Marie Adelaide received extended visits from the Kaiser, Chancellor Hertling, and assorted German generals. She also permitted the arrangement in 1918 of a royal marriage to a Bavarian prince and retained a German priest as her religious advisor, thus lending some credence to charges by her subjects that the court was pro-German (1).

Long before the war ended, it was clear to the Allies that Luxemburg must be removed from the German orbit but that she could not stand alone and must enter into some sort of union with another neighbouring state, either Belgium or France. The Belgians moved

⁽¹⁾ For the history of Luxemburg to 1918, see Grand-Duché de Luxembourg, Livre du Centenaire (Luxemburg, 1948); Grand Duchy of Luxemburg, Luxemburg Grey Book: Luxemburg and the German Invasion, Before and After (London, 1943); Great Britain, Foreign Office, Handbooks prepared under the direction of the Historical Section of the Foreign Office, No. 27, Luxemburg and Limburg (London, 1920); Great Britain, Admiralty, Geographical Section of Naval Intelligence Division, A Manual of Belgium and the Adjoining Territories (London, n.d.); Henri BERNARD, Terre Commune: Histoire des Pays de Benelux, microcosme de l'Europe (Brussels, 1961); Paul WEBER, Histoire du Grand-Duché de Luxembourg (Brussels, 1961); Xavier PRUM, The Problem of Luxemburg (New York, 1919); Whitlock to Lansing, 1 Nov 1918, no. 637, Whitlock Papers/38 (Library of Congress, Washington).

first and, in May of 1916, submitted a claim regarding both Luxemburg's postwar status and any temporary occupation of the Grand Duchy. Beyond that, the Belgian minister in Paris in June of 1917 extracted from the French premier, Alexandre Ribot, an oral statement, of which the Belgian was permitted to take formal written note, that France did not wish to annex Luxemburg and that he would discourage any parliamentary or press campaign to this end. On 5 February 1918, Clemenceau's foreign minister, Stephen Pichon, informed the Belgian minister that he was aware of Ribot's declaration and adhered to it. The British Foreign Office also considered the matter and, as early as the fall of 1916, decided that Luxemburg should be incorporated in Belgium (1).

As the war drew to its close in the summer and fall of 1918, the powers began planning in earnest for the peace and the Belgians quickly discovered that Ribot's declaration was not the commitment they had hoped it to be. Hymans visited Paris on 23 and 24 October 1918 for talks with the French leaders on a variety of questions and found them very reserved about Luxemburg. They showed no willingness to restrain the parliamentary and press campaign of the Comité franco-luxembourgeois established in Paris during the war and indicated that assignment of occupation troops was a military matter. The French leaders, who all spoke in virtually identical terms, refused to discuss the eventual disposition of the Grand Duchy and consistently adhered to the narrowest possible interpretation of Ribot's statement. President Poincaré expressed his desire for the closest intimacy between France and Belgium and mentioned the possibility of a military alliance, leading Hymans to conclude accurately that such an alliance might be the price of French acceptance of a Belgian solution to the Luxemburg question (2).

The Belgians were greatly alarmed by the indications of French ambitions in Luxemburg which, coupled with their designs for the Rhineland, could easily result in French encirclement and domination of Belgium, and from this time on, the Belgians consistently fought all French schemes for the Rhineland, most particularly Marshal Foch's proposal for a confederation of France, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Rhenish provinces. The Belgians well realized that if France gained control of both Luxemburg and the Rhineland, as she very

⁽¹⁾ HYMANS, i, 187-8, 192-3; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970 (Public Record Office, London); David LLOYD GEORGE, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference* (New Haven, 1939), i, 11-12.

⁽²⁾ HYMANS, i, 184-209; Hymans to Cooreman, 22 Oct 1918, Hymans Papers/161 (Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels).

nearly did, Belgium would be swamped, but the British remained unperturbed at the increasingly clear signs of French intentions. In the course of a detailed Foreign Office study of postwar problems made during the latter part of 1918, it was decided that, assuming the inhabitants were willing, the Grand Duchy should go to Belgium. The Foreign Office thought it unlikely that France was interested in Luxemburg, but even if she were, the prior Belgian claim was preferred and Belgian participation in the military occupation was endorsed. Further Belgian requests concerning the occupation met with British consent and French inaction while a Belgian note at the end of October claiming a reunion of Belgium and Luxemburg, if the Luxembourgeois were willing, received no response from any of the powers (1).

Any chance of a reliable assessment of Luxembourgeois opinion quickly evaporated for, at war's end, events moved rapidly and confusedly in the Grand Duchy. On 10 November 1918, there were riots in Luxemburg City followed by demands for the abdication of Marie Adelaide. The situation stabilized somewhat with the arrival of American troops on 21 November. Foch had, over Belgian protests, assigned the Grand Duchy to the American zone of occupation but then he chose to make the remote capital city his own military headquarters and the generalissimo, who had never before accepted a guard of honour, suddenly required an entire regiment together with an extensive staff of officers, all of whom arrived on 22 November. The Americans were largely displaced from the city and most of them were soon reassigned elsewhere. The American commander, General John Pershing, refused an immediate request from Foch that two French divisions be incorporated in the American army of occupation and so the French military presence in the Grand Duchy remained without legal sanction. On 17 December, France announced that the Guillaume-Luxembourg network was being administered and run by the French state. Two days later, Luxemburg denounced its railway convention with Germany and announced its withdrawal from the Zollverein. In late December, there were further popular upheavals in the Grand Duchy and a republican revolution broke out in earnest in Luxemburg City on 9 January 1919. Without orders and to the later displeasure of Clemenceau, the romantic and chivalrous

⁽¹⁾ LLOYD GEORGE, i, 78-9; Major General Sir Charles Edward CALLWELL, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries (London, 1927), ii, 153; F.O. memo, 11 Dec 1918, P.C. 69, F.O. 371/4553; F.O. memo, 20 Dec 1918, P.C. 39, F.O. 371/4553; meeting Imperial War Cabinet, 31 Dec 1918, I.W.C. 48, CAB 23/42; Belgian note to Britain, France, Italy, U.S., 29 Oct 1918, Hymans Papers/161, HYMANS, i, 199, 344-5.

local French commander intervened on behalf of the royal family and especially Princess Charlotte, younger sister of Marie Adelaide. When the tumult was thus suppressed on 10 January, the frail and mystic Marie Adelaide abdicated and soon betook herself to a nunnery where she died within a few years. After further commotion, Princess Charlotte took the oath as Grand Duchess on 15 January 1919. Out of the turmoil emerged her enormous popularity, a coalition government headed by Emile Reuter, an understanding that a plebiscite would be held on the future form of government, and a national attitude best expressed by the Luxembourgeois anthem, which declares, "We wish to remain what we are". In February, the Chamber unanimously voted to retain the independance and sovereignity of the Grand Duchy (1).

Throughout these upheavals, the Belgians made repeated attempts to participate in the military occupation and to lay the basis for an economic union. The Belgian government quickly realized that there was little sympathy in Luxemburg either for incorporation in Belgium or for a dynastic union and so King Albert personally and repeatedly assured Grand Duchess Charlotte that the independance of her domain would be respected. As Luxemburg obviously could not stand entirely alone, however, Belgian hopes for an economic union persisted and the activities of Marshal Foch were viewed with alarm. Belgian diplomatic efforts extracted a categorical statement from Clemenceau on 20 November 1918 that France had no designs upon Luxemburg. This success was followed on 16 December and 16 January by promises from Pichon and Poincaré that France would support Belgium's efforts to obtain the Grand Duchy. Yet when Hymans was in Paris on 24 December, Clemenceau was both vague and discouraging while Belgian efforts to participate in the occupation of Luxem-

⁽¹⁾ The course of events in Luxemburg during this period can be pieced together from the following sources: WEBER, p. 102; Arthur HERCHEN, Manuel d'Histoire Nationale (Luxemburg, 1952), p. 254; Pierre MAJERUS, Le Luxembourg Indépendant (Luxemburg, 1946), pp. 70-5; Jean Jules Henri MORDACQ, Le ministère Clemenceau: Journal d'un témoin (Paris, 1930-1), iii, 87-8, 93-4. 121; HYMANS, i, 345-6; Western and General Report no. 102, 15 Jan 1919, CAB 24/150; Pichon to Derby, 17 Jan 1919, Lothian Papers GD 40/17/69 (Scottish Record Office, Edingburgh); Reuter to Balfour, 22 Jan 1919, F.O. 371/3638; Villiers to F.O., 12 Jan 1919, tel. no. 10, F.O. 371/3638; Pershing diary, 29 Nov-2Dec 1918, Pershing Papers (Library of Congress, Washington); Manton memo, 24 Dec 1918, American Commission to Negotiate Peace/442, 850A.00/1 (National Archives, Washington; hereafter cited as ACNP); Brown to C/S AEF, 12 Jan 1919, tel. A-317, Woodrow Wilson Papers 5B/8 (Library of Congress, Washington).

burg still met with success (1).

Clemenceau replied to all requests for Belgian troop entry with the easy assurance that such military matters were the province of Marshal Foch but the generalissimo remained obdurate, declaring that he had no authority and that to send even a battalion of Belgian troops into Luxemburg would utterly disarrange his plans for a possible march on the Rhine. At inter-Allied conferences, his representative ominously declared that Luxemburg must be treated as a French department. Clemenceau eventually ordered Foch to allow eighteen hundred Belgian troops into the Grand Duchy but the marshal promptly discovered that no transport was available. In mid-January, he finally consented to the occupation of one border village by one Belgian battalion, an effor which Hymans declined as worthless and insulting. Meanwhile Foch and his forces remained in Luxemburg and launched a major propaganda campaign. To reassure the pious Luxembourgeois, the devout Foch attended mass frequently and ceremoniously and required his officers to do the same. To garner support from the monarchists, he was conspicuously gallant to both grand duchesses. Frequent French military parades, tricolours everywhere, visits of French dignitaries, and a variety of similar activities emphasized French control of the area and curried pro-French sentiment. This was further reinforced by lavish food and coal shipments, elegant receptions and theatricals, French postal and telegraphic censorship, and French control of three newspapers. By mid-January, French intrigue was so open that General Pershing threatened repeatedly to withdraw all American troops. Ultimately, Foch promised to withdraw the French forces but of course did not. A strident counter-attack against the French campaign was made in the Belgian press by an ultra-nationalist Belgian organization, the Comité de politique nationale, established in December 1918 by Pierre Nothomb, a prominent Belgian of Luxembourgeois origins. This group was openly annexationist, as the Belgian government was not, and its clumsy

⁽¹⁾ Whitlock to Colby, 1 Aug 1920, Whitlock Papers/42; Whitlock to House, 10 Dec 1918, House Papers, Drawer 20, file 24 (Yale University Library, New Haven, Conn.); Cartier to Hymans, 13 Dec 1918, tel. no. 591, Belgium, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Political Correspondence: The United States (hereafter cited as Belgian microfilm), roll 23 (Library, National Archives, Washington); Le Soir (Brussels), 4 May 1919, 1:4; Mordacq, iii, 19-20; B. WHITLOCK, The Letters and Journal of Brand Whitlock (New York, 1936), ii, 538; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; de Gaiffier to Hymans, 24 Dec 1918, Belgique, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Archive, file: Indépendance, Neutralité, Défense militaire de la Belgique, Garantie des Puissances, 1918 III (Brussels, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères; hereafter cited as BMAE); Alexandre RIBOT, Journal d'Alexandre Ribot et correspondances inédites, 1914-1922 (Paris, 1936), p. 257.

efforts not only undermined the Belgian government but also irritated the Luxembourgeois and led them to doubt the earnest assurances of King Albert and his ministers. The French campaign was both more subtle and more massive, including skillful efforts by parliamentary and press groups, the *Comité franco-luxem-bourgeois*, and French business organizations (1). All evidence indicates that at war's end the Luxembourgeois overwhelmingly favoured economic union with Belgium but in time the prolonged and many-faceted French drive had an increasing influence upon opinion in the Grand Duchy (2).

By the time that the peace conference opened, the outlines of French policy were clear. Clemenceau and Pichon clung firmly to the narrowest possible interpretation of Ribot's 1917 declaration and never violated it technically, but did nothing whatever to restrain Foch, the French press and Chamber, or the Comité franco-luxembourgeois. At the Quai d'Orsay, Philippe Berthelot was left free to pursue a policy contrary to the promises made to Belgium and Belgian overtures to French officials met with great reserve. Hymans early and repeatedly protested to the British about French policy in Luxemburg but to little effect. The British officials had decided to support Belgian claims regarding Luxemburg and intimated as much to Hymans, but his frequent plaints about French encirclement and imperialism and his requests for British diplomatic intervention did not, at this stage, evoke any concrete assistance. Even a comment in January 1919 to the British minister in Brussels by a Belgian diplomatist, almost certainly Hymans himself, to the effect that, if France had annexed Luxemburg thirty years before, Belgium would not have

⁽¹⁾ Whitlock to Lansing, 15 Dec 1918, tel. no. 164, ACNP/443, 850A.0136/3; Hymans to Cartier, 14 Dec 1918, tel., Belgian microfilm/23; Pershing diary, 12-26 Jan 1919; MORDACQ, iii, 9; HYMANS, i, 189, 344-5, 347, 354-5, 380-2; WHITLOCK, ii, 534, 538, 546; Allan NEVINS, Henry White (New York, 1930), p. 368; WEBER, p. 105; BERNARD, pp. 682-7; David HUNTER MILLER, My Diary at the Conference of Paris with Documents (n.p., n.d.), iv, 217; Balfour note, 30 Dec 1918, G.T. 6584, CAB 24/72.

⁽²⁾ Steefel memo, 10 Apr 1918, Inquiry Document 552 (National Archives, Washington); Hymans to Cartier, 10 Nov 1918, Tel. no. 332, Belgian microfilm/22; Ziegler report, 17 Nov 1918, ACNP/302, 185.1132/4; Whitlock to House, 1 Nov and 28 Nov 1918, House Papers, 20/24; WHITLOCK, i, 272; PRUM, p. 12. Western and General Report no. 101, 8 Jan 1919, CAB 24/250; Oppenheimer to Akers-Douglas, 30 Nov 1918, F.O. 371/4355; Robertson to F.O., 2 Jan 1919, no 1766 and tel. no. 18, F.O. 371/3636; Jacquimot to Lansing n.d. (Jan 1919), ACNP/302, 185.1132/7; Griffith reports, 27 Jan, 14 Apr, 23 Apr 1919, ACNP/302, 185.1132/9,26,28; Gunther reports, n.d. (spring 1919), 28 May 1919, ACNP/302, 185.1132/23, 36.

gone to war against Germany in 1914, went disregarded. In the interim, the French grip on the Grand Duchy tightened (1).

The early weeks of the peace conference were taken up with other matters but on 6 February Hymans saw both the British foreign secretary, Arthur James Balfour, and his permanent undersecretary, Lord Hardinge, in an effort to gain support against French tactics in Luxemburg. He stressed particularly his fear of encirclement and the potential threat to Belgian economic and political independence. Both Britishers agreed that France must not have Luxemburg (2). Armed with this assurance, Hymans made his formal appearance before the Council of Ten on 11 February and, in the course of an excessively long speech, requested great power assistance in achieving a Belgo-Luxembourgeois rapprochement (3).

After his speech. Hymans concluded that the British and the Italians supported his stand on Luxemburg, the Americans were hesitant, and the French embarrassed. He felt that Clemenceau wanted Luxemburg for France but could not say so outright. He also sensed Clemenceau's annovance that a small state would dare to oppose him so stubbornly (4). It was obvious that British diplomatic support would be needed to move Clemenceau and such support was to an extent now forthcoming. Balfour asked Lloyd George to back Belgium to the hilt on the Luxemburg question but Lloyd George showed no interest. Hardinge and Sir Eyre Crowe, the other ranking Foreign Office offical at Paris, took the lead in blocking an early plebiscite in the Grand Duchy and recommended, without effect, that Great Britain insist to France that Luxembourgeois economic union with Belgium be granted. There matters rested on 21 February when the grand ducal government asked for economic negotiations with both France and Belgium, and Hymans again sought British assistance. After encountering the greatest difficulty in persuading Pichon to make no reply while Belgium went ahead with negotiations

⁽¹⁾ Villiers to Balfour, 8 Jan 1919, tel. no. 4, F.O. 371/3638; Villiers to Balfour, 9 Jan 1919, no. 8, F.O. 371/3638; Villiers to Balfour, 10 Jan 1919, tel. no. 6, F.O. 371/3638; Moncheur to F.O., 18 Jan 1919, no. 467, F.O. 371/3638; F.O. to Moncheur, 24 Jan 1919, F.O. 371/3638; HYMANS, i, 353, 356; Paul CAMBON, Correspondance, 1870-1924 (Paris, 1946), iii, 296-7; Headlam-Morley memo, 6 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; Le Soir, 4 May 1919, 1:4; BERNARD, p. 690. (2) Balfour memo, 6 Feb 1919, Balfour Papers/49750 (British Museum, London); HYMANS, i, 360.

⁽³⁾ Meeting of the Ten, 11 Feb 1919, I.C. 138, CAB 28/6; Kerr to Lloyd George, 12 Feb 1919, Lloyd George Papers/F/89/2/9 (Beaverbrook Library, London); André TARDIEU, *La Paix* (Paris, 1921), p. 252; Lansing desk diary, 11 Feb 1919, Lansing Papers (Library of Congress, Washington).

⁽⁴⁾ Hymans note, 11 Feb 1919, BMAE 1919 I; HYMANS, i, 378.

and after an interview with André Tardieu, who echoed the thinking of Foch, Hymans turned once again to Balfour who was becoming increasingly concerned about the situation. As yet Balfour could see no device for effective unilateral action by Britain. He considered discussion with Fichion or in the peace conference useless, and only recommended to Lloyd George that, when Clemenceau had recovered from the assassination attempt, you or I should privately sound him as to whether the country which has reacquired Alsace and Lorraine, and is very likely to acquire the Saar coal-fields, might not show a little generosity to its weaker neighbour, who has suffered so much by the war and got so little out of it (1).

Herein lay the first suggestion that a Belgian solution to the Luxemburg problem might be a possible *quid pro quo* for British support to France regarding the Saar Basin.

Lloyd George made no reply and took no action while French propaganda in Luxemburg intensified and Crowe pointed out that a plebiscite held under French guns would be calamitous for Belgium and a threat to her independence. Late in February and early in March, Balfour and Colonel House discussed the matter repeatedly and decided to act on their own initiative. Together they tackled Clemenceau who largely blamed the present state of affairs in Luxemburg on Foch and disclaimed any designs on the Grand Duchy. He strongly favoured a plebiscite, however, and said that he could not refuse any Luxembourgeois request to join France. When Hymans came on 8 March to thank Balfour for his efforts, he pointed out that France would not hear of a plebiscite in Alsace-Lorraine and asked how Luxemburg differed. The Foreign Office also noted that Clemenceau had not promised to stop the French propaganda campaign while House recorded in his diary his doubts of Clemenceau's sincerity (2).

Although willing to exert pressure to block another move toward a plebiscite in Luxemburg to determine both the dynastic and the economic future of the Grand Duchy, Balfour could see little else to do unless Lloyd George and Wilson would take advantage of the struggle then in progress with the French over the Rhineland to make Luxemburg part of a general settlement with France. Other British officials were having similar thoughts. When James Headlam-Morley

⁽¹⁾ HYMANS, i, 370-1, ii, 522-3; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; Balfour note, 25 Feb 1919, Balfour Papers/49750.

⁽²⁾ F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; Balfour memo, 8 Mar 1919, Balfour Papers/49750; Balfour to Curzon, 14 Mar 1919, no. 245, F.O. 371/3638; HYMANS, i, 378; House diary, 27 Feb, 4 Mar 1919, House Papers. House, the only American delegate with any real influence over President Wilson, was an emphatic supporter of virtually all Belgian claims.

of the Foreign Office, soon to be the British delegate on the Saar commission, complained on 25 March that Britain was not giving Belgium enough support and should back her to the utmost over Luxemburg, Crowe wrote, I quite agree that we should stand by Belgium as regards the Luxemburg question, and I go so far as to suggest that our support of French claims in the Saar valley and to a pro-French settlement of the Left-Bank-of-the-Rhine question should distinctly be made conditional on Luxemburg being given to Belgium.

This recommendation, clearly spelling out the desirability of Luxemburg as a *quid pro quo* for the Saar and possibly also for French plans in the Rhineland, was emphatically endorsed by Lord Hardinge and seen by Balfour but not by Headlam-Morley (1).

The next day, Hymans saw Hardinge to report that negotiations with Luxemburg were in progress and to complain of the inaccessibility of British officials and of the inadequacy of their support on many issues. Balfour was annoyed by this, the more so since he himself had recently had a chilly session with Hymans about Holland, but nonetheless on 27 March he forwarded a new memorandum by Crowe urging that British consent to French acquisition of the Saar coal mines be made contingent upon a Belgian solution of the Luxembourg question to Lloyd George with a note saying that the matter was important. In the next ten days, no action was taken by the British delegation regarding Luxemburg in the crucial period when the Four started meeting as such and the struggle over the Saar was at its height. Wilson was reluctant to detach the Saar from Germany, for its inhabitants were indisputably German, but the French were adamant that they must have the coal mines in recompense for German destruction of French mines. No way had yet been found to give the French the Saar mines without the Saarlanders and, in view of the Franco-American deadlock, British policy assumed crucial importance. It would have been easy to link the Saar and Luxemburg just then, but Headlam-Morley, who was assigned to the Saar commission on 29 March, saw Lloyd George frequently without receiving any instructions about Luxembourg. Headlam-Morley supported the French claim to the Saar and, he later said, was largely instrumental in its detachment from Germany. His stand was partly motivated by his hopes of strenghtening the Belgian claim to Luxemburg. Had Headlam known of Crowe's thinking, he could easily have made Luxemburg a condition of his support to France, but the British were

⁽¹⁾ Headlam-Morley minute, 25 Mar 1919, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970.

poorly coordinated while the French assigned Tardieu to all west German problems and mounted a concerted effort (1).

It was partly in response to this French Campaign, involving the Saarland, the Rhineland, and Luxemburg, that King Albert made his famous flight to Paris. His concern was justified. When he met with the Big Four on 4 April, the session became stormy as soon as the question of Luxemburg was raised. When Lloyd George asked what language the inhabitants spoke, Clemenceau said French and Hymans corrected him, whereupon Clemenceau launched a furious diatribe against the Belgian government in general and Hymans in particular, charging him with organizing a frantic propaganda campaign in the Grand Duchy, interfering with the wishes of the Luxembourgeois, and trying to inflict a defeat upon France. The atmosphere became so very heated that Albert and even Hymans deemed it useless to try to reply. King Albert took care, however, to see Lord Hardinge later and to tell him about the incident. He indicated that the position of the government and even the monarchy in Belgium would be precarious if Luxemburg went to France, and he asked that Balfour enlist the aid of the prime minister. King Albert also wrote to Lloyd George, assuring him that Clemenceau's statements could be fully refuted by Belgian documents and asking for his sympathy. There is no evidence that Lloyd George replied (2).

Nonetheless, the Belgians continued to place their hopes in the British and the consistently sympathetic Colonel House. On the advice of House, Hymans brought Crowe a memorandum on 7 April indicating that a bill for a plebiscite on economic union with France evidence that strong French pressure had forced the plebiscite bill. He asked for immediate Anglo-American action and said that House was willing if Balfour were. Crowe wrote on Hymans' memorandum:

I would urge that we should at once

⁽¹⁾ Hymans to Balfour, 26 Mar 1919, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970.

⁽²⁾ HYMANS, i, 444-7; Paul MANTOUX, Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Proceedings of the Council of Four (March 24-April 18) (Geneva, 1964), pp. 110-3; Hardinge to Balfour, 4 Apr 1919, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; Balfour to Curzon, 12 Apr 1919, no 481, F.O. 371/3638; Albert to Lloyd George, 4 Apr 1919, Lloyd George Papers F/49/4/1; van den Heuvel notes, 4 Apr 1919, van den Heuvel Papers/46 (Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels). Mantoux's account of the meeting on 4 April differs from that of Hymans on matters of detail and, judging from the later remarks of both Hymans and King Albert, suffers from an excess of discretion.

- (a) definitely intimate to M. Clemenceau that our acceptance of the Saar valley solution now under discussion is conditional on France leaving Luxemburg to Belgium and
- (b) make the communication to Luxemburg, together with the U.S., as suggested by M. Hymans, informing M. Clemenceau and S^r Orlando that we are doing so.

Balfour added:

I don't know exactly how the Saar valley negotiation now stands. But I think it would be most unjust, and in the long run most inexpedient, that France should get Alsace-Lorraine and the Saar coal—and Belgium nothing.

He sent this under cover of a sheet bearing the words: "Prime Minister. This is both important and pressing. A.J.B." (1).

After further pleas from Hymans, Crowe again recommended that his request be granted, and drafted an appropriate letter to Hymans endorsing Belgo-Luxembourgeois economic union. It was not sent and there was no response from Lloyd George to Balfour's note. On 8 April, the day after Balfour sent Crowe's recommendations to Lloyd George, the prime minister, in response to Headlam's urgings, supported the French position in regard to the Saar. The next day Wilson, finding himself isolated, began to yield, and the matter was in essence settled. France therefore received the Saar coal fields without condition and the Saarland was placed under League of Nations administration for fifteen years. Lloyd George had either rejected Balfour's advice or, more probably, had failed to read his recommendations. Philip Kerr, the prime minister's secretary, returned the papers on 14 April, indicating only that Lloyd George and Balfour had seen Hymans and Emile Vandervelde on the 13th and that Balfour would try the next day to persuade the Four to ask Luxemburg to defer the plebiscite, in which he was successful. On the 17th, however, Hymans pointed out to Crowe that the Luxembourgeois Chamber was voting on the plebiscite bill that very day and asked what was being done about it. Neither Crowe nor Balfour knew anything about this latest development but Balfour saw Wilson and Lloyd George the next day and discovered that the Luxembourgeois were assuming that only the economic plebiscite should

⁽¹⁾ House diary, 6 Apr 1919; Hymans to Crowe, 7 Apr 1919, memo & minutes, F.O. 608/2 pt 1.

be deferred and were going ahead with the dynastic vote. Balfour decided that both should be postponed and Wilson agreed to so inform Luxemburg, since it was still nominally within the American zone (1).

While this immediate problem was being handled in a manner satisfactory to Belgium, Hymans received other encouraging news when Poincaré informed both him and Clemenceau that Luxemburg should go to Belgium. Clemenceau's resistance seemed superficially to be evaporating although he still insisted that the present wishes of the Luxembourgeois must be decisive and that no defeat must be inflicted upon France, Luxembourgeois negotiators arrived in Brussels to discuss economic union and the talks started well. Furthermore, when at the end of April a British official pointed out that nothing had been done about treaty clauses concerning Luxemburg and a committee was hastily appointed to draft some, a Belgian representative sat upon it and successfully blocked a French move to award control of the Guillaume-Luxembourg railway to France. Hymans approved the resulting brief clauses which only abrogated the prewar arrangements between the Grand Duchy and Germany and which, while of doubtful validity since Luxemburg was never invited to adhere to the Versailles treaty, at least contained nothing offensive to Belgium (2).

Yet there were increasing signs of renewed French pressure, both on Belgian diplomatists and in the Grand Duchy. The pro-French element in Luxemburg was blaming Belgian machinations for Big Four intervention although Reuter insisted that this was untrue. Then, too, Tardieu suddenly began to demand a Belgian economic

⁽¹⁾ Hymans to Balfour, 9 Apr 1919, no. 425 & minutes, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; Kerr to Drummond, 14 Apr 1919, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; Drummond to Clerk, 15 Apr 1919, F.O. 800/152; Hymans to Balfour, 14 Apr 1919, F.O. 608/2 pt 1; meeting of the Four, 15 Apr 1919, I.C. 170W, CAB 29/37; Balfour to Curzon, 24 Apr 1919, no. 574, F.O. 371/3638; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; Bliss to Close and Close to Bliss, both 18 Apr 1919, Wilson Papers 5B/29.

⁽²⁾ HYMANS, ii, 523-5; Drummond to Clerk, 15 Apr 1919, F.O. 800/329; Villiers to Curzon, 25 Apr 1919, no. 145, F.O. 371/3638; Villiers to Curzon, 28 Apr 1919, no. 151, G.O. 371/3638; minutes, 1st Belgo-Luxembourgeois meeting, 24 Apr 1919, Jaspar Papers/247 (Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels); United States, Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, The Paris Peace Conference, 1919 (hereafter cited as FRUS PPC) (Washington, 1942-7), v, 309, 339-42; MILLER, xix, 55; W.M. JORDAN, Great Britain, France, and the German Problem, 1918-1939 (London, 1943). p. 184; Great Britain, Parliamentary Command Paper Cmd. 153, Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany. Signed at Versailles, June 28, 1919 (London, 1919), Part III, Section II, Art. 40, 41.

union with France, which only heightened Belgian fears. French activity in the Grand Duchy became so open and intense that even the most Francophile of Brussels newspapers talked of "une manifestation annexationiste française". When Luxemburg asked to be heard by the Four, Hymans was dismayed but made no objection (1).

Hymans would have been even more dismayed had he been present when the Four, in anticipation of the Luxembourgeois appearance, discussed the situation on 23 May. While Wilson was sympathetic to Belgium's aspirations and Clemenceau appeared to be. the Tiger declared that the Luxembourgeois wanted to vote on the economic question as soon as the Versailles treaty was signed and would probably vote for France unless France announced that she would not consider a union, which step she could not take. He said that the Grand Duchy did not wish political union with France but declared that he would accept a union, whether economic or political he did not specify, if it were offered by Luxemburg. Nonetheless, he urged that the plebiscite again be deferred to ease relations with Belgium, Lloyd George, most of whose information about Luxemburg came from Clemenceau, argued that "it was a question primarily for the people of Luxemburg and no attempt ought to be made to manoeuvre them into political or economic union with Belgium if they did not desire it". When Clemenceau again urged deferring the plebiscite, Lloyd George insisted that "the Powers should not meddle" (2).

When the Luxembourgeois delegation appeared before the Big Four on 28 May (3), Hymans was present by his own request. The Luxembourgeois spokesman, Emile Reuter, requested, possibly by pre-arrangement, a three-way economic union of France, Belgium,

⁽¹⁾ P.I.D., F.O. memo Belgium/004, 2 May 1919, CAB 24/79; Derby to Curzon, 21 Apr 1919, no. 445, F.O. 371/3758; La Nation Belge, 2 May 1919, 1:2; meeting of the Four, 14 May 1919, C.F. 13, CAB 29/38; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; Reuter to Wilson, 6 May 1919, Wilson Papers 5B/34. (2) FRUS PPC, v. 862-3.

⁽³⁾ The official records of the meeting carry the date of 29 May but Hymans (in a memo dated 29 May) and a member of the Luxemburg delegation both stated that the meeting occurred on 28 May, as did Headlam-Morley in an account written in 1921. In addition, on 26 May the Four decided to hear the Luxembourgeois on 28 May and Wilson so informed Reuter. HYMANS, ii,525;Nicolas WELTER, "Le Grand Duché de Luxembourg depuis la guerre", Revue de Paris, xxxiii, no. 14 (15 July 1926), 309; F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970; meeting of the Four, 26 May 1919, C.F. 34, CAB 29/38; Wilson to Reuter, 26 May 1919, Wilson Papers 5B/39; meeting of the Four, 29 May 1919, C.F. 39, CAB 29/38.

and Luxemburg, and talked at length of the need for French participation. Clemenceau welcomed this proposal and announced that France would be pleased to join a tri-partite union. He also rather encouraged Luxemburg to go ahead with the economic plebiscite. Hymans, after unsuccessfully trying to deflect Clemenceau from a discussion in front of the Luxembourgeois, only said that this new tripartite proposal would require reflection. After the meeting, he made a sharp protest to Pichon who assured him that there must be some mistake. The next day, Clemenceau sought out Hymans after the plenary session of the conference and tried to joke with him. When that failed. Clemenceau insisted that France had no interest in economic union with the Grand Duchy, and flatly denied that tripartite union had ever been mentioned or given French endorsement in front of the Luxembourgeois. Hymans' memory was, however, confirmed by the Italian representative at the meeting, by Reuter's report to the Luxembourgeois Chamber, and by the official records (1).

Soon thereafter, Hymans saw Louis Loucheur, who was attached to the French delegation, and, after a difficult session in which Hymans threatened to make a public disclosure of all that had passed, he obtained a document saying that France was not interested in tripartite union and stating that Clemenceau had never endorsed such a proposal but had only remarked that France was willing to talk à trois if invited. Further interviews with Pichon and Clemenceau elicited nothing except a remark which indicated to Hymans that Clemenceau had been thinking of a satellite Luxembourgeois republic on the French border and probably of eventual full union (2).

Balfour was equally worried about French plans and equally active. At the end of May after the Luxembourgeois session with the Four, he revived Crowe's memorandum of 7 April urging full support to Belgium and sent it to the prime minister with a note asking that he read it and indicating how alarming the tripartite proposal was. The paper was returned bearing only Philip Kerr's initials. Crowe sent it to Lloyd George again with a note pointing to Balfour's request that the prime minister read it. The paper came back promptly without any indication that Lloyd George had seen it. Crowe then consulted Hardinge about how to put the document before the prime minister and the two of them debated with Balfour about

⁽¹⁾ Meeting of the Four, 29 May 1919, C.F. 39, CAB 29/38; HYMANS, ii, 525-30.

⁽²⁾ HYMANS, ii, 530-1.

whether Kerr's initials might mean that Lloyd George had read the paper. After Balfour opined that he probably had not, Crowe sent it to the cabinet secretary, Colonel Sir Maurice Hankey, on 10 June, saying that it was really important and asking if there were any way to put it before Lloyd George. Hankey sent Crowe's original memorandum to Kerr and told him to give it to the prime minister, but Kerr returned it with a note saying that Lloyd George knew the problem and Balfour's views but thought that, if Luxemburg wanted to join France, it was not up to Britain to stop her. On 15 June, Crowe resignedly wrote, "I gather from the above that Mr. Kerr continues to withold the papers from the Prime Minister. Put by" (1).

There the matter rested when the German treaty was signed and the senior dignitaries disbanded. The episode constituted a clear defeat for British diplomacy, especially since Great Britain failed to seize the one good opportunity to counteract the incessant French claim to be Belgium's only friend, failed to put Belgium in a position of gratitude to Britain, and failed to insure the full independance of Belgium, which was assumed to be a continuing British interest. Crowe's plan could easily have been achieved in April, in view of the French need for British support to gain the Saar coal fields over Wilsonian opposition, but the British were poorly coordinated and Headlam-Morley knew nothing of Crowe's ideas while Tardieu, who had free access to Clemenceau, represented France in all west German territorial questions, Lloyd George's well-known dislike of memoranda and his resulting dependence upon Clemenceau's interpretation of events undoubtedly played a part in the British failure as did the actions of Philip Kerr, who was expected to shield the prime minister but surely not from his foreign secretary and second delegate to the peace conference. The Foreign Office diagnosed the situation accurately and imaginatively and strove steadily for an Anglo-Belgian success but received no support from Lloyd George, who probably did not recognize the implications of the issue and, given his acute anti-Belgian bias, probably did not much care (2).

The Belgians were of course deeply disappointed that the Luxemburg question was not settled at Paris. They feared that a long struggle lay ahead of them over this issue and their fears were realized. The Luxemburg question continued to poison Franco-Belgian relations for another year. The long-deferred plebiscite was held in September of 1919 and yielded the anticipated result, thereby strenghtening the

⁽¹⁾ F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, Appendix II, F.O. 371/6970.

⁽²⁾ F.O. memo, 9 May 1921, F.O. 371/6970.

French hand although the vote was only advisory and not binding on the grand ducal government (1). By then, it was clear that the price of a Belgian solution to the Luxemburg question was a Franco-Belgian military accord which the Belgian king and cabinet were extremely loathe to consider. The French further insisted that they must retain control of the Guillaume-Luxembourg railway which was notoriously unprofitable but of strategic value to France and economic importance to Belgium. Realizing that control of the railway could lead to control of the Grand Duchy, the Belgians resisted this claim and, by the end of 1919, Franco-Belgian relations had reached a total and bitter impasse which lasted several months (2).

The British were kept fully informed of this state of affairs by the Belgians but made no effort to capitalize upon it. They were no longer interested in Luxemburg and, in a sense, no longer much interested in Belgium which they placifly assumed to be a French satellite. When Belgium asked for assistance against the French claim to the Guillaume-Luxembourg network, the Foreign Office did agree that the legal basis of the French claim was ludicrous and ordered a protest but, after the Paris embassy objected that such would displease the French, it was cancelled (3). The Belgians also made repeated efforts to convert the bipartite military talks requested by France into tripartite talks with Britain but to no avail since the

⁽¹⁾ HYMANS, ii, 533. The results of the plebiscite were as follows: of 125,775 registered voters, 90,485 voted on the dynastic question and 82,375 on the economic question. On the dynastic question, 5,113 votes were annulled, 66,811 voted for Grand Duchess Charlotte, 1,268 for another grand duchess, 889 for another dynasty, and 16,885 for a republic. On the economic question, 8,609 votes were annulled, 22,242 voted for economic union with Belgium, and 60,906 for economic union with France, Great Britain, Poreign Office, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939 (hereafter cited as DBFP) (London, 1958- -), 1st Series, v, 603. American observers had long predicted this outcome, noting not only French troops, propaganda, and economic measures but also that the pre-German clergy, who had enormous influence over the newly enfranchised women voters, were campaigning strongly for France as a result of a French promise to maintain the allegedly Germanophile dynasty. Friffith to Haskins, 14 Apr 1919, ACNP/302, 185.1132/26; Gunther Report, 10 May 1919, Wilson Papers 5B/36; Garrett to Lansing, 28 May 1919, ACNP/302, 185.1132/36. (2) HYMANS, ii, 532-3; interview with M.N. Erkens, Direction Politique, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Brussels, 1 Sep 1967; de Gaiffier to Hymans, 14 Sep 1919, BMAE 1919 II; Villiers to Curzon, 7 Jan 1920, no. 8, F.O. 371/3851. (3) Belgique, Académie royale de Belgique, Documents Diplomatiques Belges, 1920-1940 (Hereafter cited as DDB) (Brussels, 1964-66), i, 304-6; Villiers to Curzon, 2 Feb 1920, no. 61, F.O. 371/3637; Villiers to Curzon, 21 Feb 1920, no. 108, F.O. 371/3637; Grahame to Curzon, 21 Feb 1921 (Annual Report, 1920), no. 188, F.O. 371/6968; DBFP, v. 568-70, 572-4, 593.

British calmly assumed that a Franco-Belgian military pact was a foregone conclusion and one of no concern to Britain (1) even though Anglo-French tension was acute and some ranking members of the British political and military establishment were seriously debating whether the next war would be against Germany of France. As time passed and the British obstructed any real revision of the 1839 treaties, refused to give Belgium any sort of temporary or permanent guarantee against Germany without the prohibitive price tag of a return to enforced neutrality, favoured Rotterdam over Antwerp, ignored or rejected all Belgian overtures, and made an unconcealed effort to reduce Belgian reparations. Hymans reluctantly concluded that no help could be expected from Britain on any issue. Accordingly, when the French unilaterally occupied Frankfurt at the height of the Ruhr crisis in April of 1920 and requested Belgian support, while suddenly indicating that they were willing to accept a Belgian solution to the Luxemburg question, Hymans told the Belgian cabinet that nothing could be gained from following Britain in disapproval but Luxemburg would be obtained by supporting France. The cabinet unanimously agreed to send a battalion to Frankfurt and thereby provoked intense British wrath (2). This decision constituted the first Belgian step down the rocky road to the Ruhr occupation of 1923, which the French could not have mounted without Belgian cooperation, but more immediately, the Belgian participation in the Frankfurt occupation and the resultant thaw in Franco-Belgian relations quickly produced an agreement, never fulfilled by France, to divide control of the Guillaume-Luxembourg railway. This was followed eventually by a Belgo-Luxembourgeois economic union and more quickly by a rigorously limited Franco-Belgian military accord signed at the end of July in 1920 (3).

⁽¹⁾ DDB, i, 305-6, 314-7; Cambon to Curzon, 2 Feb 1920, F.O. 371/3648; de Gaiffier to Hymans, 3 Feb 1920, Hymans Papers/151.

⁽²⁾ HYMANS, ii, 544-5; DDB,i, 222-8; 241-4, 301; United States, Department of State, *Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1920 (Washington, 1936), ii, 321; Gosling to F.O., 15 Apr 1920, tel. no. 19, F.O. 371/3784; DBFP, ix, 370-3, 402-4.

⁽³⁾ Villiers to Curzon, 14 Apr 1920, no. 229, F.O. 371/3637; DBFP, xii, 50-51; Hymans to de Gaiffier, 22 Sep 1919, BMAE 1919 II; WHITLOCK, ii, 595-6; HYMANS, ii, 546-7; British and Foreign State Papers, cxiv, 639-51; Majerus, pp. 74-80; DDB, i, 405-8. French troops remained in Luxemburg City until the end of 1923. Indépendance Belge, 22 Dec 1923, 4:1-2, 31 Dec 1923, 2:5. The Ruhr occupation required rail access to the area for the transport of troops and supplies. Of the five direct routes from the Rhineland into the Ruhr, one was British controlled and four passed through the Belgian zone of occupation. Rail map, F.O. 371/8711.

The Belgians staved off the military pact until the last shred of hope of British participation was gone but when, at the beginning of July, Lloyd George conveyed the British refusal not to the Belgian government but to the Brussels press and then confirmed it at the Spa conference (1), the Belgians finally gave way and the French gained their long sought goal of a bilateral defensive pact with Belgium. It was much less a French triumph than a Belgian defeat by British default.

⁽¹⁾ La Nation Belge, 4 July 1920; BMAE 1920 II, DDB, I, 398-9; DBFP, xii, 66, 68-9.